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ABSTRACT

The Youth Employment Program Assistance Project was a New York City initiative to demonstrate how employment training for out-of-school, economically disadvantaged youth can be made educationally vigorous. It involved four training programs with a few hundred students. The project focused on the following principles and goals: all learning requires higher-order thinking skills, skills should be taught in context, learning is a social activity, and learning should have intrinsic and extrinsic reward. Project activities included technical assistance workshops, on-site technical assistance, monthly meetings, program directors meetings, and technical assistance workshops for other programs. Policy implications from the project were discussed and the following recommendations made for similar projects: (1) train for investigations of workplaces in which students will be placed; (2) collaborate with educators; (3) provide staff development; (4) strengthen organizational capacity; (5) allocate resources for planning; (6) develop new forms of student assessment; (7) develop new criteria for program performance; and (8) allow time for change. (Contains 31 references.) (KC)

Learning Work: BREAKING THE CYCLE IN YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS

AED ACADEMY FOR EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

LEARNING WORK: BREAKING THE MOLD IN YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS

by

Alexandra Weinbaum

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The Academy for Educational Development (AED) is an independent, nonprofit organization that addresses human development needs through education, communication, and information. Under grants and contracts, AED operates programs for government and international agencies, educational institutions, foundations, and corporations. Since its founding in 1961, AED has conducted projects throughout the United States and in more than 100 countries in the developing world. In partnership with its clients, AED seeks to increase access to learning, transfer skills and technology, and support institutional development.

The School and Community Services Division has a strong commitment to excellence and equity in education and to developing links between schools and community agencies that increase educational and development opportunities for at-risk youth across the United States. Staff and consultants have extensive experience working with large urban school systems, community organizations, and foundations and other funding agencies on programs addressing critical educational issues such as dropout prevention, adolescent pregnancy and parenting, literacy, and youth employment and training.

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Preface

The New York City Department of Employment (DOE) is the largest service delivery area in the country for the Job Training Partnership Act and one that continually strives to improve services to the participants in our programs. We believe that the infusion of energy and vision brought by the project described in this report has enhanced program effectiveness by presenting new ideas and information and by helping programs become better models for others engaged in similar work. The work of the Academy for Educational Development, with a total of seven DOE youth programs between 1989 and 1991, has resulted in profound changes in the attitudes, approaches, and practices of the staff at these sites. It has also resulted in many positive changes in the commitment, involvement, and achievement of program participants.

The Youth Employment Program Assistance Project (YEPAP) focused on helping staff work collaboratively to rethink their roles, identify the needs of the workplace, and engage students in active learning within the context of their lives and employment goals. It has redirected the focus of these DOE youth employment programs toward a more integrated approach that addresses the cognitive, social, and literacy skills needed by young people entering the labor force. YEPAP has also been an excellent model for our efforts to introduce and implement the principles of contextual learning supported by the DOE Institute of Contextual Education.

At this time, when national attention is focused on developing a work force that will be competitive and productive, all of us who care about quality job training programs should give thoughtful consideration to the policy implications and recommendations of this publication.

Josephine Nieves
Commissioner
New York City
Department of Employment

July 1992

Acknowledgments

The Youth Employment Program Assistance Project was a collaboration in the best sense of the word. It was the result of the creative thinking, planning, and implementation efforts of a group of dedicated youth employment practitioners, New York City Department of Employment (DOE) staff, Academy for Educational Development (AED) staff, and consultants.

Without the vision of Lilliam-Barrios Paoli, former DOE Commissioner, and Yvonne DeGaetano, former DOE Deputy Commissioner of Policy and Research, this project would not have taken place. Both of them wanted to address the educational needs of young people in employment programs and encouraged AED and other organizations to develop better models to serve young people's needs. This commitment to improving the educational approaches of DOE programs was equally embraced by the present Commissioner, Josephine Nieves, whose support for the project made possible its continuation with additional programs in 1991-92. Other DOE staff who provided valuable support and insight were Margaret Cohen, Director, Curriculum Development and Review; Elizabeth Cucchiaro, Deputy Assistant Commissioner, Youth Training; Violet Mitchell, Associate Commissioner, Youth Division; Mary Quigley, Assistant Commissioner, Program Support; Anita Rich, Curriculum Developer; Joan Richter, Director, Training Support; and Jean Selzer, Assistant Commissioner, Evaluation.

The AED Advisory and Planning Team included John Garvey, Office of Academic Affairs, City University of New York; Frank Migliorelli and Toni Stone, Playing to Win; Pedro Pedraza, Center for Puerto Rican Studies, Hunter College; and Marcie Wolfe, Institute for Literacy Studies, Lehman College. Each of these professionals specializes in an area that the project addressed; their expertise and creative input helped to form the directions taken.

AED staff on the project, four of whom also served on the Advisory Team, included Dianne Kangisser, who brought expertise in literacy and workplace literacy programs; Elizabeth McGee, who brought expertise in authentic assessment and in programs for teen parents; Vernay Mitchell, an ethnographer who documented every aspect of the project with meticulous care; and Clarener Moultrie,

who brought expertise in program development, management, and organization. In addition, several consultants who are teachers and staff developers in second chance programs for youth greatly enriched the project. They included Anne Meisenzahl, Sharon Peters, and Frank Wirmusky.

The project owes a debt of thanks to Aurelia Enache, who was the administrative assistant and played an essential role in maintaining communications and efficient project organization. Elayne Archer, a senior consultant at the Academy, provided expert editorial advice and Dore Hollander meticulously copy-edited the manuscript.

The work of creating new visions for the participating programs and implementing new approaches was an enormously difficult undertaking. That it succeeded as well as it did was testimony to the program staff who were on the front lines translating the approaches into curricular and organizational plans and activities. Special thanks go to the following program staff: Seline Bearman, Donnovan Beckford, Henry Blom, Eric Cadora, Jerry Cofta, Leslie Crawford, Sister Mary Franciscus, Arlene Kisner, Syd Lines, Hal Merriman, Justin Rose, Enoel Santiago, Tom Trukawinski, and Helen Zias. Auxiliary Services for High Schools of the New York City Board of Education provided teachers and paraprofessionals to three of the programs; several of these individuals eagerly gave their support to the project.

The project was made possible by funding from the Aetna Life & Casualty Foundation, Altman Foundation, Charles Hayden Foundation, Hearst Foundation, and New York City Department of Employment.

Alexandra Weinbaum
Project Director, AED

Introduction

Work is the backbone of an individual's life, providing the underpinning for a respected place in the adult world. Likewise, a productive economy with a qualified, well trained workforce is the marrow that sustains a country and its citizens.

The Forgotten Half, 1990

Background

The Youth Employment Program Assistance Project was a local initiative to demonstrate how employment training for out-of-school, economically disadvantaged youth can be made educationally vigorous. It involved four training programs in New York City and a few hundred students. On the grand scale of things, that is a small enterprise. But it touches on matters of urgent concern to the entire nation.

High on the list of national concerns is the inadequate educational preparation of America's youth. Because of recent and anticipated shifts in the economy and the need to improve U.S. competitiveness in the global marketplace, education is the focus of a major presidential initiative, congressional inquiry, high-powered study commissions, and debate in corporate boardrooms.

At the core of concern is that new forms of work organization and new technologies are calling for higher levels of education and skills. As we move into the next century and work settings become increasingly complex, even the least-skilled jobs are expected to require significant literacy, computing, communicating, and problem-solving skills. Forecasts on the workplaces of the future are conflicting, and several issues — particularly the projected rate of change in jobs, how best to prepare workers for the changes, and the relationship between worker productivity and education levels — will need continuing research and analysis. One point is clear, however: Too many young people are poorly prepared for today's workplaces.

The 1986 report of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), which tested literacy among young adults aged 21 to 25, using materials drawn from daily life to assess literacy skills, supports this conclusion. In their analysis of the NAEP results,

researchers Paul Barton and Irwin Kirsch found that, while most youth can perform "routine or uncomplicated tasks," only "small proportions can do moderately complex tasks." Furthermore, "a great many of these young adults will not be prepared for the workplaces of the present economy, irrespective of what these workplaces may be like in the future." (Barton and Kirsch, 1990) Other studies and an aggregation of anecdotal evidence from employers also point to the serious and pervasive nature of the "literacy problem."

A disproportionate number of the youth who must develop greater proficiency in literacy skills come from disadvantaged groups who are educationally underserved — and are therefore at greatest economic risk. These are the youth who are not destined for college or who have dropped out of high school (the "forgotten half") and who lack the family and school support to improve their skills, knowledge, and connections needed to obtain jobs. This segment of the young adult population is at the center of the initiative described here. For them, and for society in general, the stakes are high in providing quality education and training suited to the changing realities of the workplace and the demands of daily life and citizenship.

In this context, in 1988 New York City's Commissioner of Employment asked the Academy for Educational Development (AED) to develop recommendations for building a strong educational component into youth employment programs operated under the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA).

JTPA is the federal government's largest employment preparation program for helping high school dropouts and the unemployed to enter or reenter the labor force. From its inception in 1982, it has operated as a vocational education program focused on technical job training and placement. Basic skills, when offered, have been regarded as remedial education or preparation for the high school diploma equivalency exam (GED). In 1984, according to a report of the U.S. General Accounting Office, the average length of remedial instruction in all JTPA programs was two weeks.

Project Goals: "The Whole Program Teaches"

In response to the Commissioner's request, AED proposed that the narrow job training mission of JTPA be reconceptualized. We urged that youth employment programs be conceived primarily as educational interventions in which the whole program teaches; that

they be holistic endeavors in which basic skills are threaded through all phases of activity and interwoven with instruction in vocational skills and technology applications. We further proposed that the curriculum and all instruction be given a real-life context through the use of materials and issues linked to the workplace. This concept was accepted and became the core of a policy statement issued by the Commissioner. Eventually, it became the basis for the demonstration project described in this account.

Curriculum Goals

During 1988-91, a number of national bodies issued policy-making reports underscoring the issues discussed here. Of particular importance were the reports of the Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce (*America's Choice: High Skills or Low Wages*), the Department of Labor SCANS report (*What Work Requires of Schools*), and the report of the American Society for Training and Development (*America and the New Economy*).

All these warn that American workers must be better prepared than they now are for the advanced literacy, cognitive, and social demands of the present and future workplace. They view instruction in basic skills as a "foundation" for workplace preparation, but urge the development of far more complex skills that emphasize the following:

- Processing and applying information derived from various sources
- Decision-making and problem-solving
- Learning to learn
- Understanding systems
- Using technology appropriately
- Communicating effectively
- Working cooperatively with diverse groups of people

These are cited as the learning goals for all young people, regardless of whether they are heading toward college or directly toward the workplace, and regardless of whether they are enrolled in school or in programs for out-of-school youth. The reports recommend, moreover, that performance standards and assessment measures be revised accordingly.

This agenda presents educators with a formidable task. It sets forth goals that educators, together with employers, must determine how to meet.

The AED project was an attempt to explore how these goals could be reached in settings addressed to the employment and education needs of out-of-school youth. Its implications and approaches, however, are equally relevant for in-school vocational, alternative, and dropout prevention programs. We drew on theory, research, and practice from many fields — literacy, cognitive psychology, contextual education, the ethnography of workplaces — and from exemplary and alternative programs for youth that use nontraditional approaches to curriculum development and instruction.

Project Arrangements

The project was conducted from July 1989 through June 1991 at four JTPA sites chosen through a competitive selection process. (In 1992, the project continued, having been extended to a third year and three additional sites.) A condition of participation was that each program assign at least three staff members to the project, including its director. Each program received a modest amount of funding — $25,000 per year — to compensate for the time staff members devoted to the project, but these monies were not sufficient to motivate participation. Rather, the expectation of beneficial educational results for the young people was the motivating factor.

In terms of the relevance to other settings, it should be noted that participation entailed no dispensations or waivers from normal JTPA operational requirements. The programs still had to meet the mandates and performance goals under which they customarily function. If anything, the Department of Employment imposed new and higher expectations in response to the ferment surrounding out-of-school youth training issues. The new expectations were as follows:

- Programs henceforth would be required to target the most needy and least- educated populations: high school dropouts, young women on welfare, teen parents, individuals with low literacy skills. This requirement contrasted with former program tendencies to "cream" clientele by admitting young people of higher achievement — high school graduates, for example, or those with more advanced literacy skills.
- Inasmuch as the programs now would be adding an education component, they were required to staff it through linkage with the New York City Board of Education, which agency would provide the basic skills teachers. This condition reflected the

view that vocational job skills alone are not sufficient for today's labor market.

- Following national guidelines, competency standards and tests in basic skills would be developed. Achievement of these new, added competencies was to be included in the performance goals of the programs. Previously, programs' success in placing students in jobs and students' GED achievement were the main criteria of their success.

Organization of the Report

This report is divided into three chapters. The first presents the learning theories on which the AED project was based, and the plan of action that helped to bring about and institutionalize program change.

