

Education Matters

February 2009

A publication of the Association of American Educators Foundation

**Time for Professional
Development Programs
to Move into
the 21st Century**

Arrested Development

By Mike Petrilli

Everyone knows that the Internet is changing the way the world works, plays, and connects. Yet its most powerful applications only seem obvious after some entrepreneur (Amazon, Netflix) has brought them to life.

So it is with adult learning. Most professionals would rather develop their skills online, on their own schedule, at their own pace, than sit in daylong, mind-numbing

“workshops” that bring a lot of boredom and frustration but little intellectual stimulation. So it’s not surprising that as long ago as 2006 (eons in Internet time), the American Society for Training and Development reported that across all sectors almost 40 percent of professional development (PD) was delivered via technology. (Surely the numbers are even higher now.)

One would think that our elementary

and secondary education system would embrace online learning for teachers and administrators, too. Individual teachers don’t want or need homogenized training. They need “differentiated instruction,” targeted to where they are in their careers and focused on the subjects they teach and their own strengths and skills gaps. None of this is easy to deliver in traditional settings.

But as in so many other areas, our education system appears to be lagging behind in exploiting the Internet. Last year the National Research Council (NRC) published *Enhancing Professional Development for Teachers: Potential Uses of Information Technology*. It reported on a recent survey by Leah O’Donnell of consulting firm Eduventures, which found that six in seven teachers had participated in “conventional” professional development experiences, but a “markedly lower” proportion had access to online training.

This is particularly perplexing, given that teachers could be receiving targeted training in the comfort of their own homes, on their own schedule, and with-

noun — an abnormal state in which development has stopped prematurely

out the hassle or frustration of face-to-face PD. And the offerings of online teacher training are growing—and growing better. For example, PBS’s TeacherLine offers more than 100 interactive courses for pre-K–12 teachers, who can earn PD credits or (for a nominal fee) even college credit for completing them.

So why aren’t K–12 educators embracing online PD in greater numbers? The NRC report suggests

“Individual teachers don’t want or need homogenized training. They need differentiated instruction.”

several possible reasons, including a lack of knowledge about such opportunities among teachers and administrators; a bias among principals for more traditional methods; and institutional resistance from district professional development staff who might see their own jobs disappear if teachers bypass their programs and engage in training created from afar.

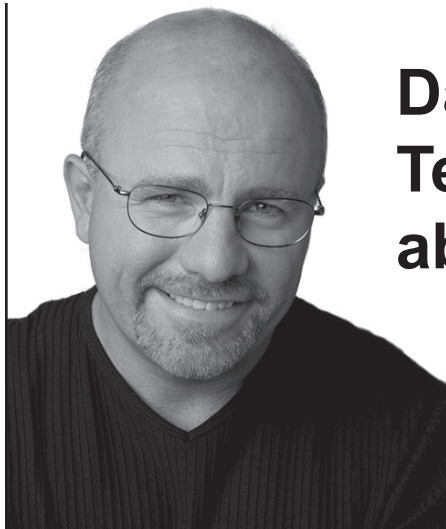
This institutional resistance appears to be the most likely explanation, but it’s not limited to central office staff. As with so many things in life, the problem comes down to money. Traditional professional development providers (including colleges of education) have a lot of dollars at stake in the face-to-face model. They are likely to be outcompeted by national providers in the purveyance of customized teacher training. And teachers themselves have come to expect to be compensated for the time they spend in professional development activities.

Perhaps accountability is an issue, too. Under the traditional model, teachers get credit just for showing up. In an online setting, they would probably have to demonstrate mastery of a subject via an assessment. And almost nothing stirs up a faculty lounge more than the dreaded words “teacher testing.”

Still, judging from the Internet’s success in revolutionizing other fields, eventually the resistance to online professional development will crumble. How long that will take will be a decent indicator of just how calcified our education system has become. ■



Mike Petrilli is Vice President for National Programs and Policy at the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, where he oversees the Foundation’s research projects and publications, including *The Education Gadfly*.



Dave Ramsey Teaches Teens about Money

Nationally syndicated radio talk show host and best-selling author, Dave Ramsey, announces his new high school curriculum, *Foundations in*

Personal Finance. This is the premier curriculum for teaching financial literacy to students using interactive learning.

