California Department of Education
Adult Education Oral History Project

Oral History Interview

COMPREHENSIVE ADULT STUDENT ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

PATRICIA L. RICKARD

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Foundation for Educational Achievement
Formerly Named San Diego Community College District Foundation
1985 - Present

California Adult Student Assessment System
San Diego Community College District
1980 - 1985

April 16, 1998

San Diego, California

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Patricia Rickard

CALIFORNIA ADULT EDUCATION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

COMPREHENSIVE ADULT STUDENT ASSESSMENT SYSTEM (CASAS)

INTERVIEWEE: PATRICIA RICKARD, Executive Director, CASAS

INTERVIEWER: Cuba Z. Miller

[Session 1, April 16, 1998]

[Begin Tape 1, Side A]

MILLER: This is Cuba Miller interviewing Patricia L. Rickard, Executive Director of the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System, more commonly called CASAS, in San Diego, on April 16, 1998. The purpose of the interview is to record the origins of and Pat's reflections on the project and the impact it has had on adult education in California, the nation, and indeed beyond the United States.

Good morning, Pat.

RICKARD: Good morning, Cuba.

MILLER: Before we get into the background and the details of CASAS, will you give a brief overview of the project for us?

RICKARD: Well, CASAS stands for the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System. CASAS indeed has a systems approach. It

includes curriculum management, assessment, and evaluation systems in order to improve programs within California and throughout the nation. Our vision was to put in place a system that better placed students into programs, diagnosed learning need, monitored progress, and certified competency attainment across all levels of ABE and ESL [Adult Basic Education and English as a Second Language] and high school completion for adults.

MILLER: Okay. Now, you started out as the California Adult Student Assessment System, one of California's special federal projects under the Adult Education Act. The purpose of these demonstration or experimental projects is to address specific needs. What was that need that resulted in CASAS being formed?

RICKARD: Back in the mid-'70s, we were experiencing in California some changing populations. It was the end of the Vietnam War. The refugees were coming into Camp Pendleton. This was the time that the APL [Adult Performance Level] project out of the University of Texas came out looking at a functional context approach to adult education, and we in California were looking at better ways of serving the new populations. And what we were doing, the curriculum that we were using, the assessment that we were using, simply wasn't working well with the new populations.

We were using what I call kid tests. We were using the CAT [California Achievement Test] and the WRAT [Wide Range Achievement Test] and the Nelson. It had no relationship to the curriculum that we were teaching, it had no relationship in terms of age-appropriateness to the populations that we were serving. They reported out in grade equivalents, which had really no relation to proficiency and achievement as we were looking at it with our adult populations. The data that we were getting from these assessments was really quite meaningless with the populations that we were serving. It didn't link with the curriculum and instruction. And so in the late '70s we started looking at what other options or what better ways that we would have to assess and report out the achievement, the learning that our students were doing in our programs.

MILLER: You mentioned the APL study coming out of the University of Texas, and that in itself had quite an impact on California adult education in the '70s. How did California first start addressing the needs that came from APL?

RICKARD: Well, one of the first projects that was actually a 309 project [Section 309, later 310 and 353, of the Adult Education Act that provides funds to the states for special projects] was out of San

Francisco State University, the CACE project, the California Adult Competency Education project with John Tibbetts and Dorothy Westby Gibson. They provided a series of workshops for teachers throughout California and incorporated some of the research from the APL project. So that was an introduction to California educators, in terms of a more functional, competency based approach to providing instruction. About the same time in New York, the External Diploma Program was being developed by Ruth Nickse, and that was sort of a parallel development. Again, it was looking at better assessing or measuring or documenting the learning of adults in a more demonstrated, functional context approach. There was a third project out of Oregon at the time, when Dale Parnell was the Superintendent of Public Instruction in Oregon. They were looking at, for the first time, the competencies, talking about competencies that all learners should be able to demonstrate. So I think that the research from the APL, the research from the External Diploma Program, the Oregon competencies, and the CACE workshops really led to a re-look or a serious rethinking of how we were delivering instruction and the kind of curriculum that we were delivering to our adult learners in California.

MILLER: And California had a couple of major curriculum projects during that time.

RICKARD: Right, we had a curriculum project in Clovis called the CLASS [*Competency Based Live-Ability Skills*] project with Elna Dimmock. [It] focused on more functional context curriculum appropriate for the adult basic ed learner. It was really focused below the high school level. Also in the mid-'70s, with a 309-funded project in California, through a consortium of seven agencies in California called CALCOMP [California High School Competency Based Diploma project], we were focusing on a more competency based high school diploma program for adults. I became involved, both in the CACE workshops and through the San Diego Community College District. We were one of the districts that were a part of the Consortium, the CALCOMP Consortium, to develop a competency based high school diploma program. As a representative from the San Diego Community College District, I was involved in the assessment component of CALCOMP. That's how I became more aware of and more involved with the movement toward a more competency based approach to both the delivery of instruction and assessment.

