

## **A Word from our President**

Patty Wheeler Andrews

Welcome to the new semester, new year, and new professional insights about our organization's continuing exploration: "Who is ready for college? What preparation does a student need to be ready for college?" Both individually and collectively, we use multiple lenses to determine our students' readiness for independent learning in a college environment. In this Year of the Rooster, the most colorful of the zodiac animals, we can examine the spectrum with that familiar acronym ROYGBIV.

R is for research: classroom research, action research, literacy and numeracy research--all varieties that enhance our understanding of student learning and that improve our teaching and advising.

O is for organization, like this MNADE professional organization, that unifies our experience and expertise, so that we become active contributors to public knowledge about the academic needs of college students.

Y is for yet. One meaning is the "not ready yet" that we perceive in students who need further mathematics learning, or additional knowledge of textbook reading, or fuller appreciation of patterns of organization in writing. Given extra motivation, support, a more positive learning environment, those students may soon be successful in college.

Another meaning of "yet" is "although", as in "the student seems to be ready for college, yet..." We've all worked with such students in our developmental courses, tutoring centers, and supplemental instruction classes. Together, we have the knowledge to empower those students to succeed.

G is for goals, grit, and gumption. It takes all of these to be ready for the challenges of that college

students face and the detours that developmental programs encounter .

B is for Background Knowledge, one of the sources of enriched reading, thinking, and writing that students might bring to their learning. With increased background knowledge comes increased fluency in comprehension, consolidation, and connection.

I is for inspiration, that fundamental individual force of internal motivation. All the external forces for leading those horses to water are not nearly as effective as that internal thirst for knowledge and learning.

V is for vigilance, vitality, and vision. Having examined the recent reports of state task forces, changes in public education policy, and local campus initiatives, we see clearly that as developmental educators, we must remain vigilant, we must support each other with vitality, and we must maintain our vision of programs and opportunities for students to succeed in college.

***This year in MNADE, we have made a major commitment to publicizing our perspectives about college readiness by creating a brochure that compares several components of high school and college experiences. As a MNADE member you are invited to order copies for your college, area high schools, and community groups that may be interested in disseminating this information. Details for ordering are in this newsletter and will soon be on the MNADE website. We have also initiated a mini-grant program so that you or your program can pursue a research project or new practice on your campus. We have a newsletter filled with possibilities, so you can join with your colleagues from around the state and region. Together, as a combination of colorful and varied professionals, we can work to improve the college readiness of prospective and current***

***students on our campuses. We are Minnesota's developmental educators, united in purpose and connected by our organization to make a difference for students and colleges.***

## **Fall Conference Keynote Address**

By Karen Agee, Past President of College Reading & Learning Association

This is an excerpt of Karen's keynote address entitled "A Spectrum of National Perspectives on College Readiness." You may read the entire speech online at [www.mnade.org](http://www.mnade.org).

"We read and hear many perspectives on whether students are ready for college. These opinions come to us from educators and parents, students and alumni, administrators and test publishers and the media. We might characterize these perspectives on a continuum from anguished to ebullient. Let's hear first from those who are most concerned and most upset about what our students do not know.

## **Red**

"One perspective on college readiness has been around for quite some time but is still hot – red hot, in fact. If such opinions follow the current White House directives on how terrorized we should be, indicating the highest level of urgency with a red flag, then this perspective tells us our national security and success as a nation are at highest risk...

"This perspective created a new national educational agenda that was adopted with red-hot zeal by the Clinton Administration and formed the basis for that administration's Goals 2000 program. Goals 2000 was touted in President Clinton's State of the Union addresses in 1997 and 1998...

"Goals 2000 programs were adopted in some form by every state legislature, every state board of education, and every state department of education across the country. The current federal initiative, No Child Left Behind, is a new initiative arising in part from frustration with inertia in the schools and the states and the failure of earlier strictures and standards to accomplish the goals of higher test scores and better qualifications for college.