A recent Charles Schwab survey found that only 34 percent of teenagers know how to balance a checkbook, 88 percent of teens do not like the way it feels to owe someone money, and 29 percent of teens are already in debt with an average debt load close to \$300.

“To graduate from high school you have to know what an amoeba is but not how to balance your checkbook,” said Ramsey. “After years of listening to parents tell me their financial woes on the radio, it made sense to develop a program that would teach teenagers how to avoid their parent’s mistakes.”

Personal Economic Meltdown

A study by Robert D. Manning says three out of five students with credit cards max them out during their freshman year of college and nearly three-fourths of students use their student loans to pay their credit card debt.

Aggressive marketing, joined with students’ lack of financial experience or education, leads many students into serious debt. Teens and students have a lot of money to spend but little knowledge of basic financial information. They spend more than they can repay and the debt increases quickly.

Foundations in Personal Finance can help teach students sound financial principles so they can avoid financial difficulties as they become adults. The lessons are taught in an entertaining, passionate, and easy-to-understand style to help students learn the financial lessons their parents have learned the hard way. Each interactive lesson is taught by Ramsey through age-specific questions. The curriculum is aligned with national and state standards. There is emphasis on twenty-first century learning skills like: critical thinking, analyzing information, problem solving, and applying knowledge to new situations.

The predecessor to *Foundations in Personal Finance*, *Financial Peace for the Next Generation*, has been taught in more than 3,000 schools in fifty states.

“Having taught Dave’s curriculum for the past three years, I am confident that it is impacting our students’ lives both now and in the future,” said Laura Townsend, teacher at Powell High School in Powell, Tennessee. “We love his sense of humor, his passion, and expertise in finance.” ■

For information and to order, call 888-227-3223 or visit www.daveramsey.com.

Alternative Schooling Grows

Despite Opposition Educators Make Progress

By David Kirkpatrick

Major institutions, such as public schools, do not change without external ideas and pressure, and anyone who tries to implement substantive change can expect to be attacked.

Jackie DuCote spent years trying to reform education in Louisiana, including gaining passage of more than fifty major education reform laws from 1977-87. She said those efforts were consistently “watered down, ignored, not implemented properly, taken to court by teacher unions or others, mired down in political turf battles, or not funded,” even if the money was there.

She learned that those promoting serious educational change can expect:

1. To be cast as an adversary.
2. To have their credibility questioned and their involvement challenged.
3. To have roadblocks thrown in their way, particularly by delaying tactics.
4. To be outnumbered at most forums at which they propose change.
5. To spend endless hours in meetings.
6. To become increasingly frustrated.
7. To be involved in a long-term effort.

And, it might be added, to lose more times than they win. So, why try?

First, because the educational future of millions of youngsters depends on changing the system. Second, because in many instances, reformers only have to win once. For example, charter school laws, which led to alternative schools, of which there are now about 4,500, enrolling more than 1,300,000 students, give impetus for the movement to spread.

National Education Association (NEA) former president Keith Geiger once told his troops they must win everywhere; they can't afford to lose anywhere. He's right. But, while he meant that as a goad to action on their part, it is, in fact, an ad-



mission of ultimate failure because no one wins everywhere every time, and teacher unions won't either.

Even among the union's ranks there is a growing interest in educational issues. The union's loss of credibility is leaving it out of the equation of change even where they might have something to offer. A classic and still unusual example of this came when a number of reforms were passed by the Kentucky legislature some years ago. State Senator Michael Moloney explained that this was possible because not only were all education lobbyists left out of the discussions but also the members of the legislative education committees, except for the chairs. This was done because of a belief that you can't count on those who are part of a problem to be part of the solution.

The teacher unions may be following a classic pattern of destructive obstruction experienced by other unions.

There was a time, 50-60 years ago, when John L. Lewis and the United Mine Workers could almost shut the nation down, a risk so real that then-President Harry Truman threatened to call out the army if the UMW called a nationwide strike. Certainly the miners had legitimate concerns. Coal mining was, and still is, dangerous work. But in misusing their power they brought about changes that worked to their own disadvantage. Today the UMW, and other major unions such as the steelworkers and autoworkers, are but shadows of their former selves.

The teacher unions may be headed in the same direction.

Occasionally, some totally unexpected event changes the outlook for change.