MILLER: And there was also an ESL curriculum project at the time, the ICB-VESL [Integrated Competency Based Vocational English as a Second Language] out of Chinatown.

RICKARD: Mm-hmm.

MILLER: Pat, other than being involved in CALCOMP and in CACE, what else in your background specifically motivated you into taking on this task? What had you done before you became *the* assessment person in California? Just a rough sketch. [Chuckling]

RICKARD: My background, I first started out in 1970 teaching adult basic education two evenings a week at Kearny Adult [Center], which is a part of the San Diego Community College District, and several mornings a week I taught English as a second language.

MILLER: Jack-of-all-trades. [Chuckling]

RICKARD: And that was out of North Shores Adult School in the Pacific Beach area. Since it was a small program, of course, it was multilevel ESL and I had about twenty different language groups in my class. In addition to multilevel, it was multilingual, so that certainly gave me an interesting introduction into adult education.

MILLER: Typical. [Chuckling]

RICKARD: My evening assignment, I was handed a textbook by the principal and sent forth into the classroom. And the people that showed up

on my doorstep that first evening were three non-readers, several who were there to get a high school English credit, a variety who needed their GED [General Educational Development tests], a few who wanted to get into an apprenticeship program and needed to brush up in math. All told, I had about twenty-five people, all the way from non-readers to "I just need a senior English credit to graduate from high school." That was my first introduction to adult education in California. But I loved it. I absolutely loved it. And I then, of course, went on to increase my teaching load for six to seven years. At the time, I was working on my master's degree in counseling and psychology.

MILLER: Okay, so you did go on into counseling then?

RICKARD: I first became department chair for ABE in the Kearny area, and then I moved into counseling and had responsibility for ABE, ESL, GED/high school, and all the counseling functions. I became the San Diego Community College District liaison to the K-12, the [San Diego] Unified [School] District head counselors' association, and became involved with the exempted minors and the Door of Hope, and any counseling communication between the unified district and the community college district. So that really broadened my understanding of what some of the issues were, not

only with the adults but with the exempted minors coming into our system.

MILLER: Okay. We generally think of CASAS getting its start in 1980, but I believe the year before that you worked with two or three other districts in a kind of mini-assessment consortium that grew out of CALCOMP. What did that group do?

RICKARD: Well, as CALCOMP was winding down in the late '70s, and we had put so much energy and focus into a functional adult high school diploma program, we within the Consortium of the seven districts started looking at our delivery system. Actually, only 20 percent of our delivery system was the adult high school diploma program. The other almost 80 percent was ABE and ESL. And, as I said before, at the time also we had a dramatically changing population that we were serving in California with the refugees and with the immigration that was coming into California. There were new pressures to do a better job with the delivery of instruction and assessment with our ABE and our ESL population. So in the late '70s, as CALCOMP was winding down, we looked at how we could articulate and set up a continuum so that students that were in ABE and ESL could move easily into the high school diploma

program. We looked at some sort of a placement, so it all got started—

MILLER: With placement. [Chuckling]

RICKARD: With placement: How can we articulate? How can we set up a more seamless continuum so that our students in ABE and ESL could move more easily into our adult high school diploma program? We began grappling with what might that assessment look like? How low must the difficulty level go, in terms of the continuum? And that was the beginning of a realization that we really needed to take a more comprehensive look at our whole delivery system all the way from beginning levels of ABE and ESL up through high school completion, and not compartmentalize and look at just high school/GED, look at just ABE or just ESL. We really needed to step back and take a look more broadly at our delivery system.

MILLER: Did that lead to an RFP [Request for Proposal] for CASAS? Or did the state decide that, okay, this is something we need to do, let's find someone to manage the development of it?

RICKARD: The first several years were a grant to the San Diego Community College District to coordinate an expanded consortium to begin addressing the ABE and the ESL systems, and so the original

CALCOMP Consortium grew and included other districts and agencies. So, from the original seven that were CALCOMP, it expanded and others were invited, as they were interested, to participate in the broader effort. The coordination was through a grant from the State Department of Ed to the San Diego Community College District. I was a counselor at the time and then became an associate dean, and this was one of my *other duties as assigned.*

MILLER: As assigned. Just pick up this little. . . . [Chuckling]

RICKARD: I was originally a full-time counselor and then full-time associate dean, running a program and coordinating the original CASAS Consortium. The original CALCOMP Consortium districts became a part of the CASAS Consortium.