"The perspective that I am characterizing as red hot and signifying with the color red is also an angry perspective. *The Washington Post* published a diatribe against the nation's failing schools in September of 1990 called "Johnny's Miserable SAT's." Its author did not visit schools, interview students and faculty, sit in on classes, and do a thorough study of the schools. No, he looked at SAT scores and drew his own conclusions. And though things may have changed, in the 1990's apparently schools in Alabama were graded solely according to their students' scores on the SAT 9.

"We no doubt hear this "red" perspective expressed more often on our own campuses than off, and more often in conversations with faculty than in the admissions office. Students are not prepared for college, we hear, and they certainly do not know what we knew when we graduated from high school. Their ignorance can be maddening even to those of us who pride ourselves on our positive attitude and professional demeanor...

"That is the worst-case scenario, then. This first perspective on student readiness for postsecondary education and postsecondary life focuses on the failure of our schools to produce the kind of students we should be producing. This perspective is shared primarily by business and the media

and, ironically, by education leaders at the federal level, so it truly is a national perspective. The “reds” say that students know little, and what they do not know is critical. Fueled by at least 20 years of righteous anger and unrighteous fury at states, school districts, schools, teachers, and students themselves, this perspective does not just sit and stew. No, this perspective says we must take action, set standards, and hold schools to those standards. Without this action, our ability to compete in the global economy will be compromised, and we will lose our grip on world hegemony, national security, and even our national identity...

## **Orange**

“Do you find this first perspective a bit harsh? Yes, we are concerned about what our students learn in school; nevertheless we are not prepared to give our schools a failing grade and demand for our students a completely new system of preparation on the basis of low SATs. If we find anything at all to salvage in our schools and the students who come to us for further study, then we are uncomfortable taking the “red-hot, red-alert, and red with fury” stance.

“Stepping down a bit from high-alert, the Situation Orange perspective is worried about test scores and sometimes scandalized by blatant lack of preparation but not inclined to lash out at schools and teachers, nor to blame students and all who contributed to their problematic education as failures. After all, the argument from falling scores on standardized tests -- like the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills and the SAT -- has been pretty well debunked by now. Likewise the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) shows no sharp decline in 25 years. US students are not in fact “failing” in international test score comparisons like the International

Assessment of Educational Progress and the Third International Math and Science Study. If we adopt the “orange” perspective, we do not claim that schools are failing to educate students...

“ACT says the problem is two-fold. First, “high school graduation requirements are not always aligned with college admission requirements.” From the “orange” perspective, then, much of the problem is that high schools let kids graduate from high school unready for study at a four-year college or university.

“The second part of the problem, from ACT’s perspective, is that “students have misconceptions about what they need to know and be able to do to be successful in college.” Students may think that taking core courses at their high school prepares them for college, but ACT’s research shows that “even students who take college preparation courses may not be prepared for college-level work.” Their schools are “betraying the dream,” say the authors of a book by that title.

“The very fact that remedial programs are needed at the postsecondary level grieves some of us. As ACT says, “Let’s make sure all students are prepared for advanced education, training programs, and the workforce – without remediation.” State legislatures agree, arguing that they can reduce the state’s financial burden by refusing to fund remedial courses at the university level and providing them only at the community college and technical college level. Some would seek to eliminate remedial courses and remedial programs altogether, arguing that students should have learned the material in high school or junior high school.

“Now we’re back to bashing students and the schools. As if it were not enough that students do not know what they need to know to address the college curriculum at the college level, apparently they do not know how ignorant they are. E.D. Hirsch, Jr., says our schools are sending us not only students with strange ideas about reality but students who are indeed culturally illiterate. In *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know*, Hirsch ascribes teenage ignorance to reading instruction that has stressed skills over content. Students may or may not have learned “skills” in high school, but they certainly have not learned the content that is necessary to keep our culture from fragmenting into ethnicities, sub-cultures, and disengaged groups. Hirsch’s sharpest criticism is reserved for student-based and skills-based teaching that cheats students of the learning they so desperately need.

“The “orange” perspective is a sober one. On the basis of test scores, high school course analysis, high school-to-college alignment, and demonstrated cultural illiteracy, we have a serious problem in this country. Anyone on the faculty can tell us that students with limited language facility struggle in their courses. Students who took high school math but did not learn math often fail college math courses. Students who do not read do not succeed. Administrators look at our program completion and retention statistics and see that a significant percentage of students – perhaps half of the students admitted – were simply not ready for college.