One such was Hurricane Katrina in 2005. The loss of life and physical damage was horrendous. New Orleans in particular was devastated, and both the city's school district and local teachers union were largely destroyed. This necessitated almost starting from scratch, and the removal of the union as an obstacle provided an opportunity to demonstrate what might be possible. As a result, reforms, in particular those involving charter schools, have led to significant gains for students that exceed anything that Jackie DuCote and her colleagues perhaps even imagined in their Ten Years on the Road to Nowhere in school reform.

More than thirty years ago Thomas Hopkins wrote in the education journal *Phi Delta Kappan*, that:

History shows that in crises the people in power tend to refine and intensify the status quo system which eventually destroys them. This is the present movement in education.

Events in New Orleans and elsewhere show this need not be. ■



David W. Kirkpatrick is Senior Education Fellow, U.S. Freedom Foundation, Washington, D.C., and Senior Education Fellow, Buckeye Institute, Columbus, OH.



Is Universal Preschool a Silver Bullet for Education Reform?

With support from major foundations and President Barack Obama, universal preschool will be the next big thing in education reform. The goal is to offer publicly funded preschool—complete with credentialed teachers and a standardized curriculum—to all four-year-olds during the school year.

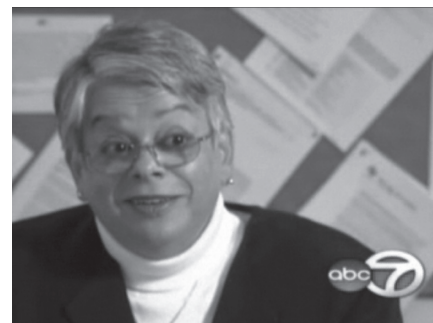
Advocates argue that public investments in early education will pay dividends over the long term. Critics point out that the evidence from states that have universal preschool programs shows that whatever benefits kids receive from those programs fade by the fourth grade.

Since preschool attendance rates in states that have universal preschool are no higher than the national average, universal preschool may not even increase preschool attendance. It would, however, cost a lot of money, put lots of privately owned preschools out of business, and dramatically decrease early education options for parents.

So what do you think? Is expanding our financially struggling K-12 system the best way to fix it? To view a 10-minute video discussing the pros and cons of universal preschool, visit <http://reason.tv/video/show/576.html>. ■

Say What?!

KVIA, the local ABC-TV affiliate in El Paso, Texas, discovered some teachers had failed the certification exam multiple times—a few had failed more than twenty times. Lucy Clarke, the local teacher union president, said they might have had mitigating circumstances, like “dyslexia, learning disabilities, and English proficiency.” She added that failing the test twenty times meant those teachers “were determined to pass it.”



Lucy Clarke, El Paso Federation of Teachers president, spinning an answer for a reporter.

F-I-N-I-S-H-E-D

Final Report on Reading First May Spell Program's Demise

The Reading First Impact Study Final Report by the Education Department's very own Institute of Education Sciences has been completed. Analysts found no statistically significant differences between Reading First (RF) and non-RF schools on student reading comprehension in grades one, two, or three—as evidenced by three years of achievement data. Not good.

On a more positive (and unsurprising) note, it also found that RF teachers spent significantly more time teaching the five essential components of reading instruction, and RF



schools did a significantly better job of providing instructional support to teachers; e.g., help for struggling readers, professional development in scientifically based reading instruction, etc.

The key to understanding this study is to recall the five components of successful early reading as determined by the National Reading Panel: comprehension, phonics (including decoding), vocabulary, oral fluency, and phonemic awareness. It takes all five to learn how to read but this study only studied the first two—and the second of these but for a single year in one grade of the three-year study.

Although the evaluation found in that one-year snapshot that RF did have a positive impact on decoding among first grade students, such last-minute antics are not enough to be conclusive. Many in the research community complained that only measuring comprehension (and decoding, briefly) does not effectively evaluate “reading achievement” (especially with a \$6 billion price tag).

But protests about excessive cost, contamination, and unrepresentative samples aside, the data do not bode well for a program rife with political drama. This study, narrow or not, may administer the *coup de grace* to this worthy but mortally ill patient. For more information, visit <http://ies.ed.gov>. ■

To Fake It Won't Make It

New Study Underscores Need for True Alternative Teacher Certification Programs

A new report on alternative teacher certification released in *Education Next* called “What Happens When States Have Genuine Alternative Certification?” is eye opening. If state policymakers use this report, they may finally understand the issues they create when they do not have alternative teacher certification.