MILLER: Okay. Let's just move on then to describe the development of CASAS after it was decided that was a special task that needed to be done. So let's talk about that and the various components in some detail. Now, you've mentioned that the CALCOMP Consortium members kind of moved into the CASAS Consortium. What were some of the other first steps then in the development of the assessment system?

RICKARD: In March of 1980 at the state [adult education] directors' meeting in San Diego, there was a small group that was convened by the California Department of Education staff to look at what our assessment efforts were to date in California. We looked at what we had put in place with CALCOMP; we looked at some of the assessment that was currently in place in efforts with ESL assessment; we looked at what was in place currently with ABE assessment in California. Out of that original meeting in March of 1980, it was decided to convene a Summer Institute, and the State Department of Education took the leadership in inviting other agencies, districts that might be interested. So in August of 1980 we convened the first Summer Institute at UC Irvine, and we had approximately fifty participants. It was one of the first times that I can ever remember in the same room having representation from ESL, ABE, adult high school completion. We had representation from counseling, we had representation from special education, we had representation from the State Department of Corrections, the State Department of Developmental Services. It was, in my experience, the first time that we had gathered together a group that was that comprehensive and looking at the issues much more broadly than just adult high school or just ESL.

MILLER: And sat down and talked to each other. [Chuckling]

RICKARD: And actually sat down and talked to each other, exactly.

MILLER: Okay. With that as kind of the organizational focus then—and you mentioned that the original Consortium members were from CALCOMP but that you expanded it a little bit—what was the membership and role of the Consortium?

RICKARD: The Consortium actually set priorities. They were the key identifiers of the needs in the field. CASAS has from its inception been field-based and field-driven. The priorities for development, all of the field testing, all of the implementation and evaluation very much have been driven by the Consortium.

MILLER: As a working group, not an advisory committee.

RICKARD: It was definitely not an advisory committee. It was a roll-up-your-sleeves, working group. The Consortium looked at identifying what were the priority core competencies that we could agree upon across the state.

MILLER: How did you go about doing that?

RICKARD: At the August 1980 Summer Institute we set up a plan to do a statewide survey. There was a survey that was done in the late '70s.

MILLER: The NOMOS [Research Institute]?

RICKARD: The NOMOS study that was modeled after the APL. So we looked at the NOMOS study and the results of that; we looked at the APL and the competencies that emerged from that; we looked at the External Diploma Program and the competencies that had been identified; we looked at the Oregon competencies that had been identified; and we also asked for nominations from our Consortium agencies as to what they felt were high-priority competencies that were absolutely critical that should be included. We then developed and synthesized all of these competencies from all of these resources and developed one of the first surveys that we did throughout California in 1980.

MILLER: Where people prioritized things high, medium, low?

RICKARD: [Yes], they not only prioritized but we asked them what's missing? What's absolutely critical? What are you including in your curriculum based on student needs? And from that we compiled from the results a list, and if we had 80 percent agreement across the Consortium agencies that this was a high-priority competency, we did include it then on the first validated CASAS competency list. During the years of the CASAS Consortium, we revalidated that list on an annual basis. We asked for nominations, we sent out the survey, and we then were able. . . . It was a—

MILLER: A living list.

RICKARD: It was a living list, it wasn't a static list. Over the years, competencies have been added based on nomination and based on consensus, competencies have been deleted. As life changes, so does the competency list.

MILLER: [Chuckling] Okay. The Consortium did much of its work through committees. What was the committee structure and their responsibilities?

RICKARD: Well, first, what I'd like to back up and talk about is that in the first years it was just really critical. . . . Because we were a working Consortium, it was critical that we met on a regular basis. But with limited funding and limited resources and time, we set up a structure so that we had a Northern Consortium and a Southern Consortium. We tried in the first early years to meet monthly, and we tried to back up the Consortium meetings so that each would have the very same agenda, and they would meet on consecutive days. We one month would meet in the north first and the south second, the next month we would meet in the south first and the north second. We would share the outcome of the north with the south, the south with the north. We would then send out minutes from both. And we within the Northern and Southern Consortium

set up committees, and we had the same committee structure north and south. Several times a year we would then pull the committees together. But that was our attempt to continue an intensive level of ongoing communication, because they were working groups with limited resources.