## **Yellow**

“So far have we portrayed your own perspective on the readiness question? Are you on high or highest alert? Are you convinced that either the flames are lapping at the base of the tower of

higher learning or at least someone is skulking in the bushes with a bottle of kerosene and a box of matches? If you cannot work up that much fury or worry, if you find those positions too extreme, then perhaps you would agree at least that danger of creeping mediocrity does exist and that we should be on the alert for lack of preparation in the students who come to us. Step down from high alert, you say, but continue to show the yellow caution light.

“So what do our students know, and how do they compare with students from around the world? According to the last few Secretaries of Education at the federal level, international test scores, particularly in math and science, show that U.S. students at most grade levels are dead last. Others interpret the same scores to mean we are tied for second place with five or six other countries. Many of the international students who attend our colleges and universities outshine native students in math and science – and some even in English. Are we losing our edge? Should we be worried?

“Let’s examine again the ACT publication from this past spring. With considerable tact, ACT says that schools have made tremendous progress in the last 20 years. Indeed the test score gap between students of color and what ACT calls Caucasian American students is narrowing. And both schools and states are demanding that students complete more core courses for graduation. So what is the problem? High school graduation requirements are “not perfectly aligned” with college admission requirements. Folks at ACT and in some state education panels seem to believe they should be perfectly aligned. The federal government lowers a state’s education grade if they are not aligned. But should high school graduation be perfectly aligned with college admission

requirements? Should the purpose of high school be to prepare students for college?

“As James Rosenbaum wrote in the spring *American Educator*, “nearly all high school seniors believe that they are going to college – and that bad grades will not stop them.” They are right, he says, because open admission policies get most students into college. Only those who have done the work in high school, he says, will make it past the remedial courses and earn the degree. We know that despite our best efforts, many of our students fail to reach their academic goals. Unfortunately, this is information that has not yet reached students and their parents. No wonder educators are worried.

## Green

“Well, maybe the problem of college readiness is not that bad after all. Viewed from the perspective of yellow caution, we are not preparing our students right for college, and we are not preparing enough of them. One might say, though, that if our concern has now shifted to insisting that every high school student be prepared for college, and at least three-fourths of our students meet that standard, at least in terms of courses taken and ACT scores earned, then maybe we should cast aside sallow fretting and adopt a greener, more positive perspective: that there are other issues to worry about and that our schools should not be blamed for problems not of their making. Indeed, the problem may not lie at all with what students are or are not learning in school...

“The projections of job growth from the Bureau of Labor Statistics seem to indicate that the fastest-growing jobs will be a mixture of highly skilled occupations, mostly in information technology, and not so highly skilled

jobs, such as home health-care aides and human service assistants.

“Those are the projections in terms of rates. In terms of the number of jobs, looking at the projections for the occupations with the largest numbers of jobs, we see mostly semiskilled and even unskilled positions: office clerks, cashiers, and retail sales. The occupation of retail sales includes almost as many jobs as the top 10 fastest-growing jobs combined. Interestingly, two occupations appear on both the Bureau of Labor Statistics lists, on the “fastest-growing jobs” list and the “largest numbers of jobs” list: systems analysts and personal care/home health-care aides. If these are the job that will be available, should we insist that all high school graduates be prepared academically to enter a four-or-more-year program of studies?

“What kind of college readiness should we be providing in our schools or discussing in college admissions offices when from 1980 to 2000 the share of our nation’s wealth controlled by the top 1% or wealthiest households grew from 24.8% to 40.1%? Can knowledge compete with wealth and power?

“From the green perspective, then, it is not all students who are at risk, but those who attend inadequate schools. Some progress was supposed to have been made on this score when civil rights groups learned that they could sue their states for faulty school funding ratios. I remember reading about such efforts in the early 1990’s; parents of every ethnicity in some poorly funded areas were counseled to sue. I took my eye off the ball, though, and if these efforts produced a revolution in school funding, I missed it.