Chapter II describes the project outcomes. It documents each program's efforts to implement the principles of the project, the barriers that were met, and the strategies used to counter them. This information is presented in detail so the report may serve as a handbook for those wishing to undertake similar change ventures. The third chapter discusses the policy implications of what was learned.

We hope the insights and findings contained here will be helpful to the policymakers, administrators, planners, and practitioners who seek to better prepare today's youth for the demanding job settings and new worlds confronting them.

CHAPTER I

Creating Educationally Effective and Engaging Youth Employment Programs

It's hard. Too many of our kids have seen so many people in the community or family give up. For them, succeeding is not a reality. That's one of the things the program has to address: that even though they've dropped out of school, or have one or two kids, whatever the social barrier may be, they can still compete if given the opportunity — with anybody. For minority kids, one of the big problems is competing with white males or college graduates or people who've had better social opportunities. With all that, we've been able to hold on to them in the first place, and then place them in jobs where they succeed and grow. We know because the kids call and tell us.

Program Director,
Smith Place Settlement

Now I'm more serious, thinking about college. I thought about college before I came here, but it was community college. Now I want real college, the big time, not that two-days-a-week and at-night stuff.

Student,
[illegible] tors, Inc.

My last job was a waitress. But that doesn't go anywhere. Like I don't want to go to head waitress — that's a nowhere job. I want to get my GED and learn more, for the sake of my daughter.

Student,
Smith Place Settlement

A. THEORETICAL BASES OF THE PROJECT

1. The Focus Must Be on Strengths and Skills, Not Deficits

In spite of the best intentions of both policymakers and program operators, most youth employment programs draw on a deficit model of youth development in their policies and programs. This model assumes that young people lack the skills that would enable them to survive in mainstream society, and programs are designed to "remediate" these deficits in the belief that they are the main hindrance to school success and future employment. Generally, young

people are tested and grouped according to their deficits, and academic programming proceeds on the assumption that students must be taught the simple skills in which they are deficient.

Such a view would appear to have a foundation in common sense. Many young people are deficient in academic skills, and a simple approach to education suggests that it start with simple skills and move to the complex. Yet this wisdom is flawed for two reasons. First, it assumes that the standardized tests customarily used by youth employment and other remedial programs can accurately assess students' abilities in academic skills. Recent research, however, has shown the limitations of such standardized tests for revealing what students know, particularly for students who have been out of school for any length of time and have a history of negative feelings and embarrassment about test-taking. Beyond that, even if students' academic skills are limited, their literacy attainments may be much more complex and potentially useful in mainstream settings than test scores would lead educators to believe.

Research suggests that literacy is not a set of definable technical skills, but rather attitudes, behaviors, and practices that differ, depending on the requirements of cultural and social settings. Thus, the literacy required to answer multiple-choice questions on a school science test is quite different from the literacy required to compose and perform a rap song or to write a letter to the housing authority regarding problems in a building. Each of these literacy performances requires different skills, behaviors, and practices. Students entering a youth employment program therefore may possess literacy skills that are not readily revealed by multiple-choice standardized tests.

Ethnographic studies suggest that the literacy skills used by poor and working-class people to address their needs in their own communities are often complex, even though they may not be measurable by paper-and-pencil tests. Children who were street vendors in Brazil were able to perform multistep computations in their heads to determine the price of the fruit they sold; however, they could not perform similar operations presented as algorithms on a test (Raizen, 1989). In her study of a poor community in the South, anthropologist Shirley Brice Heath observed adolescents who had poor literacy skills as measured by school achievement, but who posted detailed written messages for one another in the local billiard hall where they hung out (Heath, 1983). Schools and youth

development programs rarely assess these skills and strengths. Rather, they group students on the basis of paper-and-pencil tests, on which these young people perform poorly.

To create a curriculum that acknowledges strengths and builds on them, programs need to ask several questions: What literacy practices do young people already engage in? How can schools and programs build on the skills and knowledge that young people gain and value in their families and communities? How can these skills be developed and transferred to mainstream settings?

A second problem with the deficit view of students' abilities is that it leads to the creation of programs that emphasize the mastery of decontextualized skills, such as identifying the parts of speech, reading short paragraphs for "main ideas," and so forth. This approach, too, appears to be based on a commonsense perception — that people generally proceed from simpler to more complex materials when they learn. But studies of how people learn do not confirm this view. Skills are never learned in isolation and then mechanistically put together. For example, it is not possible to write a letter, essay, or poem just by mastering the parts of speech or punctuation. The art of writing can be mastered only through writing.

Yet the notion of proceeding from decontextualized subskills to more complex skills pervades most youth employment programs. Indeed, it has been argued that many of the educational problems plaguing our workplaces and society in general are the direct result of such approaches to teaching and learning. According to W. Norton Grubb of the National Center for Research on Vocational Education, University of California/Berkeley, this view of learning leads to what he calls the "skills and drills" approach to remediation (Grubb et al., 1991). In such programs, students are not exposed to ideas, concepts, and problem-solving, or to stimulating discussion about issues that concern them. Rather, they are most often found poring over worksheets in isolation at their desks, or at computers that display similar worksheets and signal when the correct answer has been entered. This view of learning is narrow and mechanistic, and assumes there are right and wrong answers to everything. Most distressing of all, to learn in this way is profoundly boring and alienating.

In real-life environments such as workplaces, all skills are embedded in the actual tasks that people perform. David Fleming,

formerly of the Youth Policy Institute, recommends that if we want to improve the literacy skills of young people, the school must return to the classroom "its power to set up situations where students can acquire literacy by familiarizing themselves with situations in which literacy practices are used in meaningful ways" (Fleming, 1991). Youth employment programs in particular must weave together classroom and workplace learning.

2. All Learning Should Be Contextualized

Recent research in cognitive psychology and ethnographic studies of how people perform their jobs suggests that people learn, apply knowledge, and solve problems significantly differently in schools and at workplaces. Lauren Resnick of the University of Pittsburgh's Learning Research and Development Center points to the following differences:

- In-school learning is generally individualized; students compete against one another and must complete assignments on their own; tests are designed to assess what they have learned on their own. In workplaces, in contrast, people pool their knowledge and expertise to accomplish a task.
- In-school learning generally does not use tools to accomplish tasks: for example, calculators are generally not allowed until a student shows mastery of computation. In workplaces, any tool is used that assists a worker in completing the work that must be done.
- In-school knowledge is presented abstractly; in workplaces, knowledge is related to the solution of work-related problems; similarly, in schools, symbol manipulation is learned for its own sake rather than as a vehicle to solve real problems. (Resnick, 1987)

Resnick and other cognitive psychologists note that because of these differences, learning is more engaging in workplaces and people perform at higher levels of proficiency there. She therefore recommends incorporating these aspects of the workplace and other real life environments into the classroom.

Still other emerging evidence reinforces the premise that students learn better when skills are contextualized, that is, when they are taught in the context of meaningful and useful subject matter. Students retain learning longer and demonstrate greater gains in learning when taught in relation to a purpose or function than in classes that teach simplified subskills (Sticht, 1987). Research on

recruits who entered the Army in the 1960s with reading scores below the generally accepted standard and were provided with learning experiences in which they used reading, writing, and math in the context of learning job tasks that they would later be asked to perform did at least as well in their jobs as recruits who had higher reading scores on entry into the Army (Philippi, 1988; Sticht, 1987). These results — and the experience of educators in such settings as vocational schools, youth employment programs, alternative schools, and apprenticeships — have convinced many educators that, to be effective, learning must be contextualized. In other words, learning must deal with real issues and problems and must result in performances and products whose use and function are clear and meaningful to students.

Such learning draws on complex thinking skills by definition, because learning that is embedded in real tasks always involves complex levels of thought and problem-solving. Examples of contextualized learning are not limited to vocationally related problem-solving and can be developed in all disciplines and at all education levels. For example:

- Students in a building maintenance program can be asked to estimate the amount of paint that will be used in a job, to estimate the cost of the job, to write up an invoice for it, and to negotiate with a customer who believes that the bill is too high.
- Students in a parenting class can be asked to design a playground that is developmentally appropriate for five-year-olds, that is safe, and that meets city regulations for playgrounds.
- Students in a history class can write a letter to a local paper either supporting or opposing the use of civil disobedience to shut down a nuclear power station some community members consider unsafe.
- Students in a clerical skills program can be presented with a problem in the workplace regarding the use of the photocopy machine, and asked to write a memo to their supervisor suggesting solutions to the problem.

Although such approaches to learning seem to fit the mission of youth employment programs, they are rarely found. One reason is that appropriately trained teachers are needed to develop and implement such approaches, and such teachers are often in short supply both in school and in youth employment programs. Indeed, one of the arguments for the decontextualized "skills and drills"

approach is that it is relatively "teacherproof." However, now that the United States is bemoaning the sad results of decontextualized, "teacherproof" education, it is high time to jettison it. Teacherproof education does not work — in school or in out-of-school programs.

3. Teachers Must Learn How to Value Students as Learners and Engage Them in Learning

Many of the young people in youth employment programs are alienated from school learning. It is generally the need for a job that motivates them to enroll in a program. The challenge of the programs, then, is to build on this motivation in order to engage the students in learning. This involves two critical processes — valuing students as learners and knowing the teaching strategies that will move individuals to "hook" into learning.

On the face of it, valuing students as learners may not seem so difficult. But in fact, teachers, like other members of American society, see students through the lens of the negative race, ethnic, and gender stereotypes that prevail in our country. Some teachers hold negative views of the learning potential of African-Americans, women, teen parents, and other socially stigmatized and marginalized groups. Claude M. Steele of Stanford University argues that when black students are devalued as learners, they experience such perception of their ability not only as personal failure, but also as further proof of the inferiority attributed to their race (Steele, 1992). To value students as learners, teachers must look deeply and consistently at their own beliefs about race, gender, and ability. They must analyze how these beliefs play out in the classroom, and in their treatment of individual students. This is neither an easy nor a one-shot task. To engage in it is the underpinning of good teaching.

Valuing students as learners is essential but not sufficient for good teaching. Beyond that, teachers must know effective strategies to engage young people in learning. Many youth employment programs expect the goal of a job or a GED to be sufficient motivation. But that is never the case. We all need more than extrinsic rewards to submerge ourselves in learning. Learning is now, and it is difficult; a job or a GED is in the future and is only indirectly connected to the tasks at hand. The challenge of engaging students in learning is among the most difficult that teachers and programs face, particularly with students who have been disengaged from

school learning for many years or were never much engaged in the first place.

Frank Newmann of the University of Wisconsin has said that although it is difficult to analyze engagement,

> we know it when we see it, and we know when it is missing. Students are engaged when they devote substantial time and effort to a task, when they care about the quality of their work, and when they commit themselves because the work seems to have significance beyond its personal instrumental value. (Quoted in Whelage et al., 1989.)

Much of the programming in school and in youth employment programs undermines engagement. Students are asked to learn things that are not intrinsically interesting; they are asked to learn in ways that do not promote thought, but rather promote the passive intake of information. In addition, the practicality of what they learn is not clear.

Newmann suggests that the following conditions must be present to bring about engagement:

- Students see that the learning is extrinsically valuable: that is, that it is helping them attain one of their goals — a GED, a job, a diploma.
- Students find that learning is intrinsically interesting: that is, it is challenging, makes them think, frees their imagination, is fun.
- Students receive clear, prompt feedback about their performance; teachers and peers give encouragement and feedback in an ongoing fashion.
- The learning is related to issues and problems of concern to the students and is of practical value in their thinking about their lives or futures.
- Students take ownership of the learning: that is, it is structured in such a way that they have influence on the conception, execution, and evaluation of the work itself; they plan, organize, and execute tasks with the guidance and assistance of the teacher as coach, but the design and execution are clearly their own work.
- Students are encouraged to work collaboratively on projects rather than on their own.
- Students are provided with flexible time limits to accommodate their learning needs and the needs of the project on which

they are working. While deadlines have to be set, they should be related to the nature of the work required. (Newmann, 1990-91)

These recommendations in many ways parallel the ideas of the cognitive psychologists who argue for creating learning experiences in school that parallel those in real-life environments.

4. Teachers Must Assist Students to Understand Labor Market Opportunities and Barriers

Many youth employment programs encourage young people to pull themselves up by their own bootstraps. Although such encouragement is an oft needed and valuable antidote to the despair that disadvantaged youth feel, it may also obscure the very real limitations of individual effort. The harsh reality of American life — seldom revealed by the "equal opportunity" media images of blacks and whites or women and men working together in high-powered jobs — is that social class and, more significantly, race and gender discrimination continue to shape and limit labor market opportunities. Although higher levels of education result in greater earnings for young people regardless of race and gender, it is also true that individuals with similar educational levels differ significantly in earning potential according to race and gender, and that the labor market continues to be stratified along race and gender lines. For example, white male high school dropouts earn more, on average, than black high school graduates; and Hispanic female high school dropouts earn less than any other group of young people (*The Forgotten Half*, 1988). A 1985 study of the labor market in New York City reveals that blacks, Latinos, and women continue to be very underrepresented in the primary labor market — that is, the market of secure, decently paid jobs with benefits (Stafford, 1985).