MILLER: They had quite different personalities too, didn't they? Do you want to share some of the flavor of that? [Chuckling]

RICKARD: Well, it was really quite interesting. In the north, the Northern Consortium arrived early, rolled up their sleeves, and sometimes went on way past quitting time. In the south, although there was the same dedication in terms of the committee structure, the L.A. freeway traffic was a determining factor for when the committees ended in the afternoon. I think some of the dynamics between the north and the south is that in the north we had more medium and small districts and agencies, so we had people sitting on the Consortium that wore several hats. They were the ABE *and* the ESL coordinator, and, in smaller districts, *and* the GED/high school coordinator. Since they sat in all three chairs, it was easier for them to look across the needs and to have a more global view of a systems approach of students coming in and moving through the system. In the south, with larger districts, we would have

representatives that would come that represented the ESL program, we would have their counterpart that represented the ABE program, and there might be a third representative that coordinated the GED/high school program. And so, because some of the districts were so large, we had to work harder sometimes to integrate—

MILLER: Cross those lines.

RICKARD: Integrate the continuum and look at not just an ESL component or an ABE component. Or, this competency is not an ESL competency, all students need this particular competency, whether they be limited English proficient or native speakers of English. The size of the districts, and wearing many hats to just wearing one hat—those were some of the dynamics that interplayed with what we were doing.

MILLER: Certainly some of the things that were hashed out during that time were things like the scale scores versus grade levels. I mean, some people wanted grade levels also. Without getting too technical, can you just explain what the scale is that you use? And again, maybe a little bit about why you did not want to go into grade level components.

RICKARD: Okay, I'm going to back up one step before that. I think before we can talk about grade level versus scale score we have to talk about conceptually how we looked at assessment. When we adopted and validated the competencies, we looked at a core of competencies that applied across all districts. But districts were serving very different populations with very different needs, as is still the case in adult education, so coming up with, in quotes, *a test* we all knew was not going to work. And it was why in the late '70s we got away from and wanted to develop an assessment system that made more sense for adult education. Adults come to our programs to acquire English communication skills, to get a GED, to acquire the competencies to get a job, to read to their kids. There are so many different goals that our learners have, and the competencies needed to reflect those goals. We then needed to set up an assessment system that was flexible enough to measure those competencies across a continuum of levels. In order to do that, instead of thinking of the paradigm of a series of tests, we looked at an item bank of test questions that would measure specific competency statements. We had a competency statement, such as interpreting clock time, that could be taught and tested at a beginning level, at an intermediate level, at an advanced level, or

even at a high school level. For example, if I said to you, "It's ten o'clock in San Diego and I want to call Melbourne, Australia, Cuba, what time is it there?" That's an example of—

MILLER: That a beginning level student couldn't answer. [Chuckling]

RICKARD: So we had to come up with certainly a different way to organize the assessment. And so very early on we looked at an item bank concept: measuring specific competency statements across a range of difficulty levels. From that we could then construct tests at different levels that measure different competency statements. And underlying that, we looked at what was then a fairly new measurement methodology called Item Response Theory, which looked at calibrating or establishing an item difficulty, so that if a student responded to a series of items and we knew the difficulty of that item, we could then estimate the ability or the proficiency of that student on a fixed metric scale. That was just so far removed from a grade level where you were giving adult learners a test and you had looked at giving that test to another norm group of K-12 learners who were in the fifth grade and the fifth month of school in Iowa in 1956, and trying to compare our adult learner to some norm group that was really inappropriate. I think that actually there wasn't much discussion about why grade level was

not appropriate. Certainly with our ESL coordinators and ESL participants in the Consortium, they had always felt that grade level was fairly meaningless with ESL learners. The content of the tests that were being used at the time were not age-appropriate. The content included was not what was being taught. The results were not able to be used in any meaningful way. So we knew that we had to come up with a different approach.

At the time, I think that Dick [Richard] Stiles [Consultant, Adult Education Unit, 1975-current] was in the California Department of Education, and in the '70s was involved with the CHSPE, the California High School Proficiency Exam. And the CHSPE was very much functional context, competency based and was incorporating this new measurement theory. So, in the late '70s when he moved over from the California Assessment Program Branch of the California Department of Ed into the Adult Education Unit, he brought that expertise with him, in terms of measurement and evaluation, and brought the technical resources so that we had the tools we needed to set in place this new calibrated item bank. He was quite instrumental in pulling in people that had this expertise from throughout the country to assist us.

MILLER: Okay, so developing the Item Bank, and do we need to say anything about writing test items and the field tests, or do we just. . . ?

RICKARD: [Chuckling] I think that's important. I said earlier that CASAS has been since its inception strongly committed to a field-based, field-driven approach to development, field testing, implementation, and evaluation. We talked a little bit earlier and we mentioned the committee structure of the Consortium, but we didn't get into it in any detail.