“Besides poverty, what are the other risk factors for college readiness? Again, they are factors not under the control of

schools, parents, and students: “race,” language, and “disability.” On the SAT and ACT, on the National Assessments of Educational Progress, and on college admission tests like the COMPASS, Anglo-American students outscore African-American and Latino-American students and are outscored by Asian-Americans. Not surprisingly, students whose first language is not English do not fare well on either multiple-choice or essay exams in English. And students with documented disabilities, including learning disabilities, tend to fare less well than their classmates without documented disabilities.

“As a result of disparities in test scores, school experiences, family means, and a myriad other inequities, African-American students do not gain access to the more prestigious schools at the same rate as other students. You probably read with interest in the latest issue of the *Journal of Developmental Education* the article by Randy Moore of the University of Minnesota’s General College asking whether prestigious institutions create excellent students or if they just identify students who are already excellent. Do they make students smarter or just restrict their admissions to the smartest? How by such a system will the nation’s power, prestige, and wealth be shared by those who do not happen to be already privileged by birth?

“The green perspective does not view you and me and our programs as an embarrassment to the university. Only if we expect students to have all their worries and problems sorted out before they come to college can we eliminate the counseling program. Only if we expect them to have chosen a major and minor and to stick to them can we eliminate the academic advising office. Likewise, we may want to keep our developmental programs and learning

support services because they serve students’ developmental needs.

“Much of the learning assistance research supports this perspective: If we want students to be successful in college, we need to teach them to be successful in college. Articles about self-efficacy and learning-to-learn course descriptions probably mirror this view of things. Growth and development – even transformation – are expected essentials in college.

## Blue

“There is another perspective even more relaxed and less angry than this. From the “blue” perspective, this is the best of all possible worlds, or if not, at least we know it could hardly get better. There is quite a bit of support for this point of view in education journals and on government websites dedicated to touting someone’s success as a leader in education, especially since the high school dropout rate seems to be falling, high school graduation is on the rise, more and more students are taking college preparation courses, and students now learn much more than we ever did.

“Have you seen a high school science text lately? Back in the 1960’s I attended a fine high school in semi-rural northern Indiana, and my botany and zoology instructor left the next year to teach ecology in college, yet we never studied recombinant DNA as many biology students do now. How many of your friends in high school took calculus, and how many of your children’s friends do? Science fair projects show surprising savvy. US math teams take highest honors in international high school competitions, and our students score at the top of the heap in international reading tests. High school students conduct their own experiments with lasers, participate in Model UN, and

give senior recitals on two or even three musical instruments. If these students are not ready for college, then nobody ever will be...

"From the serenity of this blue perspective, admission requirements change with the times, and some of our most treasured requirements – such as being able to write the standard five-paragraph essay – may be hopeless outmoded in the near future or even right now. Consider the requirements of Harvard about 20 years after its founding in 1636. Under President Chauncey, the first qualification for admission was that students or their family or friends had to "lay down one quarter expences, and also give the Colledge Steward security for the Future." There was no financial aid package. A certain social, geographical, and cultural status was required, as well, but academic requirements at that time were merely to be able to read, write, and converse in Latin and Greek and demonstrate familiarity with the foremost Classical writers – skills then considered essential for students planning to serve in the ministry or professions and take their place among the educated elite.

"Wouldn't those earnest Puritan men be ashamed of us now? We do not even attempt to restrict the use of the vernacular language (English, in our case) by students in their rooms. In fact we even teach in the vernacular, and most of us would be hard put even to read Cicero, Virgil, and the Greek New Testament, let alone converse and teach in Latin. If such standards have become so completely *passé*, then should we not reexamine every preconception we have of what constitutes adequate preparation for college?

"Let's admit it: It is not just school kids who have trouble finding Bhutan on the

map. We hardly remember trigonometry at all and may never had taken the calculus, yet somehow we can figure out how to use the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software to analyze survey data. None of us read every book on the "Required Reading List" for junior high kids, but we did just fine in high school. And few of us read every book on the "Required Reading List" for senior high students, but we did just fine in college and even graduate school. And sometimes people who get straight A's in school and earn dazzling SAT scores have trouble with real life. These things being so, why should institutions of higher education establish false standards and then shunt students aside if they fail to reach them?