To the extent that many young people perceive that educational achievement may not result in high earnings or job status — because of the gender, race, and class barriers described above — they are likely to deemphasize skills that are related to school success and to seek to attain skills that bring them status within their families, peer groups, or communities, such as excelling in sports (Ogbu, 1980). Programs cannot ignore students' perception of the labor market, nor their knowledge of family members or friends who have not succeeded in the labor market in spite of their educational credentials. Programs must provide students with the analytic tools to realistically assess the available labor market opportu-

nities and the existing barriers. They must help young people with the difficult task of both assuming individual responsibility for their learning and understanding the limits of individual effort.

B. PROJECT PRINCIPLES AND GOALS

These research findings informed the AED project and the following learning principles, which, in turn, shaped the basic plan of action.

- *All learning requires higher-order thinking skills.* Students should not be taught simple subtasks first and then more complex ones, because this is not how tasks in the world are organized. Real work requires complex levels of thinking, judgment, and decision-making.
- *Skills should be taught in contexts that have a purpose and function.* Subskills that are taught by rote or presented abstractly cannot prepare young people for the demands of life; nor are young people interested in such learning. Increasingly, students perceive that kind of school learning to be irrelevant to their futures, and they become disengaged.
- *Learning should build on prior knowledge and experience.* Students are not empty vessels into which knowledge can be poured; they come to school with complex experiences and ideas about the world. Teachers must understand and acknowledge these experiences and ideas and build on them. To do so requires careful attention and ongoing assessment of students' understanding and development; in this type of teaching, the teacher helps the student to develop her or his strengths and to correct inappropriate or mistaken approaches or ideas, much as a coach does with an aspiring athlete. The goal is the peak performance of which the person is capable.
- *Learning is a social activity.* Learning involves social interaction, exchange of ideas, learning from others, building on group experience, knowing how to accept criticism, and negotiating with others. This is the nature of learning in workplaces, families, and communities; education programs should prepare young people accordingly.
- *Learning should have intrinsic and extrinsic rewards.* All good learning engages the mind and emotions, as well as pro-

vides some form of extrinsic incentive that the participant values.

Transforming the focus of youth employment programs from technical job skills and placement to developing youth as learners called for a plan of action that would do the following:

- Develop in each program an understanding of its mission as an educational intervention — and a view of students as learners with a range of strengths for the program to uncover and build upon.
- Develop in each program an organizational structure to support the integration of program components and the development of staff as a team collaboratively engaged in ongoing curriculum planning, instruction, and assessment of students.
- Develop a contextual approach to learning by investigating the literacy, cognitive, and social requirements of workplaces and other contexts in young people's lives, and place these at the center of curriculum and instruction.
- Develop learning outcomes for students to be addressed in all program components, and curricular themes and projects by which students can develop and apply skills that jobs or other contexts of their lives may require.
- Integrate reading, writing, math, and technology into all aspects of learning in the program.
- Develop new approaches to assessment that accurately capture students' full range of abilities, interests, and development. Assess students both at intake and during program participation, and use the results to shape instruction in an ongoing fashion. Also, help students develop the ability to assess their own performance.

C. PROJECT ORGANIZATION

Given these goals, the AED project was to function as a multilevel educational change effort that would work intensively with teachers and directors, but would also have to affect the institutions in which the programs were embedded — namely, the sponsoring agencies, the DOE, and the Board of Education. The project was structured to include an Advisory and Planning Team composed of experts in all of the educational areas we addressed: contextual education, literacy, assessment, writing, reading, the use of technology as a learning tool, and multicultural education. (The one

major omission was an individual with mathematics expertise. Outside math experts were consulted, but their absence from the team weakened the project in this area.)

In addition to the Advisory and Planning Team, there were four AED-based site coordinators, each of whom worked closely with staff from an assigned site throughout the project.

Project activities included the following:

1. Technical assistance workshops. At the workshops, the project's educational approaches were explained. The 24 workshop-hours covered the following topics:

- How programs viewed and assessed participants as learners
- Understanding the writing and reading process; writing and reading across the curriculum
- Rethinking approaches to math teaching
- Using technology as a tool for learning
- Analyzing the literacy demands of workplaces
- Curriculum development that incorporated findings from workplace investigations
- Using multicultural and other materials that address the contexts of participants' lives
- Developing and implementing student projects

Each participating program had to assign at least three people to attend the workshops — the director and instructors in vocational and basic skills. AED staff and consultants led the workshops, but the format was participatory. Each workshop ended with a how-to session on implementing the workshop strategies.

2. On-site technical assistance. The four site coordinators played a vital role in providing technical assistance. They made regular, frequent visits to the sites and worked intensively with program staff. They helped to establish regular planning as an integral part of the program's operations. They assisted in implementing and in documenting the evolution of program activities. Throughout the project, they provided indispensable leadership, advice, and support.

3. Monthly meetings. Monthly meetings enabled project participants to discuss their activities, exchange ideas, and share information. Program staff, AED staff, and DOE and Board of Education representatives attended these meetings. The meetings included formal presentations by the programs and occasional formal presentations by AED staff to further develop some of the approaches.

4. *Program directors meetings.* Throughout the project, the AED site coordinators also met separately with the program directors. These meetings provided opportunities to discuss project implementation, program problems (sometimes unrelated to the project), and possible solutions. In general, the meetings were very important for bringing about program ownership of AED's approaches.

5. *Technical assistance workshops for other programs.* Near the end of the project, program staff who were able to attend at this point to share their experiences with a larger audience facilitated three days of technical assistance workshops for other youth employment programs in the city. We structured the workshops in such a way that the larger goals of the project could be presented as the context in which implementation activities took place.

D. ESSENTIAL PROJECT STRATEGIES

Throughout the project, we reflected unceasingly on the most effective ways to bring about program change. Our thinking was informed by research on school change in the 1960s and 1970s that concluded that many of the large-scale, federally funded projects failed to bring about fundamental change at the classroom level (Fullan, 1982). Analyses of these change efforts revealed the following problems:

- They were top-down in their approach in that they ignored local history and conditions, and the need that localities have to adapt changes to their own needs.
- They ignored the larger institutional settings of schools, believing that teachers themselves would bring about change when provided with new curricula or instructional approaches.
- They ignored the fact that change is a slow process and that those undertaking change need intensive support, including ongoing technical assistance, peer support, and review. (Fullan, 1982)

Major theorists of school change have described conditions in which change is possible and have concluded that significant change efforts take from three to five years (Louis and Miles, 1990). The basis of school change, according to Fullan, is "transforming subjective realities." Teachers must understand not only the theo-

retical utility of the proposed change, but how it actually plays out in their classrooms. They must reflect and learn from experience, try out new approaches, make mistakes, and revise approaches until they are convinced that they have found effective ones. Teachers, however, are embedded in complex systems within the school itself, within the district and community, and within a larger political and social context. Each of these systems affects the change process in ways that may support or detract from the teachers' efforts. The literature on change cautions that it must be recognized as a process that always will be met with resistance, and requires appropriate resources, materials, and ongoing support to be accomplished (Fullan, 1982).

AED believes that school-change experiences are relevant to its work with youth employment programs, even though JTPA-funded programs have not been regarded primarily as education programs. Schools and youth employment programs, of course, differ in essential ways. The programs are much smaller than schools: they may serve no more than a hundred students a year. Staff therefore are also few and may have little or no training as educators. This may free them from many preconceptions, but also may make it difficult for them to see themselves primarily as educators. Educational requirements may be more flexible in JTPA-funded programs than in schools, where they are determined by state- or city-mandated curricula and standardized tests.

In spite of these obvious differences, there are also parallels. Programs are a part of larger organizations with their own agendas that may be unsupportive of change efforts undertaken to enhance student learning. They are also part of bureaucracies that oversee their performance and provide their funding. In New York City, each of the programs had to relate to three larger external organizations. One was the immediate sponsoring agency — the settlement house or other agency where the JTPA program was physically lodged and under whose aegis and fiscal administration the program operated. Another was the DOE, which funded both the programs and AED, monitored the programs' performance, and held them accountable for meeting certain performance goals. The third was the New York City Board of Education, which provided basic skills teachers to the programs and supervised them.

Size alone suggests that effecting change should be easier to accomplish in JTPA-funded programs than in schools. But this

structure of external hierarchies led to issues and barriers that had to be addressed.

In order to carry out change within the programs, the following strategies were employed.

1. *Building Trust*

Building a close, trusting relationship between our site coordinators and program staff was fundamental to successful results. Indeed, none of the program activities would have been successful without the frequent presence of the coordinators. Also important was that the AED staff met regularly to analyze each site and the barriers encountered there, and sought together to devise remedies. Throughout the project, we remained mindful of the programs' external organizational relationships and often acted as their advocates. Inasmuch as the programs operated within the culture of a larger sponsoring agency that had its own agenda and a focus that lay elsewhere, differences arose. A difference might pertain to class size, for example: the JTPA program might think smaller classes important, but the agency administrator might resist hiring an additional teacher to split the class load. When such issues were overwhelming, it was not possible to focus on program goals, and the site coordinators found themselves acting as advocates for the programs with the agencies.

The advocacy increased the programs' trust and enthusiasm for the project. (It did not always achieve the desired result, however, and the obstacles in the interaction between the programs and the sponsoring or funding agencies undermined the project at various points.)

Trust-building occurred in other ways. We found that several programs faced internal difficulties that were impeding their ability to participate in the project. Rather than focus on project goals, the site coordinators helped with these problems, which included replacing staff, and management and scheduling issues. This effort to build organizational capacity further developed trust and helped prepare the programs to implement the project activities.

2. *Staff Development: Practicing What You Preach*

Because AED modeled an approach to learning that was predicated on respect for the learner's prior knowledge and experience, we believed that the same principle should inform our approach to staff development and to the workshops. In each workshop, we

used the experiences of programs and staff as the basis for developing approaches that would fit particular programs. This took many forms, but in every workshop, the facilitator asked staff to reflect on their own experience as either learners or teachers. Having them reflect on their experiences as learners was helpful in addressing the prevailing views of students from a deficit perspective. It became apparent to staff that they, like their students, had a range of difficulties and strengths in such areas as writing and math. For example, most staff, like students, found themselves to be reluctant writers (some would avoid writing at any cost); they were embarrassed to read what they had written to a large group or to let anyone see what they had written (as teachers routinely ask students to do). The experience of writing and sharing work, as well as revising and editing, gave them a new appreciation of the difficulties their students face and insight into how to assist young people in becoming better writers. Another principle in laying the groundwork was to insist on the complexity of the ideas in the project. AED was occasionally prodded to provide teachers with neat packages of curricula or assessment tools that they could take back to their classrooms. Although we provided programs and staff with many resources on the ideas in the project and on how to implement them, we felt that staff had to digest materials and ideas presented in workshops and decide if and how these approaches would work at the program level. We argued that just as students would not be prepared for the challenges of the workplace if they were spoon-fed information, the same principle applied to the program staff.

3. Breaking Isolation and Exchanging Ideas

When programs were queried as to the most valuable contribution of the project, they said it was the opportunity to get an inside view of other programs, to learn from other program staff members, and to develop a dialogue with them about program and educational issues. One teacher observed, "Before being in this project, I taught my classes, rarely talked with other staff or knew what they were doing, and went home." Staff of different programs never met except in DOE workshops that were designed primarily to present new materials or regulations, not to exchange ideas. AED found that the hunger for the exchange of ideas about programming and teaching strategies was intense. This project provided opportunities to satisfy that hunger. Program staff readily borrowed from one

another, used curriculum ideas, visited one another's sites occasionally, and relished the opportunity to exchange ideas on a monthly basis. These meetings, although they took place after program hours, from 3 to 6 p.m., were always well attended.

4. Instituting Program Planning

To achieve good programming, it was essential to introduce and institutionalize a regular time for program planning. Early in the project, AED requested that each program schedule planning meetings, using the project's underlying ideas about developing an effective educational program as their core. This request, perhaps more than others, met with resistance, primarily because of time and budget constraints. Many JTPA classroom teachers work on a per diem basis and are paid only for classroom contact hours. Thus, time spent in program planning ordinarily means that they must participate voluntarily, or the agency, often already fiscally burdened, must come up with extra dollars. Usually, teachers simply work in isolation from each other. Also, the meetings included program directors, who ordinarily are involved with program management and are not tuned in to instruction. But where the goal is a curriculum that integrates vocational, academic, and life skills, joint planning among all concerned is essential. We insisted, therefore, that programs find time for these meetings, either by having students work independently for a certain period of the day or by having staff stay late or give up a lunch period.

The planning sessions were instituted to design, coordinate, and assess the implementation of project approaches. At the end of each session, programs documented the decisions reached and the unresolved issues. This documentation formed the basis for assessing program change.