Once we had identified and once we had talked about moving to an item bank concept, we provided some early training in 1980 to some of the members of the Consortium that were interested, some item writing training. And from that item writing training, we looked at those that had an affinity to being good item writers and began developing . . . setting in place a process to develop, to review, and to field test items that matched the competency statements. So, actually, in those early years the Consortium members wrote the items, edited the items. We constructed field test forms of test items, we sent them out to the Consortium agencies, and they were field tested within the Consortium agencies across all levels of ABE, ESL, and high

school completion. We took the results of that, calibrated the items, they went into the calibrated item bank, and from that we were then able in 1981 to construct the very first . . . what we call survey achievement or progress tests. We then in the fall of 1981 began field testing in the field.

MILLER: Oh, the field test was in '81?

RICKARD: The field test was in '81. So we spent the fall of 1980 and the spring of 1981 in a flurry of activity of item development, item field testing, analysis, and calibration. From that initial pool of calibrated items we constructed the first survey achievement tests at an A, or beginning level; B, intermediate level; C, advanced level. And we constructed two parallel forms at each level and had them ready for an initial field testing of the test in the fall of '81.

MILLER: You were talking about all of these item writers from throughout the state. My guess is that certainly the contribution was there, and some of them became very skilled, but some of them had the ideas that your own staff would kind of have to refine before they could go out for use. [Chuckling]

RICKARD: Well, I have been known to say that I think that item writers are born, that there's some genetic DNA that makes a good item writer. An item writer needs to be creative in looking at the

competencies, they need to have enough knowledge of that level and of our learners. And we were constructing at that time a fairly new type of item that would have an item display from real life. It would have a stem, or an item question and distracters, and it was not your typical test item that people were used to. We needed the creativity but we also needed attention to detail and following of an incredible set of rules, in terms of item development. And so we found that some people could follow the rules very well but weren't as creative, and others were very creative but couldn't follow the rules very well. We were really looking for a creative person with attention to detail that could follow the rules, and really knew the field, and knew the adult learner, and understood the competencies. Some of our Consortium members just thrived in this environment, and others gravitated to other committees.

MILLER: [Chuckling] Working to one's strength. Okay, we had mentioned the beginning institute, and the Summer Institutes continued, and you said that at least a couple times a year you tried to get the north and south together. Do we need to say anything else about the Summer Institutes, except that they were a period of really intensive work for them?

RICKARD: The Summer Institutes were truly working institutes, and in the early years were almost totally devoted to three very intensive days, and on into the evenings, where we had identified tasks that really couldn't be done long distance with a Northern Consortium and a Southern Consortium. This was our one opportunity that we had during the year that the Northern and Southern Consortium members could come together, that the committees could have uninterrupted work time. Also, it was an opportunity that we could compare notes on what the implementation issues were, what some of the policy issues were, how well it was working. This was the one opportunity that we also had to look at what were some of the training and staff development issues that were absolutely critical to implementing a quality assessment system. What training did our teachers need in order to administer, to interpret, and to use the results to target instruction in a better way? So the Summer Institute provided the opportunity to address implementation issues, to address policy issues. It was a wonderful networking as well as roll-up-your-sleeves working groups to continue the development process.

MILLER: And you had mentioned that the very first one was at Irvine. You were there two years?

RICKARD: We were at UC Irvine two years and then we moved up to UC Santa Cruz for several years. Originally the Summer Institute was California only, but I think by 1984 other representatives—

MILLER: We started having visitors. [Chuckling]

RICKARD: We started having visitors from other states, because other states were experiencing some of the same issues with assessment that California had experienced in the late '70s, and other states were also looking for better ways to deliver curriculum and assessment. So, although [it was] the first Summer Institute, our California Department of Education—Don[ald] McCune [Director, Adult Education Field Services Division, 1975-86], [and] Dick Stiles—made an effort to invite a representative from each of the western region states. And some did come. We did in 1980 have a representative from Arizona, we had a representative from Nevada, and also from Oregon. So we did—

MILLER: Kept them apprised.

RICKARD: It was open, so that they could piggyback on and learn from the experience that we were having.

MILLER: Now you mentioned that the first field testing was ready by the fall of '81. The first . . . I don't want to say *real test*, but yes, for official purposes then started when, in '82?

RICKARD: Eighty-two [1982]. We took the results that we got from the field testing in '81, and based on that experience, we then refined the test forms and we continued item development. We looked at what the training needs were going to be to implement the system, and, in the fall of '82, implemented the pre-post testing for the first time in California.

MILLER: And that was for the local agencies that had federal grants?

RICKARD: It was made available to all federally funded adult basic education programs in California.