## Purple

"At the highest level of enlightenment, some argue, we gain a more humble perspective. In the purple chakra, from a plane of higher awareness, we may perceive something new. We have been talking about college readiness by asking whether the students of this country are ready for college. We might now ask whether college is ready for them.

"Do we have the knowledge and the skill to take students from wherever they are to wherever they want to be? We've heard the reds thunder, "No way, can't be done," and the blues lisp, "but of course we can do this, and we're already succeeding." Professional development opportunities like this conference will help us to do the best we can for the students admitted to our institutions...

"The presentations planned for us this afternoon and tomorrow morning will help us to meet the needs of our students. As we ponder a variety of college access issues at this conference, we will free ourselves from

habits of thought and consider new ideas. From the purple perspective, the institutions to which we return on Monday can be transformed by our work here.

“If this year’s freshman class is less than perfectly prepared for college, we will be patient and positive, because we know we too are still learning.”

## **Minnesota Peer Tutor Awarded**

By Linda Russell, CRLA Region Director

How exciting to be in Kansas City at the fall College Reading & Learning Association conference and hear that one of our own was awarded the Tom Pasternak Peer Tutoring Award! This is a national award, and quite an honor.

Elizabeth Kellet was the proud recipient. I spoke with her at the conference, and then interviewed her for our newsletter so that MNADE members would be aware of her accomplishments.

A bit of background first. Elizabeth tutored writing at both North Hennepin and St. Cloud State. She was at North Hennepin for four years and for two of those years was also at the writing center at St. Cloud State. Ruth Ulvin from North Hennepin Community College nominated Elizabeth for the award. Now Elizabeth is beginning her second semester in graduate school at St. Cloud State University in English and hopes to teach college English upon completion of her degree.

Ruth describes Elizabeth as “kind, articulate, compassionate, understanding, and intelligent. She has mentored many new tutors, encouraged hesitant writers, and welcomed students into the Writing Center. One of Elizabeth’s greatest strengths is her ability to encourage students to reflect on their writing and the writing process. As Elizabeth’s supervisor, I have

observed her dedication to student success. She is an incredible tutor who is thoughtful, kind, generous, and insightful in each of her tutoring sessions.”

Here is the interview with Elizabeth Kellet:

### *1. How did you become a tutor or become interested in tutoring?*

I was asked to become a writing tutor by Bridget Murphy, who taught my freshman composition class. At the time, she was the director of the writing center. I was very interested in becoming a tutor because I wanted to work with students and be able to also use my skills as a writer. I was intrigued by the role of a peer tutor, and I saw many possibilities in how peer tutoring could be advantageous to both the tutor and the student.

### *2. How did your experience as a tutor affect you as a student?*

My experience as a tutor greatly affected me as a student. I definitely saw a noted improvement in my own writing. This was facilitated, in part, by the numerous trainings and workshops I attended; however, improvement to my own writing was affected even more by the students I had tutorials with. They really challenged me, and I learned so much from being a peer tutor.

### *3. Has tutoring affected your career plans at all? If so, how?*

Before being asked to become a writing center tutor, I was unsure about what career path I wanted to take. It took someone else recognizing talent in me as a writer for me to realize that talent myself. After only a semester of tutoring, I decided to major in English. While still tutoring at North Hennepin Community College, I transferred to St. Cloud State

University. There I took the writing center practicum course and was the only undergraduate in a class of graduate students. For the next two years I tutored at both writing centers and finished by B.A. in English (emphasis Literature and Writing) with a minor in psychology. I knew from my experiences as a tutor that I wanted to teach college, so I decided to continue my education. I'm now finishing up my first semester as a graduate student at St. Cloud State, and I taught my first course in writing at SCSU this semester as well. I love teaching college, and I feel that I was especially well prepared for the job because of my peer tutoring experience.