Even though the programs initially resisted the planning process, they ultimately found it exhilarating. This was the first time that many of the staff had dealt with educational issues on a programwide basis, and they found the process intellectually engaging. The documentation of the meetings, which introduced a management style not customarily used in these settings, and which made it possible to track decisions and commitments, gave staff a sense of accomplishment and direction. They became more excited about project approaches as they took ownership of them and shaped them to their needs.

5. *Trying Out Ideas, Reflecting on Them, Gaining Confidence*

Any change involves a leap of faith. Ultimately, an innovation must be tried before people are convinced that it is worthwhile or that they can in fact incorporate it into their program or class. This risk-taking is essential to change, as is the ability to reflect on what has been done, make adjustments, and learn from mistakes. The structure of the project facilitated this process. Participants were forced to make a leap of faith and try things out because the project required that they make a presentation in the monthly workshops. (Usually, these dealt with class activities related to a particular theme.) The initial presentations were often very rough, the attempts not very successful, and the feelings afterward somewhat tentative. It took repeated tries before participants began to feel more confident in their approaches. The main turning point for the programs was their perception of improved outcomes for students: staff noticed that students were more engaged, had better attendance, demonstrated less of a feeling of "putting in time," and showed greater willingness to write and to share their writing. This receptivity to project approaches was important in encouraging program "buy-in": project approaches worked, even when carried out imperfectly.

6. *Teaching Others*

An essential aspect of the learning process for programs was the many opportunities to teach others. That is essentially what happened in the joint monthly meetings of the four programs. At the end of the project, staff from every JTPA youth program in the city were invited to three days of technical assistance workshops. The main facilitators were not AED staff, but the participating program staffs themselves. The workshops introduced the principles in the project, which staff illustrated with specific examples from their own programs — student orientations, assessment techniques, approaches to reading and writing, curriculum development, and the like. As much as possible, the programs offered for discussion and analysis materials they had developed themselves or products of students' work. The sessions were participatory, the discussion lively. These three days consolidated the project in a way that no other activity had before. At the end, when the project participants saw the other program representatives welcoming but struggling with the ideas that had been presented, raising all the objections

that they themselves had initially raised, and expressing similar resistance, they could see the distance they had traveled in achieving new understandings and transforming their programs.

CHAPTER II

How Programs Changed: A Report on Project Outcomes

What the program did for us was to provide a vehicle for concrete change in our approach to vocational education. Before that, we knew we had to change, but we didn't have the structure to do it. The emphasis wasn't on curriculum but on vocational skills and meeting the mandated goals. It was just each isolated subject. Each teacher was more concerned about his piece than the whole curriculum, and now everybody owns the whole thing and everybody has input. Now we know how to move to change things that don't work.

Program Director,
Smith Place Settlement

I came to get a GED and a skill. At first I wanted just that, but now I understand they put more thoughts in my head than just to get a skill — to communicate, think problems through, help me see there may be different ways to solve a problem.

Student,
Smith Place Settlement

I just never wanted to learn. Now I'm learning. I want to learn. It's not like remedial school. They make you want to learn.

Student,
Actors, Inc.

JTPA programs tend to be idiosyncratic. Though they share a single purpose and are governed by the same rules, each program has its own characteristics and texture. Consider the four programs in this project, and it becomes evident that the situation could not be otherwise. One is operated by a theater group; another is for ex-offenders and is connected with the criminal court system; a third is part of a community-based storefront and directed by a nun; and another is in an established settlement house. Some of the differences among them are shaped by the resources and attitudes of the sponsoring agencies. Others result from the way the physical environment and space arrangements affect and reflect the particular program mission. Finally, differences are always defined by the

abilities, the vision, the energy, and the caring of the individuals who staff the enterprise.

Although the objectives and expected outcomes for these programs were similar, the four differed substantially in their organization, procedures, and need for program development. What follows is a description of the programs as they were at the baseline and the changes that took place over the course of the project. This account documents the events, processes, and circumstances under which each program — and the four collectively — received and used AED assistance.*

A. BASELINE DATA

1. Physical Settings

Actors, Inc.

Actors, Inc. (ACT), is located in Long Island City in a nonresidential, industrial and wholesale district, close to the railroad tracks and a canal that once carried goods to stores and restaurants throughout the city. The building, a former chicken processing factory, is several blocks from the subways and difficult to find. On the first day of each program cycle,** staff greeted the new students at the subway and escorted them to the building as a friendly introduction to the program. The space for the program is ample but inadequately differentiated. Two classes often had to occupy unpartitioned space; since one of these was a typing class, the noise level sometimes made concentration difficult. Furniture was movable and could be arranged in many configurations, which supported the role-playing that was a central feature and one of the main strengths of the program.

New Directions for Youth

New Directions for Youth (NDY) had a small but commanding presence in a Latino neighborhood storefront. It controlled the facility and made good use of it through its arrangement of furniture, equipment, and exhibition space. Walls were covered with reminders to students about program rules and with examples of student work. Every staff person felt personally responsible for the maintenance, arrangement, and decoration of the space. In order to

* In order to protect the confidentiality of the programs, AED has used pseudonyms.

** "Cycle" refers to a complete round of the program from recruitment to instruction to job placement for each group of students, usually a period of five to six months.

maintain some privacy for staff, allowing them space and time to relax when they desired, and to discuss business, the director requested that students leave the building at lunch. The program was well known and respected in the community; it recruited students primarily through word of mouth, and always had a waiting list.

Opportunities for Youthful Offenders

Opportunities for Youthful Offenders (OFYO) has ample and partially renovated space in a downtown criminal court building, which reflects the status and needs of the ex-offenders it serves. However, the program is split between two floors — the third and the sixth — in a building with poor access between floors. This hindered the integration of program components. Administration and case management functions took place on the renovated third floor. Teaching was conducted on the sixth floor, which had a well-equipped large space for instruction in building maintenance, but poorly maintained, shabby classrooms for basic skills. These differences reflected staff and student values concerning the importance of these program components. According to the program staff, most case managers and students did not value the basic skills classes and placed the highest priority on job placement.

Smith Place Settlement

The Smith Place JTPA program is one of many programs housed in a modern, cinder block facility operated by Smith Place Settlement (SPS). The building is located in the heart of a housing project on Manhattan's Lower East Side. The JTPA program was crowded into a limited space with no chance of altering its configuration. Because it was one of many unrelated programs in the building, it never seemed to develop a distinct and commanding presence in the community. The program's difficulty in recruiting students — though staff posted fliers and put them under doors in the housing project — reflected this problem.

2. Staffing and Program Organization

The programs differed significantly in the size, qualifications, and background of staff, and in organization. Differences in staffing determined overall receptivity to the AED project. Program organization changed significantly in three programs during the project

and remained unchanged in one. The following is a description of the programs as they were at the beginning of the project.

ACT: ACT is part of a larger organization composed of actors and theater people whose primary mission was the production of plays for prisoners and other disenfranchised groups. Its youth employment program grew out of ACT's work with summer community theater projects in which disadvantaged youth created plays based on their own experiences. The use of communication arts and the learning skills involved, which led to increased self-understanding, demonstrated how theater could relate to the needs of economically disadvantaged communities. In the early 1980s, therefore, ACT expanded its programming to include a youth employment program. The youth program continued to be staffed in part by the founding members of the organization and to emphasize communication arts as central to job preparation. The core of the program, other than the vocational training, was a communication class in which students learned oral communication skills through carefully structured and sequenced theater games, role-playing, and other activities. The teacher of this class was an actor who was a licensed teacher as well; he also served as a counselor and grant proposal writer. Other full-time staff were a director; a job developer, who was also co-director of the larger organization; two Board of Education teachers; and a paraprofessional. Two vocational teachers and a counselor were part-time staff members. The staff were ethnically diverse. The full-time staff were licensed teachers or teachers/actors; the others were not professionally trained for their positions.

The program was loosely organized. Staff meetings were ad hoc and tended to deal with organizational issues such as scheduling or case histories of individual students who presented special difficulties in their participation in the program. Instructors organized their own classes and functioned independently of one another.

NDY: NDY belongs to a consortium of community-based organizations; its funding is channeled through this consortium, and some of its employer contacts are also made through it. However, in every other respect, it is an autonomous program, directed by a nun, a teacher formerly. She hired and fired the staff, tending to select community people, some of whom she had worked with previously, and several of whom were retirees; few had professional credentials for the work they did in the program. At baseline, the

program had only one nonwhite staff person, the counselor; no staff spoke Spanish, although the majority of students did. The staff consisted of the director, a computer and typing teacher, two job developers, a counselor, math and English teachers, and a GED teacher assigned by the Board of Education. In addition, two full-time administrative assistants were centrally involved in program implementation. The staff, at least, formed a close community, reinforced by common neighborhood experiences, religious affiliation, and general outlook on the social problems in the community. The program resembled a small parochial school in which everything was carefully structured and ordered; initiative and direction came from the director, although the staff met daily and were involved in ongoing decision-making about the content of the program.

OFYO: Like Smith Place, OFYO is bound to a larger organization and shared case managers and basic skills teachers with the larger agency. Often, the director also had other responsibilities in the larger organization. The staff were ethnically diverse and for the most part professionally trained for their positions. Because the program borrowed staff from other divisions, they did not meet as a program staff to develop a coherent approach to the youth employment program. This was illustrated by the differences between the case managers, who tended to deemphasize education, and the instructors in basic skills. At baseline, staff were dissatisfied with the program organization — that is, with the lack of clear direction in the program and the lack of organizational support.

SPS: The youth employment program is part of a large and well-respected settlement house. The program had far less autonomy than ACT or NDY. The SPS program was staffed by a full-time director, a full-time counselor, a vocational teacher, a Board of Education basic skills teacher, and a paraprofessional. It shared a life skills teacher and a job developer with other programs. The staff were ethnically diverse, and all had professional training for their positions. Compared with the other three programs, SPS was understaffed, and the staff complained of the strain of carrying the program without sufficient personnel. At baseline, the program components were carefully and clearly organized, although the staff did not meet regularly to discuss program content or direction and tended to function autonomously in their respective roles.

3. Students' Demographic Characteristics

A large majority of the participants in the four programs were African-American and Latino. ACT also had a substantial number of participants who were immigrants, primarily from the Caribbean Islands and Latin America. ACT, NDY, and SPS enrolled more females than males, while the population at OFYO was overwhelmingly male. The following profile fits the majority of students who enrolled in these programs. They were young people with low family incomes who:

- Dropped out of high school, but were serious about their participation in the program
- Demonstrated a lower level of basic skills than their years in school would indicate
- Wanted to obtain a GED or wanted to increase their chances for gainful employment
- Were intimidated by the job-seeking process
- Feared taking tests and being judged according to their scores

Some students in each program were parents (at baseline, the proportions were ACT, 25 percent; NDY, 44 percent; OFYO, 48 percent; SPS, 25 percent.) The students at OFYO had one other characteristic: they were former offenders who chose to enroll in the program in lieu of serving a jail sentence. They were streetwise and needed assistance from the program on how to initiate change in their lives.

During the project years, ACT and SPS accepted candidates for admission who were less skilled according to test scores than those accepted previously. In the past, the two programs had screened applicants for reading levels at or above eighth grade; thus, a high proportion of students were ready to take the GED or already had high school diplomas. As a result of new DOE priorities, the programs targeted less-prepared young people, the majority of whom had dropped out of high school, and many of whom had reading test scores at or below the sixth grade. At NDY, staff perceived an increased severity of social problems among the clients they recruited. They spoke of greater family disorganization, more drug abuse, and health issues that they felt rendered the students less communicative and more difficult to counsel and assist than in previous years.

Uneven sex ratios and cultural differences had subtle but important effects on some aspects of program organization and function. For instance, at ACT and SPS, a physical separation between males and females occurred. At ACT, groups isolated themselves by subject areas; since most males chose the financial clerk specialization, they became separated from the females, most of whom elected to learn typing. Staff reported that many females at this site were shy in social situations and needed coaxing and support in preemployment classes. At SPS, where 80 percent of the students were female, the males isolated themselves.

At NDY, the ratio was more even, at 60 percent female and 40 percent male, and all students took all of the vocational subjects; thus, there was less isolation. OFYO had the most uneven ratio: 96 percent of the students were males. This program made efforts to form a support group for the few female participants.

All of the programs had some procedure for assisting parents with caring for their children, as well as helping them with the many personal and family problems that affected attendance and participation. At ACT and SPS, where many of the students were mothers, counselors attempted to secure slots for their children at publicly supported child care facilities. This effort was not always successful, however, because of the long waiting time for a place. At SPS, students left their classes periodically to participate in small group discussions about family planning. NDY used individualized counseling, which in many cases resulted in referrals to other agencies. OFYO used a case management model in which the case manager counseled students and made the appropriate referrals.