MILLER: Pat, do you recall early stumbling blocks, early problems in these formative . . . in the first two or three years? You had mentioned people looking at items, saying, "This is not an ESL item" or "This is not an ABE item." It seemed like there was quite a bit of that periodically.

RICKARD: I think some of the issues that we addressed ongoing over the years were [that] in the late '70s there were tests that were called ESL tests, and there were tests that were, in quotes, *for ABE learners*. One of the things that we discussed early on in looking at the competencies was that, if there was a specific reading competency, that both limited English proficient as well as native speakers of English ought to be able to demonstrate that particular

competency. So we were very, very careful that all items in all tests were field tested extensively across all levels of ESL, ABE, and, as appropriate at the upper end, GED/high school. We conducted extensive item bias studies in the early '80s. The California Department of Education contracted, I think it was in 1985, with an external evaluator that had expertise in measurement and evaluation to do a whole evaluation, an analysis of what we were doing, and also to look at item bias, gender bias, language bias, ethnicity bias. From the inception of CASAS and this project, we were concerned about and knew that we needed to address, and did address in all of our analysis, the behavior of the item with different ethnicities, different language groups, genders, and at different levels. We knew that this was going to be an issue, and indeed it had been an issue with us with other kid tests that we had been using in the late '70s. So we were very much aware, and built into our whole development process this kind of rigor, so that we could say, "These items in these tests are valid and reliable with both native and nonnative speakers of English."

MILLER: I know there was a little bit of concern at the time because of the influx of the refugees, in that so much of the field testing . . . there was a refugee base in that field testing.

RICKARD: That was actually a good thing.

MILLER: It was a good thing. It upscaled. . . .

RICKARD: Having the refugees really made everything that we did more comprehensive. We weren't just testing on Hispanics, we weren't just testing on an Asian or Chinese population, but we had an extensive database of item responses from significant groups, ethnicity groups and language groups, so that we were able to break down and do analysis by Vietnamese, by Laotian, by Hmong, by Korean, by Filipino, by Hispanic, in all of our top ethnicity [and] language groups that we were serving in California.

[End Tape 1, Side A]

[Begin Tape 1, Side B]

MILLER: This is tape 1, side B of the Pat Rickard interview. Pat, we were talking about some of the early problems or stumbling blocks. You have referred to it in terms of need for training, and you were talking about the scaling and how that came up. It seemed that a good deal of the Consortium meetings were spent by . . . I know the two gentlemen from San Jose, in educating the Consortium about assessment. And that was one of your major tasks, was just one of education about what you were trying to do.

RICKARD: I think that if you look at even within the K-12 system, not just adult education, the pre-service education that teachers have in assessment, it's from slim to none. It may be that a person has had one course in tests and measurements, but only addressing just the surface area and not the linking with instruction and not the underlying assessment. There is a real need still, and there was a strong need then, to spend some time talking about what is good assessment? What do we mean by valid assessment? What do we mean by reliable assessment? How does this relate to instruction? How does this impact instruction?

When we looked at some of the underlying psychometrics, why is an underlying fixed metric scale using Item Response Theory a better way to go than grade level? And as I said before, it wasn't that there was a strong belief that grade level was the proper way to go, I think it was more that—

MILLER: They didn't know anything else.

RICKARD: That was all that was available, and most teachers and most coordinators in their pre-service and their undergraduate and their graduate studies aren't given much training at all in terms of assessment. So, to undertake this effort, to set up a statewide consortium and have it field-based, field-driven, statewide, to

develop a better assessment system, it was absolutely critical that we brought in some more formal education training for the Consortium so that they could better direct the whole development effort.

John Davis, who was the Director of Research and Planning in the San Jose Unified School District, and Jim Moriel, who was the Director, I believe, of Data Processing in the San Jose district at the time, in the early '80s, actually had implemented and were one of the very first unified districts in California to implement an assessment system for the kid program with the underlying Rasch Single Parameter Item Response Theory, and had developed an item bank that they were currently using with the kid program. We called on them as a resource because they were California based and could provide the resources. The Metropolitan Adult Education Program [MAEP] in San Jose was one of our original Consortium members, and so John Davis and Jim Moriel, along with Dick Stiles, provided some initial professional technical expertise in measurement.

The other resources that we had at the time, in terms of measurement expertise, Portland public schools in Oregon also were one of the first districts in the nation to take the theoretical

model of the Rasch Single Parameter Item Response Theory and apply it to the real world. But it was again with what I call the K-12 or kid program within the Portland public schools, and they had some experience with item banking and developing tests and measuring progress across levels, across instructional levels, and had experience with grade level versus scale score.