*4. What is your favorite thing about tutoring? Or, what is a memorable tutoring experience?*

My favorite thing about tutoring is raising the confidence levels of students. So many students have had bad or belittling experiences with professors who show little interest in the abilities of their students. As a tutor, I saw numerous students who had little or no confidence in their writing. Many times, all students need is someone who believes in their capabilities and who can take the time to work with them.

*5. What effect has the CRLA tutoring award had on you?*

Being the recipient of the CRLA award has been great! I've been able to meet so many new people because of the award and also because of attending the CRLA conference. It's been great to be able to talk with so many other individuals who show such an interest and dedication towards students.

*6. What advice would you give a new peer tutor?*

New peer tutors should try to get as involved as possible and should take advantage of the many opportunities that are available to peer tutors. Attend trainings and workshops, present at conferences, and just get involved. Many peer tutors do not look at their job as a career step, but it really is a professional job and there are so many professional opportunities within the field.

*7. Is there anything else you'd like to add?*

I'm very appreciative to CRLA for honoring me with this award. It's been such a great and exciting experience!

Thank you, Elizabeth, for your dedication to students! Good luck in furthering your educational and career goals. We hope you become a member of MNADE and continue to be active in your professional development.

### ***College Readiness Brochure: How to Use It?***

At our fall conference we brainstormed ways we could make good use of the new College Readiness Brochure. What follows is a summary of all of the ideas that came from the overheads that each group created. There are some wonderful and creative ideas in this list!

### **Give the brochure to PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS, PARENTS & 7-12 TEACHERS**

- Home schooled students
- Applicants to the college (attach to the application)
- Groups of students taking a college tour
- Mail to people we send our class schedule to
- ABE programs
- K-12 partnerships

# **MNADE NEWSLETTER**

*Winter 2005*

- Parent-Teacher Organizations (PTO, PTA)
- Hot Career Night-Chase Your Dreams night
- PSEO students—make it part of the process for becoming a PSEO student
- Take to schools—Junior and Senior Highs (incl. alternative high schools)
  - Special Education Dept.
  - Counselors
  - Community Education
  - Career center
  - Tutoring center
  - ESL/ELL centers/programs
  - Open houses
  - Parent-Teacher conferences
  - 9<sup>th</sup> grade social studies teachers (for career units)

## **Give the brochure to ADMITTED STUDENTS**

- In Orientation packet AND discussed at orientation
- FYE courses
- Student senate
- Student life groups
- “late” entry students
- PSEO students
- Put in syllabus for all developmental courses
- Hand out at assessment

## **Make brochure available in all STUDENT SUPPORT AREAS**

- In the Learning Center, Writing Center, and Math Center
- Use in tutor training
- TRIO programs, such as Starting Point
- In the EOC
- On TV monitors
- In campus Student Center
- In Bookstore

- In the Library
- Hand out on Student Success Day
- Hand out on Technical Advising Day

## **CAMPUS STAFF who should have the brochure (and copies to hand out)**

- Counselors and Advisors
- Admissions staff
- Assessment staff
- Faculty (make sure adjuncts get it)
- College Recruiters
- FYE instructors

## **OUTSIDE GROUPS (non school)**

- Advisory Committees for Technical Programs
- Home School Associations
- Churches
- 4H Groups, Scouts, Campfire
- Scholarship sponsoring organizations (Rotary, Elks, etc.)

## **OTHER ways to use the brochure**

- Link to it from college web site in the prospective student section AND the current student section
- Make it an agenda item on Opening Days and discuss Best Practices in breakout sessions
- Put in college catalog and student planner (which has college info in it)
- Put in Faculty Handbook
- Use in FYE classes as a goal setting activity, self assess using pre/post methods, follow up with students 2-4 weeks into their semester and find out how they observe differences
- Enlarge it to poster size and post it in departments listed above

# ***MNADE NEWSLETTER***

*Winter 2005*

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To submit an article, please send an email attachment to Linda Russell at [linda.russell@minneapolis.edu](mailto:linda.russell@minneapolis.edu).

Feedback on this newsletter is WELCOMED! Send suggestions to the above email address.

**Look for information on our Fall  
Conference on our website soon!**  
[www.mnade.org](http://www.mnade.org)