Other demographic and cultural issues the staff members had to consider and address were these:

- Preparing students who were immigrants with accented English speech to seek jobs
- Dealing with students speaking languages other than English in classroom settings
- Counteracting racial, ethnic, and gender discrimination by prospective employers
- Hiring staff who were similar to the students in race, ethnicity, and gender
- Acknowledging and celebrating the multicultural nature of the program participants by using appropriate activities and materials

OVERVIEW OF THE FOUR PROGRAMS

Program Characteristics	Actors, Inc. (ACT)	New Directions for Youth (NDY)	Opportunities for Youthful Offenders (OFYO)	Smith Place Settlement (SPS)
Type of Program	Theater group	Community-based organization	Court-related program for ex-offenders	Settlement house
Training Offered	Financial clerks and clerk-typists	Clerical skills	Building maintenance and construction trades	Clerical skills
Physical Setting	In a nonresidential, industrial district, several blocks from subway. Space ample but undifferentiated, with two classes sharing unpartitioned space. Noisy, but with the advantage of having furniture movable into various configurations.	A neighborhood storefront. Good use of space with well-arranged equipment, furniture, and displays of students' work.	Ample, partly renovated space in a downtown judicial building; program split between third and sixth floors, with poor access between floors. Third floor used for administration and case management; sixth floor, for teaching. Large, well-equipped space for vocational education; poorly maintained, shabby classrooms for basic skills.	Modern, busy, cinder block building located in a housing project on the Lower East Side. Program operates in crowded, limited space shared with other, unrelated programs.

OVERVIEW OF THE FOUR PROGRAMS

Program Characteristics	Actors, Inc. (ACT)	New Directions for Youth (NDY)	Opportunities for Youthful Offenders (OFYO)	Smith Place Settlement (SPS)
Staffing/Program Organization	Part of a larger theater group whose primary mission is to produce plays for disenfranchised populations. (Emphasis on communication arts as central to job preparation.) Six full-time staff: director, job developer, teacher/ counselor, two Board of Education basic skills teachers, one paraprofessional. Three part-time staff: two vocational teachers, one counselor.	Autonomous program directed by a nun who was a teacher. Nine full-time staff: director, computer/ typing teacher, two job developers, counselor, math teacher, English teacher, two administrative assistants. Board of Education GED teacher, part-time. Staff, drawn primarily from neighborhood, formed a close community.	Part of a larger organization with a shared staff — case managers and basic skills teachers. Staff ethnically diverse, most professionally trained. Did not meet as a program staff to develop a coherent approach to the youth employment program.	Five full-time staff: director, counselor, vocational teacher, Board of Education basic skills teacher, a paraprofessional. Two part-time staff: life skills teacher and job developer. Staff ethnically diverse, the majority with professional training. Program considered understaffed relative to the three other programs.
Students' Demographic Profile	Many immigrants from Caribbean Islands and Latin America. Female: 75 percent Teen parents: 25 percent	Majority African-American and Latino. Female: 60 percent Teen parents: 44 percent	Former offenders assigned to program by the court. Majority African-American and Latino. Male: 96 percent Teen parents: 48 percent	Majority African-American and Latino. Female: 80 percent Teen parents: 25 percent

The programs differed in the importance they attached to these issues and therefore in their practice of using multicultural materials in the classroom, addressing issues of racism and sexism, and hiring staff who reflected the students' backgrounds.

4. Programs' Social Climate

All four programs were notable for the good intentions of their staff members. Staff created a caring interpersonal environment and showed concern for students as people and as potential workers. The affective climate was created in various ways. NDY staff created a welcoming environment by exchanging pleasantries with the students throughout the day beginning with their arrival. The atmosphere simulated that of a friendly but orderly workplace: students had to punch in and out and dress appropriately. The exchange of greetings acknowledged that they were all working together for a common purpose: a sense of community was established, which was reinforced throughout the day through small interactions.

OFYO created a caring climate in and around the lounge area located near the case management offices. Although there were instances of rivalry and competition among students in the classrooms, the activities and interchanges observed in the lounge while the students relaxed and waited to see a case manager showed that camaraderie and concern also existed among them. Despite substantial physical and organizational changes at OFYO, the staff continued to express concern for creating a positive climate. In addition, the advocacy function of the staff was well developed, as they participated directly in court procedures for the students.

A sense of community was also present at ACT and SPS, although the space constraints at SPS made meeting areas for students and staff difficult to find. ACT stressed oral communication as a major mechanism through which learning and caring are fostered. Barriers of fear and embarrassment were eliminated as the instructor and students participated in role-playing and theater games. At SPS, too, staff demonstrated their concern for students in the classrooms and counseling sessions; as in the other programs, students reciprocated the warm feeling by making return visits when they completed the program.

B. PROJECT OUTCOMES

1. *The Program as an Educational Intervention*

> *When I started, I was not running a school, I was running a job placement program. I was not happy with my kids going out without more from this program.*
>
> *Director, ACT*

From the beginning, an objective of the AED project was to assist programs in defining and carrying out their mission in such a way that the entire program would address the learning and social needs of young people in preparing for the workplace and for other adult situations. In our observations, these and other youth employment programs tended to have a more narrow mission: to enhance the students' technical job-related skills, and to boost their self-esteem to facilitate the job-seeking process and improve their sense of self-worth.

An important goal for the majority of students was earning a GED. Some entered the programs for that purpose only and left when they had fulfilled it without completing the job preparation components. Program administrators, on the other hand, regarded the attainment of the GED as a goal the participants would achieve if they were sufficiently prepared, but not as essential to fulfilling the primary vocational training mission of the program.

An acknowledgment that was missing or of low priority was that the program experience as such constituted an intervention into the lives of the students as learners that went beyond narrow job-related skills. The desire to teach technical job-related skills for entry-level, low-paid jobs obscured both this broader mission and the need to develop the critical thinking and social skills required in higher-level jobs.

Central to engendering a new mission was a change in the way program staff perceived the students. As suggested in Chapter I, most programs view students through their deficits, a perspective that is dominant in our society and perpetuated through the use of standardized tests. Although program staff repeatedly objected to DOE's overuse of tests, they also used test scores to assess and, in some cases, channel clients into vocational areas. Many of AED's activities assisted the programs in developing a new appreciation of

students' abilities and conceptualizing the program to build on their experiences and strengths.

Three of the four programs significantly changed their mission from providing technical job-training skills to focusing on the value of students as learners and providing opportunities for building on students' strengths. The fourth, NDY, retained the more narrow mission of preparing students for entry-level jobs. For the staff, this program's excellent record in placement validated the usefulness of this approach. They continued to view students as deficient in many areas of learning and not as people with rich experience that could be tapped and developed. Both the program's laudable success in placement and the fairly rigid adherence to a philosophy of correcting moral and cognitive deficits made it difficult for staff to understand or accept the principles of learning we were advocating.

ACT, which eagerly embraced the AED project, made a number of changes over the course of two years, illustrating how a program revised its mission as it altered its perception of students as learners. Like most youth employment programs, ACT tested students on entry. Reading scores, although not the sole determinant, influenced how participants were placed into vocational areas. Furthermore, the vocational selection process, although seemingly initiated by the students themselves, actually was supported by the staff view that males had greater interest in computers and that participants with higher test scores did better in the financial clerk classes. Thus, sex stereotyping was also a factor, with females overwhelmingly opting for training in the less-skilled occupation of clerk-typist, where they received less instruction on the computer than students studying to be financial clerks. Over the two years of the project, this program completely changed how it evaluated students. It revised its orientation to include a variety of learning activities through which prospective participants could be assessed. On the basis of rich portraits staff developed of students during a two-day orientation, they placed students in groups that provided a gender and ethnic mix, as well as a mix of personalities, abilities, and interests.

The program staff also decided to eliminate the separation between financial clerks and clerk-typists. All students received basic training in both vocational areas during the first half of the program and then could specialize in one area during the second

half. To enhance staff understanding of each student and to promote bonding between staff and students and among students, the program developed a "family group" system. All staff persons were assigned a group of students with whom they met weekly to discuss program and individual issues. In these sessions, staff became aware of difficulties students were having in classes and at home. According to one staff member, family groups became the instrument through which the program coalesced as an educational intervention with a new view of students as learners who brought complex histories, strengths, and needs to the program: "The family groups turned out to be the best thing we did. [They] carried the program."

2. An Organizational Structure to Support the Integration of Program Components and New Approaches to Planning

"This is like riding a bicycle and changing the tire at the same time," said a staff member in one program, describing the process of program reorganization that the AED project encouraged. All programs experienced difficulty in keeping the programs running and meeting the DOE performance goals while implementing changes in mission, teaching, and program integration.

At the baseline period, four key organizational components could be identified for each of the programs: (1) administration — the director and, in some cases, clerical staff; (2) support — counselors, case managers, or job developers; (3) academic skills instruction; and (4) vocational and life skills instruction. Operations in the instructional and other components were somewhat isolated from each other. There was little collaborative planning or integration of curriculum and teaching strategies. In three programs, staff meetings were not regularly scheduled and focused mainly on individual students or organizational issues. Only NDY had regular staff meetings in which programmatic issues and case histories of students were discussed.

A major goal of the AED project was to facilitate integration of the instructional and other program components and an interdependence among staff in creating an educational setting that would address the learning needs of the students. To some extent, all the programs achieved this objective. One of AED's strategies was to start from where the programs were, rather than from a fixed model. For example, site coordinators made suggestions for lesson plans that the programs could use immediately. The site coordina-

tors would then work on redesigning the instructional components, enabling staff to accept more profound changes at a later date. **The most critical organizational change that was required in all of the programs to make possible the integration of instructional and support components was setting aside time for staff to meet regularly to plan program change and reflect on the changes.**

One of the program directors best described this process:

> I think the way our program changed the most for the best was that for the first time, we began to sit down and make plans together. The project taught us to do this. It taught us that we need to develop a working plan and in it to specify our goals — when we are going to do something, who is responsible, what the problems are, and how to solve them. So, basically it taught us to devise a plan. This will definitely go on after the project.

Once the programs had learned the mechanics of collaborative planning, each developed a plan that incorporated the AED approaches and built on the program strengths. Site coordinators assisted staff in setting goals. An important aspect of the planning process was that it brought staff together in new ways. They had to think about their specific contributions to the program and brainstorm how they could work together to redesign the program as a whole. Regardless of the quality of the plan, the process helped staff assemble their ideas — it was a unifying experience, although agreement or consensus was not always easy to achieve.

All the plans included suggestions for AED's role. This feedback gave us further insight into how the programs envisioned the project and, in turn, helped the site coordinators to develop the agenda and pace for the project at each site. One director described the entire planning process this way:

> The initial planning period was about two weeks. Now we meet weekly. If it means letting kids go then we do. Staff know what others are doing; things don't happen independently. It's difficult to take an honest look at your program. When you break it down, you see the gaps. AED does provide technical assistance in this process. It's real. They sit with you and let you know how things could be done differently.

Documentation of the Planning Process

Throughout the project, programs were advised that documentation of their work was a critical element in bringing about program change and the integration of components. This could be done simply by note-taking during planning meetings and by collecting program photographs, videos, and computer disks. The documentation had several purposes:

- It established a permanent record of program planning.
- It encouraged self-evaluation.
- It helped in writing reports.
- It served as a reference in planning future cycles.
- It was used in developing public relations materials.
- It helped the orientation of new staff members.

In each program, one person took the lead in the documentation tasks. Usually, at the beginning of a staff meeting, the director read the decisions and plans recorded at the previous sessions, and new staff read these notes to orient themselves to program procedures and concerns. The comments of staff members attested to the value of this process:

"Documentation helps the planning team reflect upon the curriculum development process."

"It brings about a lot of fruitful discussion."

"The notes create a kind of historical record."

Curriculum Planning

The final stage of planning occurred before each program's last cycle of instruction. By then, programs were implementing many aspects of their plans, but had not yet developed detailed curricula. Curriculum planning was conducted as follows:

- At each site, the coordinator and key program staff met daily for seven to ten days to plan program orientations and curricula. The site coordinators were responsible for recording the daily accomplishments and the next day's agenda.
- At the end of the planning period, ACT, OFYO, and SPS had detailed plans for program orientations and curricula. These three programs developed themes for curricula — for instance, "Our Lives Today: Many Lives, Working Lives and Changing Lives." The themes provided a vehicle for integrating curriculum in vocational, academic, and life skills classes into units

ACTORS Inc.: PLANNING CHART

Item	Goal	Steps already taken	Future objectives	Steps to take (by whom)	Role of AED
Environment	Improve physical environment so that more effective teaching and learning can be achieved.	Redesign Jerry/Helene's room with its dual purpose in mind. Review spatial arrangement in Leslie/Shelly/Ray's room to reduce noise interference and to provide optimal group interaction.	Staff will discuss room usage in terms of subject needs and schedule needs. Staff will research resources available (furniture, etc.) to expand options.	Staff will implement changes.	
Mission	Develop a clear understanding of the program's philosophy and identity.	Initial discussions.		Develop a mission statement. Incorporate into orientation.	AED might be valuable as facilitator.
Attendance and retention	Improve attendance and retention.	Group bonus (not successful).	Develop "family groups" with one staff member in charge of 6 to 8 students.	Observe "family groups" in an alternative school. Implement "family groups."	Share other program experiences.