Dave Saba, president of the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence

First, it separates the real from the false. Forty-seven states claim to have alternative teacher certification programs but really only twenty-one states can make this claim. The other twenty-six require just as many college credits as regular university-based teacher certification programs.

Dave Saba, president of the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence, had this to say:

Newsflash #1 – If you have the fake programs, you only get about 5 percent of your teachers through alternative certification. If you have a real program, you increase the numbers of teachers applying and see 28

percent of your new teachers coming from your alternative certification program. From the report, “Hardly anyone bothers with an alternative certificate if the requirements are essentially the same as for the traditional one.”

Newsflash #2 – Minority representation is much higher in states with real alternative certification than in states without it.

Newsflash #3 – I quote direct from the report: “In states that had genuine alternative certification, test-score gains on the NAEP exceeded those in the other states by 4.8 points and 7.6 points in 4th- and 8th-grade math, respectively. In reading, the additional gains in the states with genuine alternative certification were 10.6 points and 3.9 points for the two grade levels, respectively. Among African Americans, test-score gains were also larger in the states with genuine alternative certification.”

“If you have the fake programs, you only get about 5 percent of your teachers through alternative certification.”

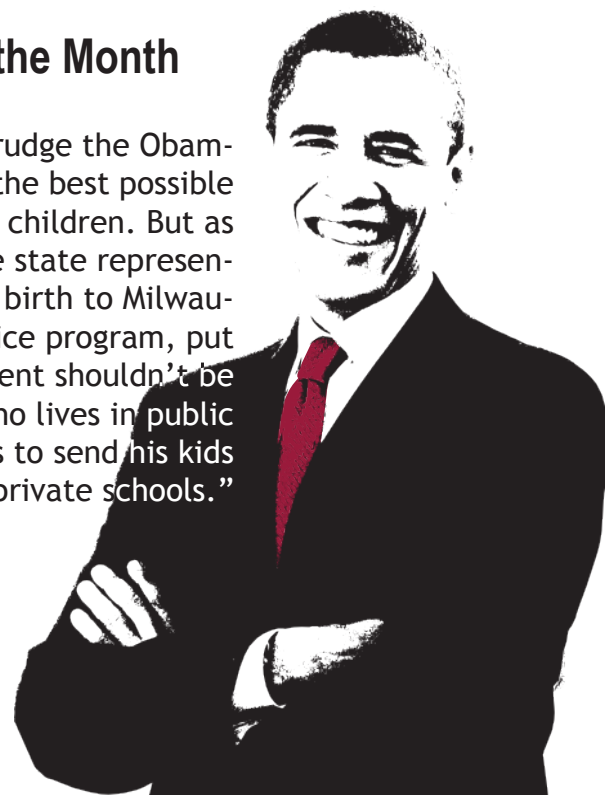
\$10,000 Grants Available

The Lemelson-MIT Program is currently accepting applications for 2010 InvenTeams, which are teams of high school students, teachers, and mentors that receive grants up to \$10,000 each to invent technological solutions to real-world problems. The InvenTeam initiative is designed to excite high school students about invention, empower students through problem solving, and encourage an inventive culture in schools and communities. The deadline to submit is April 24, 2009. For more information, visit <http://web.mit.edu/inventteams/apply.html>.



Quote of the Month

No one should begrudge the Obamas for choosing the best possible school for their children. But as Polly Williams, the state representative who gave birth to Milwaukee's school choice program, put it, “The president shouldn't be the only person who lives in public housing who gets to send his kids to private schools.”





Healthy Kids, Smart Kids

What One School Did to Address the Problem of Unhealthy Eating Habits

When Dr. Yvonne Sanders-Butler became principal of Browns Mill Elementary in Lithonia, Georgia, she was astonished to see how the students' eating habits and lack of physical activity were affecting their performance in the classroom. Having struggled with finding balance between diet and exercise in her own life, she knew all too well the effects this lifestyle can have on a child's future.

Browns Mill Elementary's "Healthy Kids, Smart Kids"—a model diabetes prevention program—was recently featured at an international summit hosted by the Johnson & Johnson Diabetes Institute in Brussels, Belgium, on improving diabetes care and prevention, which is now a global epidemic.