The other two people that really need to be mentioned in addition to Dick Stiles, John Davis, Jim Moriel, and Fred Forester, is John Martois from the Los Angeles County Department of Education. John Martois, at the time that we were developing this system, was developing an item banking and measurement system for the Department of Defense schools in Europe, and L.A. County had that contract. He had an extensive background in not only Item Response Theory and analysis of items using Item Response Theory, but he helped us with item bias studies and what was a very new methodology at the time called the Mantel-Haenszel Item Bias Statistic. So John was extremely helpful.

We also brought together on several occasions John Martois and Ron Hambleton from the University of Massachusetts, Ron being a national expert and had written several books at the time on the application of Item Response Theory to education and to

K-12 basic skills assessment. We had Ron Hambleton also several times over the early years review what we were doing to make sure that we were on course, that the procedures that we were using were psychometrically solid, appropriate.

To point out what current measurement issues were, in terms of Item Response Theory, we were one of the first in the United States to apply this measurement theory to functional context items in tests, and definitely with adults.

MILLER: Definitely, yes.

RICKARD: That's a long way around your question.

MILLER: Yeah. That's okay. I remember Dick and John and Jim and how patient they were in working with the Consortium members. But in fact you came up with several people who had a great deal of expertise as far as working at the local level in assessment. One idea or goal perhaps—maybe idea is more like it—that you had early on was that each district would be able to construct their own test from the Item Bank, and in fact the early Item Bank you distributed to members of the Consortium. But that didn't work out. Do you want to tell us what happened there?

RICKARD: I was absolutely convinced in the early '80s that if we could put together a calibrated item bank, and it could be organized in such

a way that we could provide binders of camera-ready copies and we could provide the item stats, that we could set up a series of training workshops, and that with enough training help, that Consortium members and districts could then be able to construct tests for different purposes. So we developed not only item writing workshops and item writing training, we also developed an intensive three-day workshop—that you, Cuba, went through, I remember. And it was our fondest hope that by the end of that three-day workshop we had provided enough information and hands-on experience and background [for participants] to then take this Item Bank and develop tests for different purposes. And we were very clear that different designs, differently designed tests would be for different purposes. We spent a lot of time on what an appraisal would look like, or a placement, and what were the characteristics of a placement test versus. . . .

MILLER: An achievement test.

RICKARD: An achievement test, or how it would look different if you wanted to put together a test for certification at a given benchmark level, and what would be the attributes of that particular assessment and how it would be constructed and how it would be field tested. And I absolutely was convinced that with enough training we

[could] empower the field, place the tools in their hands, and that it would work. We would be able to train and districts then would be able to construct customized assessment that better fit their needs. [Tests] would be on a common scale so that we could reference across California student learning gains on a common scale but with some customized assessment. That was my fondest hope. The reality. . . .

MILLER: Well? [Chuckling]

RICKARD: The reality was that there were so many unintended outcomes that I had never anticipated. Again I think that it was not having the pre-training background, not having extensive background and training in assessment and measurement. Some things that I never dreamed would happen, happened, and it got to be too much, in terms of trying to provide technical support to forty-five different agencies trying to construct their own assessment. I guess I don't want to go into all the different ways.

MILLER: You don't want to remember all the pain. [Chuckling]

RICKARD: All the different ways that things could go wrong.

MILLER: Anyway, one good idea that didn't work. [Chuckling]

RICKARD: The impact on the staff here at CASAS was that it required an inordinate amount of our time per agency, in terms of technical

assistance, that we didn't have. Also, we started looking at the kinds of assessment that districts were constructing, and in most cases they were very, very similar. There was a core of common needs. So, from that experience we were able to pull back and look at [the process]. It was an extremely good learning experience. I think we gained a lot of knowledge from that. Both I did in directing the process, and also the field.

MILLER: The participants.

RICKARD: The participants, I think, began to realize how complex the process is to develop good assessment. They gained a greater appreciation for what goes into good measurement, good assessment that's linked to curriculum and instruction. So, if you look on it that way, I think we gained. As a state and as a Consortium, we gained a lot from that experience. From that we began to look across the state and see what some common needs were and what some of the districts were trying to do. There were some that wanted the Item Bank because they wanted to construct level exit tests, to say, "When is a learner ready to move from beginning to intermediate ESL? And when is a learner ready to move from intermediate to advanced?" So, rather than having a lot of individual efforts that took an inordinate amount of resources and time and energies, we

convened, again, another committee of the CASAS Consortium to look at common needs, to identify a core of competencies at a given level that the consortium members all agreed on, and that jointly we would put together some level exit tests. So level exit tests are only one example of what came out of that [process], and [it] really exemplifies how committees were set up. Committees were ad hoc committees. They were set up to address certain needs. When that need was met, the committee disbanded and we reformed to focus on another need.