ACTORS Inc.: PLANNING CHART

Item	Goal	Steps already taken	Future objectives	Steps to take (by whom)	Role of AED
Career development	Prepare students for vicissitudes of work-life: interpersonal relationships, social skills, planning for change.		Conduct workplace investigations. Series of staff meetings to achieve consensus on results/ prepare curriculum materials.	Communicate expectations to students; provide them with information on skills needed to deal with vicissitudes; develop instructional units.	Assist in planning investigations, analyzing results, and developing curriculum.
Assessment	Develop better knowledge of participants' needs and progress in program.	Sporadic staff meetings and sharing of observations. Informal sharing of problems.	Comprehensive assessment of each participant by instructors at orientation and throughout the cycle.	Develop assessment tools for orientation. Regular staff meetings to discuss participants' needs and development.	Offer guidelines and information about assessment. AED share experience with video assessment or other types of documentation.

ACTORS Inc.: PLANNING CHART

Item	Goal	Steps already taken	Future objectives	Steps to take (by whom)	Role of AED
Curriculum integration	Provide whole staff with working knowledge of resources and approaches used in all aspects of program. Develop an educational and training plan that will integrate general education, vocational education, and preemployment competencies.	Informal discussions on site. Attended workshops organized by AED. Initial discussion.	Greater knowledge of computer potential. Knowledge of general education materials available. Provide general education which will improve/enhance participants' academic skills in order to better prepare them for their personal, professional and social/ communal lives. Provide basic vocational skills training that will utilize general education and pre-employment training skills. Provide communication and preemployment skills training that will use general education and vocational strategies.	Each staff member will observe current approaches and review materials. Entire staff will show how materials and approaches are currently used. Each staff member will prepare a plan for his/her program component. These plans will be shared and discussed with entire staff. Plans will be enriched/revised in the light of staff discussion. Specific plans will be made to interweave activities and share materials.	AED could offer guidance in expanding use of computers in program. Facilitate this phase of integration. Help identify and develop resources.

related to the current lives of students and the changes relative to their lives as workers.

- NDY made plans for changing its pattern of instruction by introducing a structured approach to cooperative learning, in which students would work together in small groups within the classroom. Instructors in the other programs reviewed their curricula with an eye to also engaging in cooperative learning, and reflected on its effectiveness with the site coordinators.

As in the formulation of the more general plan, curriculum and orientation planning brought the staff together in new ways. Some tensions emerged because of uneven commitment to the project, with some staff carrying most of the burden of curriculum development. Nevertheless, for staff members who did participate actively, the rewards were very real: an engagement in the intellectual task of shaping curriculum and of probing ways to address the program mission in the orientation, and sharing the excitement of collaborative learning.

3. A Contextual Approach to Learning by Investigating Workplaces

Central to the development of curricula was an improved understanding of what the workplaces for which students were being prepared were really like — their physical environment and social organization, as well as the literacy, problem-solving, and social skills required in particular jobs.

At the start of the project, program staff lacked basic information about how young people fared in the job market. For example, though NDY had a good record placing its graduates in jobs, it did not address the racism or sexism that students might encounter in hiring or on the job itself. The programs also needed better understanding of the trends in society at large and in the labor force. They needed to see how specific job skills were not always as important as thinking and problem-solving skills, and the ability to function in the interpersonal environment of the office or shop floor.

In our workshops and in contacts with site coordinators, program staff were exposed to current research about the impact of change on both the workplace and the labor market. We also taught

them how to conduct literacy task analyses* of their own jobs to familiarize them with task analysis as it relates to specific skills.

In addition, staff from each program visited workplaces where students had been placed. They interviewed former students and their employers, and saw workers having to apply their skills in situations unlike the classroom. They collected materials — memos, notices, forms, and other documents — that they later used in curriculum planning.

Program staff learned that jobs were more complex than they had expected and were surprised at the high level of problem-solving that former students described, such as using a computer manual to figure out how to solve a problem with the computer. They discovered that social skills and communication skills headed the list of what made for students' successful integration into the workplace. And they learned that reading was fragmented and consisted chiefly of reading documents, while most writing consisted of entering data on forms.

Each program differed in how staff incorporated what they learned into the curriculum:

- *ACT:* Students themselves conducted the investigations, using a video camera and tape recorder to interview former students at worksites, and wrote scripts for mock interviews with one another about work.

- *NDY:* In an office simulation created in the computer classroom, students were assigned to small groups, each of which formed a corporation. If the corporation fell behind in meeting its goals, it had to make decisions about laying people off, switching jobs, and so forth.

- *OFYO:* Basic skills teachers developed scenarios from their workplace observations that they presented as problems for small groups of students — for example, the problem of estimating the cost of a repair job and negotiating with a client who made too low an offer.

- *SPS:* Teachers collected reading materials from the worksites and used them in the computer and basic skills classes — for

* The method for conducting a literacy task analysis — an analysis of the reading, writing, computation, and problem-solving skills required in specific job tasks — was adapted from Drew and Mikulecky, 1988.

example, they used worksite memos to have students write similar memos. Materials from their interviews were used to create workplace scenarios that students role-played, after which they wrote the dialogue and entered it in the computer.

The firsthand workplace observations were highly instructive for both teachers and students. Teachers, usually isolated from the actual workplace, may easily become so set on successfully teaching a particular skill that they lose sight of the complex conditions in which the skills must ultimately be applied. For students, the visits did much to demystify the workplace. This was important because the work experience of most students was of the odd job variety: in fast-food chains, or as retail stock clerks, waiters, babysitters, and the like. Though most of them were receiving occupational training that would prepare them for office skills, most had only vague notions of what office environments might actually be like. Equally important was that the experience conveyed a sense of reality and connection between their activities in the classroom and where those activities were leading.

4. Development of Learning Outcomes, Curricular Themes, and Student Projects

One of the ways that AED encouraged programs to think holistically about students was through the development of learning outcomes and curricular themes. In most youth employment programs, curriculum development receives scant attention. Most often, performance outcomes in vocational and preemployment skills drive the curriculum. Typically, rather than having an actual curriculum, students work from workbooks, doing drills and practice exercises in various subskills, from setting margins on a typewriter to learning parts of speech. This in effect becomes the curriculum.

We encouraged programs to think about broad learning objectives for students, rather than subskills. For example, rather than learning parts of speech, a learning outcome might be a student's ability to produce several pieces of writing for different audiences. Or, rather than mastering the keyboard, a learning outcome in the computer class might be preparation of a memo by students on a topic of class discussion. AED encouraged instructors to think about the learning objectives for their individual subjects, then the staff examined the total learning objectives for the program, refined or expanded them, and eliminated overlaps between program components. Broad learning outcomes in all of the programs included

such goals as effective communication, ability to work in groups, and ability to investigate a topic or question. These were outcomes that the entire staff agreed to address through all of the program components.

AED also encouraged programs to develop curricular themes — that is, content-driven curricula that would raise issues and questions that all of the program components could address from different perspectives. ACT, OFYO, and SPS developed such thematic curricula.

ACT

In this program, staff began the planning of learning objectives and curricula by having each instructor write what she or he hoped to accomplish in class. Because the program staff previously had taught in isolation from each other, few had any idea of what was going on in their colleagues' classes. The very act of sharing their educational vision helped them to understand each other better and laid the groundwork for collaboration on setting programwide goals.

Following the formulation of objectives for individual classes and programwide outcomes, the staff decided they wanted to connect the various classes through a theme that would allow them to integrate reading, writing, math, and computer applications. The theme chosen was one already being developed by OFYO staff: "New York City: Whose City Is It?" This theme seemed particularly suitable to the students in the program, many of whom were foreign-born and did not feel that New York was their city. For many, getting around, learning about neighborhoods, and becoming familiar with the social mores of different cultural groups was very difficult. Among the projects and activities that the staff planned were these:

- In the basic skills class, students developed interviews with family members about how and why they came to New York City.
- Students worked in teams to read the subway map and plot their route to a hypothetical job interview. They then wrote letters to the Transit Authority requesting subway maps. The letters were their first typing assignment.
- In the business skills class, students were asked to list the various types of businesses in their neighborhoods by category and size. They also were asked to obtain information about their local bank by collecting written information and by interviewing a manager. They reported on the businesses in their community to the entire class.

- In communications class, students read articles on the city. Each student had an opportunity to select one article and report on it on to the entire class.

Some of the instructors found the integration of a curricular theme difficult. The computer teacher held out for a more traditional approach to teaching the computer; he was reluctant to have students begin writing on the computer without going through his customary sequence of steps. Gradually, however, his resistance diminished as he saw students' enthusiasm for use of the computer when they worked on their own writing.

In this program, the curriculum theme did not last the entire cycle. Instructors found that integrating material on New York City was not always possible. However, the staff continued to meet weekly to discuss the following week's activities, the outcomes they expected, how each class would address them, and how the outcomes related to the programwide goals defined at the beginning of the cycle.

SPS

The theme the SPS staff selected centered on their perception of the students' major concern — preparing for employment. Staff thought of this theme as having three aspects: "Many Lives" would give students a chance to reflect on their histories — their families, their communities, their individual life stories — and on the rich experiences they brought to the program. "Working Lives" would introduce students to a range of careers beyond the jobs for which they were preparing, and to workplaces where they might find jobs. "Changing Lives" would focus on the changes that students would have to make in their lives to become workers.

Each of these units was to be addressed in every class and by every program component, and each had clearly defined learning outcomes. From the beginning, the computer teacher and basic skills teacher worked together, so that the teaching of computer skills was consistently tied to the development of writing that would have meaning for students.

For example, in the first unit, "Many Lives," students explored their family and community histories and wrote "Who Am I" statements, which led to the final written product for the unit — an autobiography. Students began their "Who Am I" statements during the program orientation, which itself became an intrinsic part of the curriculum. The basic skills teachers then introduced autobiogra-

phy by having students read published autobiographies of famous African-Americans and Latinos, or excerpts from them. These included *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (the favorite of the students), Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, and Jessie de la Cruz's *Autobiography*. To assure that students who found the reading difficult could fully participate, teachers read portions of these aloud in class.

By the end of the first thematic unit, students had improved their writing and computer skills, and had an appreciation of the complexity of their own experience. They became familiar with the genre of autobiography, and acquired knowledge of African-American and Latino people whose lives have had great social impact.

As staff began to meet regularly to plan curricula, they found that students were becoming more involved in the program. Indeed, one staff person observed, "When we give more, the students give back more." They came to realize that there was a direct correlation between the effort they invested in curriculum development and the learning productivity of students. Sustained curriculum planning often was not possible, given all of the constraints under which small programs like SPS operate. The absence of one staff member, for example, made it almost impossible for the rest to meet, since others had to cover her or his class, thus disrupting scheduled meetings. Planning hours often had to come out of lunch time or after program hours. Nevertheless, staff agreed not only that curriculum planning made their work more interesting, but that the benefits to students were immediately obvious.

5. Integration of Writing, Reading, Math, and Technology into All Areas of Learning

When the project began, writing, reading, and math were taught as isolated, fragmented subskills in all the programs, and appropriate reading materials were in short supply. Writing was taught primarily through the use of grammar, punctuation, and spelling worksheets. Computers were used only for vocational training, not as powerful tools that can enhance learning itself. None of these approaches took into account the research demonstrating that learning is more effective when skills are merged into a holistic meaningful context.*

* Though the integration of math in all areas of learning was a project goal, it was the subject least effectively addressed in the project; hence it is not discussed here.

SPS PLANNING CHART: INTEGRATION OF PROGRAM COMPONENTS THROUGH A CURRICULUM THEME

Theme	Goals	Skills	Activities/ Projects	Reading/ Writing/ Word Processing	Typing	Math	Life Skills	Counseling	Clerical
Many Lives	Writing and speaking standard English	Communication	"Introducing Me" and "Who Am I" statement; autobiography	Motivation to read/ write (input and simple editing)	Keyboard accuracy	Self-reliance	Who am I and what do I want to be (presentation)	Identify barriers to employment	Proofreading; attention to detail; note-taking
Working Lives	Problem-solving; scheduling; report writing	Investigative skills; cooperation in groups	Worksite investigation	Revision and editing (document processing)	Business document formatting	Problem-solving; shapes and graphs	Examine careers; resume writing	Group cooperation	Filing; reception; office protocol
Changing Lives	Interview skills	Decision-making; planning	Internships one full week	Writing reports (file management)	Speed	Applications of concepts	Interviewing	How to present myself; office culture	Telephone; mail

Writing

Writing as a basic skill was a topic of many workshops because of the evidence that writing often stimulates reluctant readers (and writers) to become interested in doing both. An AED emphasis was on "writing process," a concept that covers a variety of approaches to writing instruction. It teaches writing in its multiple forms, as communication that varies according to its function. For example, appropriate writing for an essay is different from that for a business memo. The concept conveys the notion of writing as process by having students write on topics of interest and work with the piece over a period of time, revising and perfecting it, and in essence reseeing it. By contrast, traditional assignments require short, one-shot pieces of student writing that are corrected, returned by the teacher, and discarded. The process approach also deemphasizes teaching the rules of grammar, syntax, or punctuation, so as not to inhibit the flow of thought and language that makes for good writing; rather, it encourages students to deal with these points in the final editing stages.