In August 1999, after a year of observing students' eating habits and endless consultation with her PTA board members on how to approach parents, Dr. Sanders-Butler made it her mission to ensure a healthy learning environment for all her students—the "Healthy Kids, Smart Kids" program.

Working with students, parents, and school staff, Dr. Sanders-Butler was able to see results by the following spring, after



Dr. Yvonne Sanders-Butler, principal of Browns Mill Elementary

incorporating the following initiatives:

- Make health education a part of curricula at all grade levels, requiring PE for students and using lessons from all subject areas (i.e., math, history, science) to teach healthy behaviors;
- Provide more balanced school meals (breakfast and lunch) that meet the USDA nutrition standards and contain less sugar;
- Allow snacks and drinks in the vending machines, provided they are healthy;
- Offer the "Worksite Wellness" program to teachers and staff, including nutrition education and opportunities to engage in physical activity; and
- Encourage students to take their lessons home with them and educate their parents in making meals that are both low in sugar and high in nutrients.

As a result of Dr. Sanders-Butler's efforts, the "Healthy Kids, Smart Kids" program has reached more than 20,000 students in her community. Specific results measured by the school showed:

- Disciplinary and counseling referrals dropped by 28 and 23 percent, respectively;

- A 15 percent improvement in reading and math scores;
- Students were taking 30 percent fewer trips to the nurse's office;
- Daily physical activity among students increased by 50 percent;
- To date, the school has saved more than \$600,000 by providing healthier options to children and teaching them about portion control; and

- An increase in applications to attend the school because of its healthy environment.

In addition, a toolkit has been developed to help other schools in the area who have approached Browns Mill for advice and help in starting their own "Healthy Kids, Smart Kids" program. ■

For more information, go to www.diabeteshow.com.

About Diabetes HOW

Everyone understands "why" we need to address the global diabetes pandemic. What needs more focus is "how" we can accomplish true change at the community level. This initiative is especially interested in identifying and highlighting activities that have already been underway that form the basis for productive synergies to accomplish the goals of this coalition.

Diabetes HOW represents a global movement reaching across languages, cultures and continents to initiate real, measurable action that will improve the quality of life for people living with and at risk for diabetes.

Diabetes HOW will focus its efforts on four key areas that affect the quality of life for people with and at risk for diabetes, including:

- Support within social, school and work environments
 - Self-management for a healthy lifestyle
 - Health outcomes and quality of care
 - Access to care and cost of treatment
- The first phase of Diabetes HOW will work to improve the quality of life for children with and at risk for diabetes, focusing on:
- Improving nutrition and lifestyle educa-

tion offered to children in school

- Increasing physical activity of children
- Educating children and families on healthy living
- Training teachers and community leaders how to support children with and at risk of diabetes

In the future, Diabetes HOW will extend its reach to address the challenges faced by adults with and at risk for diabetes.

Through partnerships and collaboration, but most of all through the community, we can all create change.

Change begins with you.

Statistics on Adolescent Diets



The 2007 National Youth Risk Behavior Survey indicates that among U.S. high school students:

Overweight

- 13 percent were obese.

Unhealthy Dietary Behaviors

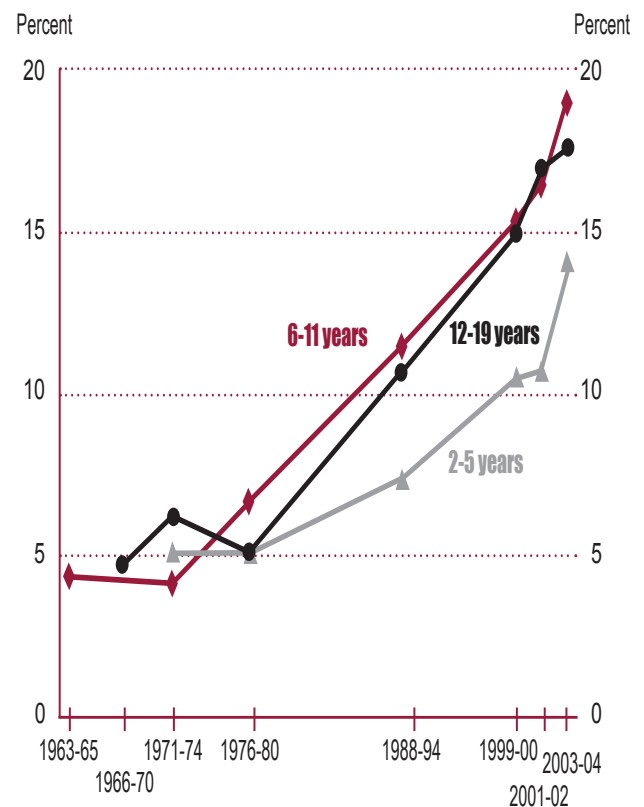
- 79 percent ate fruits and vegetables fewer than five times per day during the seven days before the survey.
- 34 percent drank a can, bottle, or glass of soda or pop (not including diet soda or diet pop) at least one time per day during the seven days before the survey.