Here, the writing workshop that had been required of the teachers themselves came into play. Teachers observed that they would have been unable to introduce writing as effectively if their own comfort with it had not increased as a result of their workshop experience. This was an area where the programs made great forward strides. As one teacher put it:

> In the early days of the project, I thought kids hated to write and had to be coaxed into it. Now I find that's not true. With minimal suggestion, they seem to embrace it. I use a free writing exercise. I say, "You have to write for five minutes every day about anything." They all write for the program's magazine, too. We're much less precious about ourselves and don't treat it like a big deal.

Reading

OFYO and SPS planned a period of time for sustained student reading each day. This moved OFYO to expand its library. At SPS, books chosen for this activity were multicultural biographies and autobiographies that affirmed the various cultural backgrounds of the students. AED staff suggested bookstores and agencies where appropriate books were available. In addition, we conducted workshops on the differences between "reading to learn" and "reading to

do," the latter being the type of reading that most frequently occurs in workplaces. Emphasis was placed on the variety of documents — reports, graphs, memos, applications, instructions — in workplace reading. This led the programs to take a new look at the types of reading materials they customarily provided. With AED's encouragement, they introduced documents from the workplace and the daily lives of the students, and familiarized students with strategies for different types of reading.

Technology

While all the programs had computers, most of the students' time on computers was spent in mastering the mechanics of the machine and learning marketable skills such as word processing and data entry. Eventually the word processing was used as a tool to develop students' writing skills, but in general, program staff had little understanding that for many users, computers have a compelling fascination, a holding power that makes it difficult to put them aside, and an ability to engender intense concentration. These qualities, combined with individualization, self-pacing, and privacy (so students feel no embarrassment even when making repeated mistakes) makes computers uniquely valuable as learning tools in subject areas across the board.

In the course of the project, we held several workshops on the uses of technology as a learning tool, encouraging both the broad use of computers and the use of other technologies, such as video cameras and tape recorders.

In the case of the computers, a stumbling block was the fact that some of the staff were not themselves computer-literate. As a result, the burden of integrating use of the computers with other curricular components fell on the computer instructors, who were not always open to shifting their concept of the computer as a machine that one should master to the program's larger view of it as an instrument for enhancing learning.

Nonetheless, the programs attempted to incorporate technology more fully into their various learning activities. At ACT, as noted, students used video cameras and tape recorders for worksite investigations and interviews with former students. At OFYO, students used computers in their building maintenance program for spreadsheets and blueprints. In three of the programs, students produced their own newsletters or literary magazines consisting of student writings and artwork.

Integrating Reading, Writing, and Technology

> There was an assignment about learning about ourselves, our families and hobbies. I realized how many hobbies I have. I had no idea I had an interest in building things until I started writing about it. I never wrote memos before. I write more now than before. We keep journals, I didn't do this before. I always wanted to but didn't.
>
> Student, SPS

> In Syd's class we read a lot. He hands out things for us to read and asks us to select books. We also read a lot in computer class. I especially liked a book of short stories written by African-Americans. I like to read things written by Black authors. They help you see real life. They tell you about things that have really happened.
>
> Student, SPS

> We use the computer to write resumes, memos, letters and our journals. We write it first and then type it on the computer. I think I am a better writer. I like to write.
>
> Student, SPS

At *SPS*, instructors combed newspapers and journals for reading materials of high interest that also would require varying reading strategies — news items, editorials, graphs, cartoons, instructions for filling out documents. One instructor read aloud daily; students enjoyed hearing biographies, myths, folklore, and legend, and it gave them a chance to hear standard spoken English. Students maintained reading logs, in which they entered brief descriptions and notes about the reading with questions and reflections: for example, "I don't agree with this because. . ." or "This is boring." In this way, the reading logs became instruments for a "dialogue" between the reader and the text, keeping the reader actively engaged in the reading process.

At *NDY* and *SPS*, where students were resistant to the writing-editing process, they were encouraged to work in pairs, to give one another feedback on revising their work. One effective strategy was to give a student's paper, with the student's name removed, to a group that would edit the paper for grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

The cooperation of the computer teacher at SPS was critical in facilitating the writing process. He had first to understand and appreciate it, and then to relate it to the technical word processing lessons. For this, he devised his own exercises, which both taught technical skills and provided opportunities for writing. The writing generated in his computer class was returned to the basic skills class for revision and editing; in turn, materials generated in the basic skills classes were used as the basis for applying computer skills.

NDY's computer teacher created "real" workplace situations in the classroom, which was run as a simulated office. Using the computer, students performed tasks assigned to them by an imaginary boss. During the course of a lesson, the teacher interrupted their work with simulations of routine real-life occurrences — phone calls, power failures, and so on — and provided problem scenarios for her students to solve. In this simulated office environment, students had the chance to apply what they had learned in the classroom.

OFYO developed an interesting and innovative use of technology in which students created their own materials. Working individually and in groups, they participated in activities that required writing, thinking, and planning skills — all related to the program's vocational training mission in building maintenance and the construction trades. The program used Apple II GS computers to teach simple floor plan design, job estimates, and inventory control. Using simple geoboard and more advanced drafting programs, the students learned concepts of measurement, scale drawings, and fractions.

Use of the computer enhanced the basic skills curriculum in other ways. As part of the "New York City: Whose City Is It?" curriculum theme, the basic skills instructors focused on the history of the city's immigrant groups. Using both classroom and field trip activities, they developed a curriculum that combined math, reading, and writing with the use of the computers. Students studied population and immigration trends with spreadsheet and graphing programs, they used word processing for writing, and they created personal time lines with a special program that charted their family history and ancestry. The entire enterprise was a first-rate example of how reading, writing, math, and computer skills could be learned in functional contexts.

As a result of the reading, writing, and computer teachers' working as a team, the outcomes in all four programs were impressive. Students looked forward to the activities, they produced voluminous journals of daily entries, and they felt good about their increased proficiency in all three skills.

> [Before] All I read was the classified. Now I'm reading things going on in the world that are affecting me and will continue to affect me. It's important for me to read and find out about these things.
>
> Student, ACT

> We read a lot of stories. The instructor is not a boring person. She brings in stuff that jogs your mind, and she makes us do a lot of writing that jogs your mind. We read the newspaper almost every day. We read the editorials and discuss them afterwards.
>
> Student, ACT

> I never used to read books before I came here. Now I read — any book.
>
> Student, ACT

> I've done a lot of pieces I'm proud about. I did a piece on Friday, "Should Sex Education Be Taught in Public High School." I put a lot of effort into my work. It's something I feel strongly about because I do feel sex education should be taught in high school.
>
> Student, ACT

> I wouldn't have written an essay. Now I do. I wouldn't have done short stories. Now I do. The writings have helped improve my writing.
>
> Student, ACT

6. ***New Approaches to Assessing Students***

> Most existing tests — largely pencil and paper, multiple choice tests of short term memory — do little to advance the cause of learning. Effective assessment techniques should support instruction and students' knowledge of their progress.
>
> U.S. Department of Labor,
> *What Work Requires of Schools*

As much as I thought of myself as a "progressive" educator, I discovered how much a lot of what I did is test kids to show what they can't do. I didn't realize I was doing this but I was. This was a big and important change for me — starting from what they can do instead of from what they can't do.

Teacher, ACT

The project confirmed my belief that students are not empty vessels into which teachers pour information. They come with a lot — ideas, experiences, values that we need to tap. Student-led projects are one way to do this. I experimented with many teaching approaches that gave much more independence to students — small groups, pairs, and student-led classes.

Teacher, SPS

Since all the programs were working from a deficit model when the project began, instruction was geared to low expectations of student achievement (often a self-fulfilling prophecy), and to remedial solutions. The logic of this construct was based on intake procedures that assessed students chiefly on how they performed on the standard multiple-choice, pencil-and-paper tests. As these tests provide scant opportunity for the student to demonstrate strengths and functional skills, what emerges is skewed to *lack of ability* rather than ability. In short, if we look for what is negative, that is what we find.

It is also true that if we look for strengths, we find them. And assessment procedures that reveal students' strengths provide a foundation on which to build curricula and instruction that are better tailored to students' abilities and needs than are generic curricula. From the outset, therefore, the AED project insisted that the programs attend to the crucial matter of assessment. We asked program staff, for example, to list their initial impressions of students (for impressions are assessments, albeit informal ones), and to reflect on the meaning of those impressions. Their lists included the following:

- How students went about filling out intake forms
- How they participated in conversation
- How they kept appointments
- How they listened and followed oral directions

- How they learned about the program

We found that because these forms of assessment were informal, they were less trusted by the staff members than were the officially sanctioned forms of assessment, such as the multiple-choice TABE (Test of Adult Basic Education). We therefore assisted the programs in evaluating these types of informal assessments and encouraged them to develop new task-oriented assessment instruments. Such instruments call for more complex activities, which would demonstrate a wider range of skills than the standardized tests normally addressed, and are more indicative of how a person will perform on a job. One teacher described it this way:

> For orientation, we used to get everyone in one big room, we passed out schedules, laid out regulations, and gave the test. Now, we have a three-day orientation to introduce students to the staff and to what the program will be like. Among the things we do is provide an activity that will lead to the production of a piece of work. We might describe a problem they need to discuss which then requires a note to be written. We might do that in each of the three subject workshops — basic skills, communication skills, job development — and at the end, the whole staff reviews this kind of material in their folders and we collectively rate them. This tells us a lot about who the kids really are. It's a good diagnostic tool. From this, instead of making up the class groups randomly, which we used to do, we group students in terms of their interests, abilities, et cetera.

Ultimately, AED helped to formalize these new assessment instruments so that they would be useful in developing approaches to teaching. It should be noted that midway through the project, DOE changed the basic skills competency tests, making them compatible with the forms of assessment that we had encouraged the programs to develop. Several changes in assessment were implemented during the project.

- *ACT* and *SPS* used a variety of writing, problem-solving, and communication skills activities during their orientations to assess students' strengths and needs. Each program devised criteria to assess participants. Their staff periodically returned to the original assessments to determine how each participant was progressing.

- *SPS* used portfolios of students' work in all areas — writing, reading, and typing/computer skills — to assess their progress. Together with staff, students evaluated their own work.
- *ACT* used role-playing at midcycle to assess students' progress in oral communication and knowledge of the workplace. All students also discussed with the entire group how far they had come in the program and the areas they wanted to address in the second half of the cycle.

These assessments and other project activities had a profound impact on instruction in all four programs in the following ways:

Staff expectations of students rose. Because of the richer, fuller picture of students' strengths and needs, instructors expected more of them. Staff said that relying on test scores in the past had led them to underestimate students' abilities and potential.

Teachers emphasized students' independence. Rather than spoon-feeding information through worksheets that were graded, teachers began to request fulfillment of assignments that were "performances" of real-life tasks — for example, drafting and revising a memo; writing a letter to a newspaper; developing a floor plan for a building.

Teachers encouraged students to rely on one another for the completion of tasks. They systematically attempted to direct attention from themselves as the source of the "answers." Increasingly, they encouraged students to see each other as experts in some areas. In two programs, students were encouraged to teach a class, and teachers noticed that students spontaneously began to stay after class to assist one another in typing or computer skills.

Teachers, as much as possible, used students' own knowledge as the basis for their classes. For example, instead of having students memorize the rules for filing, the business teacher asked them to discuss the kinds of filing systems they used in their own lives, and to derive the rules of filing from these examples. Similarly, a business instructor used students' surveys of businesses in their own communities as the basis for a lesson on classifying different types of business.

Teachers increasingly used cooperative learning in their classrooms. This strategy was especially embraced by NDY, which incorporated it into all of its classes.

All of the programs introduced student projects and gave students full leadership and responsibility for executing these projects. This meant, for example, that students chose the content for publications and wrote the script for a video without direction from staff. These products pleased students because they reflected their own decisions and leadership.

Staff wrestled with the problems posed by these instructional approaches — for example, how to involve slower or less-articulate students in group work; how to work effectively with heterogeneous groups; how to address the demands of students who wanted to complete worksheets as proof of their learning; how to deal with resistance to revision and editing of writing.

These were major, unresolved problems, but there was a great difference between how they were dealt with at the beginning and the end of the project. Initially, the problems were largely unarticulated because student deficits were the focus of attention and instruction often was reduced to having students complete worksheets in preparation for taking a competency test. At the end, the focus was on student strengths, on measuring student progress, on making heterogeneous groups work, and on effective instructional strategies. Indeed, for all the programs, instruction and assessment became inextricably linked, and instructional issues became central.

C. SUMMARY OF PROJECT AND PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In the past, these four youth employment programs had succeeded by force of will and the dedication of the staff. AED believes that the infusion of new energy and vision brought by the project enhanced program effectiveness by presenting new ideas and information, by advocating for these programs, and by helping them become better models for others engaged in similar work. Indeed, this belief was confirmed by anecdotal evidence in the course of the project as program staff reported improvement in attendance and student engagement in learning — and most significantly, an increase in the number of students attaining GEDs. For example, at ACT, the number of students achieving GEDs quadrupled from four to sixteen between the first and second years of the project; at SPS, the number nearly doubled from five to nine. To measure the project's total impact at this stage is manifestly difficult because many of the changes are still evolving and will continue to do so beyond

the duration of the project. Nonetheless, over the past two years, AED has been able to document important changes in the outlook and operation of the four programs. These changes include the following:

Program staff gained a new, expanded view of what is possible in terms of student capabilities. One instructor commented, "The project has changed the way I teach. I am less into lecturing and more into drawing the students out. I get them involved in teaching. . . . I see students not as vessels but as people who have language, ideas, histories."

Program directors became more knowledgeable and skillful in assisting program change. At first, for example, a director's criterion might have been, "If I put this teacher in a room with thirty students, can she or he handle it?" In the end, the directors had been educated as to the qualities that characterize a good teacher. This had important impact on program quality.

Programs established regular meeting times and thus more collaborative planning.

Program staff learned to develop curricula that provided a base for instruction that addressed thinking and social skills needed in demanding jobs.

Program staff gained deeper understanding of the skills needed in the workplace and the capacity of the programs to address them.

Program staff learned to use engaging reading and writing activities, and to use technology across the curriculum.

Program staff developed assessment techniques that measure strengths and that can then be used to inform instruction.

Programs saw how they could learn from one another.

These successes would not have been possible without project flexibility. Without the pliancy and latitude to redirect the course as needed, we would have alienated program staff and at best produced cosmetic changes. When it became clear after a few months into the project that some of the prerequisites to change were not present in the programs, AED staff digressed from their scheduled tasks to work on building organizational support and a readiness for change. Delicate organizational issues had to be addressed in all

of the programs before the project could take on the discrete programmatic objectives. It was crucial, for example, to help build a productive working relationship between the programs and their sponsoring agencies, which, because their primary interests lay elsewhere, often were not supportive of program needs.

AED site coordinators were able to act as liaisons between the parties, and as advocates for better understanding and more beneficial guidelines. This was accomplished through the planning meetings, where they brought a sympathetic outside ear to the examination of difficult issues. The meetings became sessions for reporting, reflecting, and generating ideas — and for analyzing, critiquing, and revising AED's work. The "experts" learned from the individuals they were there to help, as well as the other way around. And, in accordance with what they learned, the site coordinators continuously refined their intervention and activities to fit existing program conditions. Whatever the shifts, however, the underlying philosophy and objectives remained constant. The process was marked by intermittent feelings of hope, disappointment, and elation, but it enabled all the players to work through the discomforts that are intrinsic to change. In the end, the AED project achieved fundamental changes in three of the programs. As these changes were introduced, program staff took ownership of the process. In a culminating activity, they conducted workshops and presentations to share their experiences with other youth employment programs in the city.

Sustaining what was achieved will take an unremitting commitment by program staff and favorable conditions in the sponsoring agencies. The groundwork has been laid. AED is confident that the programs will proceed and grow in light of their deeper understanding of the strengths and resources that JTPA youth can bring to overcoming the disadvantaged circumstances of their lives. The ACT program director offered the following observation: "When we started the project, I thought we had a good program and wondered what we would do — but we ended up overhauling the whole thing."

CHAPTER III

Policy Implications and Recommendations

Employers are looking for people who can think on their feet. Having vocational skills doesn't necessarily mean you can think on your feet.

Program Director,
Actors, Inc.

The intellectual equipment needed for the job of the future is an ability to define problems, quickly assimilate relevant data, conceptualize and reorganize the information, make deductive and inductive leaps with it, ask hard questions about it, discuss findings with colleagues, work collaboratively to find solutions, and then convince others.

David Fleming, "The Next Literacy: Educating Young Americans for Work and Citizenship"

A. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The Youth Employment Program Assistance Project was an experiment in reconceptualizing the educational mission of JTPA-funded youth employment programs. It grew out of a new policy emphasis concerned with the failure of JTPA programs to adequately prepare young people for the higher-order thinking and social skills that employers increasingly demand. It was a response, as well, to new understanding of the dismal economic outlook for young people who are not college-bound.

Lessons emerged from the project that AED believes will prove useful to policymakers and practitioners concerned with the educational preparation of out-of-school youth. In four selected but fairly typical JTPA youth employment programs, we succeeded in laying the groundwork for a coherent, rigorous, and contextual approach to education. The process yielded two important lessons:

To be effective, a program must have an educational vision. That vision must encompass the desired outcomes and the curricular and instructional methods for achieving them. The reports discussed in Chapter I on the skills needed by the American work force provide the building blocks of such a vision, in that they point

to the outcomes that must be the goal of any educationally effective youth employment program. The reports recommend that all individuals, whether college-bound or not, achieve a basic foundation in literacy, and the ability to apply literacy skills in both their work and their personal lives. Young men and women must know how to solve problems and make decisions, to understand systems, to extract and apply information, to work cooperatively with diverse groups of people, to communicate well, to use technology appropriately, and to learn how to learn.

The AED project demonstrated a process for accomplishing these ends. It guided staff in learning about, and implementing, innovative approaches known to be effective in developing these higher-order skills. It brought meaning to the classroom by linking curriculum and instruction to the contexts of work and daily life. It involved students in investigations of worksites where program graduates were placed, and applied the insights from these worksite experiences to the classroom. It wove literacy, reasoning, and vocational skills together into an integrated, holistic educational experience. In short, it started with a vision of youth employment programs as an educational intervention in which the whole program teaches, and all the activities that followed were informed by that vision.

To meet the future needs of the most poorly educated of our young people, programs must engage them in learning by providing extrinsic and intrinsic reasons to participate. In many cities, youth employment programs have difficulty recruiting and retaining young people. At least four reasons emerged from observations made in the course of this project:

- Students and programs have different goals: students may want a GED and leave when they achieve it, or they may see the program primarily as a vehicle to a job and be impatient with participating in the related program components.
- Young people do not see the payoff for increased education in their immediate environment. They may have family members or neighbors with high school diplomas who struggle in low-paying jobs, are unemployed, or are on welfare. The immediate payoff of employment is not clear; the tendency of many programs to place young people in low-paying jobs without a future substantiates these perceptions.

- Programs do not guarantee a job, and therefore young people feel that the investment of time in job training may not be worthwhile.
- Programs are not engaging. They often provide the same tedious and unchallenging curriculum that students had in school; or they may use the same instructional approaches that did not answer students' needs in the first place.

No program will be successful in recruiting or in engaging young people in learning if it does not attend to its clients' perceptions of the labor market and the intrinsic and extrinsic rewards that the program itself provides. Critical to the success of any program is its ability to provide decently paying jobs with benefits. Service Delivery Areas (SDAs) must ensure that programs achieve this promise by investigating the labor market, by preparing young people for existing jobs, and by developing strong linkages with employers who are willing to hire their students. This is the basis on which the success of educational engagement rests.

In addition, intrinsic and extrinsic rewards must be built in to programs. Programs often use extrinsic rewards, such as awards for attendance, that are ineffective in improving either attendance, motivation, or program completion. Most SDAs and programs have not paid adequate attention to other forms of intrinsic and extrinsic incentives, such as making learning itself challenging and fun; providing direct, frequent assessment and feedback; encouraging cooperative learning for group cohesion and trust; and encouraging youth leadership in the program. These and other educational approaches that have been demonstrated to be successful in motivating and engaging young people in learning were at the core of our project.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS

To improve educational attainment in JTPA programs and to align program goals more closely with the perceptions and needs of young people, AED makes the following recommendations:

1. Train for Workplace Investigations

SDAs should provide programs with the training to conduct workplace investigations in local companies where the programs have placed or hope to place their students. In this way, they can ensure that programs prepare young people for real jobs that pro-

vide decent wages, benefits, and working conditions. These investigations should examine the organization of the workplace; its physical and social environment; and the perceptions of both employers and employees as to the literacy, problem-solving, and social skills required for the jobs that students are being prepared for and to which they could aspire. Such information is vital to the curriculum content. Since a good curriculum must reflect the communities from which students come, as well as the needs of the local labor market, it cannot be top-down. The curriculum must be tailored by the program staff itself. Training to provide program staff with the know-how to do this should be part of the larger staff development plan described under the third recommendation.

2. Collaborate with Educators

To create engaging contextual education programs, SDAs and Private Industry Councils (PICs) must collaborate with professionals in the education community who have developed approaches and practices that effectively address the learning needs of the targeted clients. There has been a recent explosion of information and effective practices in literacy programs, alternative schools for at-risk youth, and some vocational schools. These include such innovative strategies as "writing process," portfolios for documenting student learning, cooperative learning, and the integration of academic and vocational skills, all of which are relevant to youth employment programs. In rethinking their programs, SDAs and PICs must find ways to collaborate with the programs and educators who develop and implement these approaches — essentially the approach used in the AED project.

3. Provide Staff Development

To enable programs to plan and implement new approaches to curriculum and instruction, SDAs must provide intensive staff development for program directors; program staff; and SDA staff in charge of program development, contract development, and monitoring.

Staff development must cover the following areas: (1) investigating workplaces to understand their literacy, cognitive, and social demands; (2) developing curricula that address the results of these investigations; (3) assessing learners' strengths and needs; (4) developing a "whole language" and "writing process" approach to

reading and writing instruction across the curriculum; (5) devising new approaches to teaching math; (6) using technology in the classroom as a tool for learning; (7) using culturally relevant materials and building instruction around the contexts of students' lives; (8) conducting ongoing assessment of learner development that documents progress in the outcomes the program is addressing; (9) teaching strategies for working with academically heterogeneous groups; and (10) educational planning and reflection. Institutionalizing staff development requires the involvement of program directors; this ensures that even if staff turnover occurs, educational consistency will remain.

The following strategies are useful for staff development:

- Organizing workshops conducted by specialists
- Conducting visits to programs or schools where good practices can be observed
- Using exemplary programs as training sites
- Pairing trained staff with untrained and new staff
- Holding regular meetings in which all program staff can exchange curricular and instructional approaches

4. Strengthen Organizational Capacity

To ensure that programs are able to undertake the tasks directed to the objectives described here, SDAs must strengthen programs' organizational capacity by providing their personnel with technical assistance and realistic salaries. Programs cannot improve without strong organizational capacity, including a director with a clear vision for the program and strong coordinating and supervisory skills; without appropriately trained staff equipped with professional credentials for the work they are doing; and without a board composed of employers and other community leaders who advise on placement and curriculum. Building organizational capacity is fundamental to educational progress and reconceptualization of the kind carried out in the AED project. To attract appropriately credentialed and qualified staff, programs must have budgets sufficient to offer salaries competitive with those in education.

5. Allocate Resources for Planning

To ensure that programs are designed as educational interventions, they must have resources to devote to planning, reflection, and continuing staff development. Staff must have regularly scheduled time for these purposes. This is an essential condition for

sound, ongoing programming and curriculum development. SDAs therefore should require programs to budget for planning time and, through technical assistance and documentation of the results, should ensure that such time is appropriately used.

6. Develop New Forms of Student Assessment

Program staff must develop new forms of assessment that will accurately measure and describe the knowledge and experience of young people entering the programs, as well as their achievement in the course of their participation. Assessment instruments that provide a rich and comprehensive picture of youth at intake and throughout the program are essential. Methods that rely on standardized tests and other forms of mandatory testing reveal only student deficits in basic skills. Some school districts and schools have pioneered other forms of assessment that demonstrate competencies, and these can be adapted to youth employment programs.

Changed assessment will lead to changed perceptions of students — of their strengths and their academic and other needs. Assessment should be a collective procedure carried out by the entire staff so that all personnel are familiar with their students. In the AED project, as discussed in Chapter II, changes in assessment produced fundamental changes in staff perceptions. The rich profiles of students that program staff were able to obtain through the intake assessments shaped their expectations of students and helped them modify the program to suit students' needs.

7. Develop New Criteria for Program Performance

Program performance must be measured in ways that reflect the new emphasis on educational attainment. SDAs can assess programs by sampling random selections of portfolios of student work that reflect learning achieved in the literacy, reasoning, and social skills needed in the workplace, as well as the technical job skills.

Progress in learning, GED achievement, and placement in postsecondary education must be accorded equal weight with job placement. Positive outcomes should also include combinations of part-time work and participation in postsecondary education.

8. Allow Time for Change

Educational change is a complex undertaking that takes time. Evaluation of student outcomes too early in the process is unwise, as it is likely to undermine the program's willingness to risk exper-

imentation — and, in any event, will yield findings that are incomplete and hence inaccurate. It is critical, therefore, that SDAs allow sufficient time for change to take root before evaluating the program impact on student achievement and performance.

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