Physical Inactivity

- 65 percent did not meet recommended levels of physical activity.
- 46 percent did not attend physical education classes.
- 70 percent did not attend physical education classes daily.
- 35 percent watched television three or more hours per day on an average school day.
- 25 percent played video or computer games or used a computer for something that was not school work for three or more hours per day on an average school day.

Source: www.cdc.gov.

Trend in Child and Adolescent Overweight



Source: Prevalence of Overweight among Children and Adolescents: United States, 2003-2004 (April 2006) www.cdc.gov.

Character Education

Is Your School's Program Working?



Only time will tell if the No Child Left Behind Act will be viewed as a positive accomplishment of the George W. Bush administration. There is much evidence that in its present form, NCLB is not highly regarded by the majority of our nation's classroom teachers. On the other hand, many civil rights organizations give it high marks for helping to close the gap between urban and suburban schools.

However, one of the lesser known, and we believe one of the best, offshoots of the Act is the development of realistic character education evaluation tools. In today's competitive world, our students need solid skills to succeed. These include the ability to make responsible choices, the courage to stand up for what is right, and the compassion to help others. These goals are being achieved through character education programs. However, we must not become complacent.

Evidence of Character

A Department of Education publication entitled *Mobilizing for Evidenced-based Character Education* sends a clear message that scientific evaluation is both possible to implement in our schools and essential if national education organiza-

tions, universities, local schools, and the community are to know that what they are doing is effective.

The Association of American Educators (AAE) highly recommends this publication that is designed to assist education project directors, evaluators, and other key stakeholders in conducting scientifically based evaluations and understanding how to best measure their efforts in accordance with federal requirements for scientific rigor in the evaluation process.

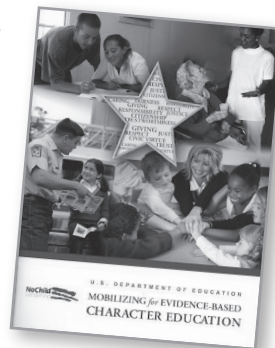
AAE's Role

During the past eight years, the U.S. Department of Education has been providing grants for the implementation and evaluation of character education programs around the nation. AAE and AAE Foundation Board Member Dr. Kevin Ryan were chosen to assist in the evaluation of a number of projects operating under a Department of Education grant. Those evaluations helped the Department in creating this publication.

Mobilizing for Evidence-based Character

Education is organized in a logical sequence that reflects the order in which to undertake eight basic steps in planning and implementing an evaluation. The introduction explores the federal mandate for evaluation and notes the many ways that evaluation can contribute to the improvement, recognition, and sustainability of a character education program. In addition, there are helpful reference sites provided with each step, a list of published resources, information on pertinent federal regulations, sample consent letters, a checklist of evaluation activities, examples for displaying data, and a glossary of common evaluation terminology.

All information in this publication is in the public domain; therefore, it can be reproduced without violating copyright laws. ■



Free copies of the publication can be ordered from ED Pubs online at www.edpubs.org or by calling 1-877-4ED-PUBS (1-877-433-7827).



Education Matters is a publication of
the Association of American Educators
Foundation (AAEF)
27405 Puerta Real, Suite 230
Mission Viejo, CA 92691-6388

www.aateachers.org; (800) 704-7799
E-mail: info@aateachers.org
Gary Beckner, Managing Editor
Kelley Prause, Associate Editor & Researcher
Diane Meyer, Editorial Assistant
Bobette Craycraft, Editorial Assistant

Presorted Standard
US Postage Paid
#400
Laguna Niguel, CA