Another example was we wanted to [address other types of assessments]. When we talk about comprehensive, we're not just talking about an item bank of pencil and paper multiple-choice items. We wanted to look at writing assessment, we wanted to look at performance-based assessment, we wanted to look at listening assessment. So committees started emerging in the early '80s based on these needs. At one point over a two-year period we had a committee that was focusing on the development of listening assessment. We had in the early to mid-'80s another committee that was focused on performance-based assessment, and that committee just went on and on.

MILLER: Ran away. [Laughter]

RICKARD: They were really [dedicated]. But out of that committee came some wonderful performance assessments. We had another committee that was very concerned about writing assessment and started developing some rubrics for writing assessment. We had another committee—and you were on that committee, Cuba—that dealt with how in the world we [were] going to manage all of this at the district level? And those that were coordinators and managers were more concerned about the logistics of how all of this [was] going to be put in place? What are the staff training needs [required] to put this in place? How are we going to aggregate data across levels and across our programs? And also looking at reporting, how are we going to report this to the state? So those were some of the issues that the management committee tackled at the time. So as we got into this, it took on the true meaning of the word *comprehensive* adult student assessment system.

MILLER: That certainly leads us into our next area, Pat. Without veering far from the original framework, CASAS nevertheless has changed and broadened its scope over the years. And you were talking about the emphasis on a committee working on writing and a committee working on applied performance. Before we get into

some of the other areas that were concentrated on, why don't we talk about just some of the logistical changes that took place? You changed your name from California Adult Student Assessment System to Comprehensive [Adult Student Assessment System]. When and why did that take place?

RICKARD: In March of 1984 we submitted the data that we had to date from our California agencies. We were invited by the U.S. Department of Education to submit the data and our claims to the Joint Dissemination Review Panel of the National Diffusion Network [NDN]. Our claims at the time were: that programs that implemented this system would be able to more accurately place learners into program; that learners within programs that implemented this system had better retention of students within program; and that there were more learning gains or learning outcomes of learners going through the program. We took all of our data that we had from the regional field test in the fall of '81 and in the fall of '82 across California and we submitted this data in a report to the Joint Dissemination Review Panel. They approved, blessed it, and said that our claims did hold up and we were approved as a validated adult assessment system.

We were eligible then to apply for funding through the National Diffusion Network, which we did. We had about a three-week period from the approval of the Joint Dissemination Review Panel to submit a full proposal to the National Diffusion Network. We were funded, and the very first state that wanted to adopt the CASAS system was Maryland. At that point, we made the decision to change the name from *California* to *Comprehensive* because it was no longer just a California system. We had received approval to disseminate nationally and wanted to reflect that in the name.

MILLER: Okay. Now, you started out under San Diego Community College District, and you've moved on to a couple of other sponsoring agencies since then. Take us through that sequence and what prompted the changes.

RICKARD: When we submitted to the National Diffusion Network in 1984, the coordination of the Consortium was funded under the San Diego Community College District. And I want to take a little crosswalk here. In addition to funding to coordinate and spearhead this development effort, the California Department of Education also gave mini-grants to the Consortium agencies to participate in the Consortium. So I want to make clear that the funding was not just from the California Department of Education

to the San Diego Community College District, but the forty-five agencies that participated as formal members of the Consortium—[1]

MILLER: Also had funding.

RICKARD: Also had funding, received board approval, formally submitted and were approved as formal members of the Consortium. So it was a formal consortium, not just San Diego. After we submitted and were approved for funding by the National Diffusion Network, receiving the funding [grant] within the San Diego Community College District was difficult because the mission of the district is to deliver services to learners within the district, and our board of trustees sometimes [had] a hard time understanding why—

MILLER: National needs.

RICKARD: National needs. The mission of the funding for NDN was to take what we had done in California. . . . The majority of the effort and the majority of the implementation [for NDN] was not for the benefit of the district. It was taking what had been done throughout California and sharing it with the nation. With the structure of the district, as with any district, what you need to do in terms of [local] policy, it [was] difficult to manage a national

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[1]See Appendix F for a list of agencies funded for the CASAS Consortium.

project. The San Diego Community College District had a foundation already established, the San Diego Community College District Foundation. So, when we applied for the funding for the National Diffusion Network, we applied for it under the San Diego Community College District Foundation. We were better able to manage the services that we needed to provide out of state under the district foundation.

MILLER: It gave you the flexibility you needed.

RICKARD: Yes. So the NDN project was [operated] under the district foundation. The work that we were doing within California was still under the district. As the project moved into the mid to late '80s, we moved more of the management under the district foundation. There hasn't really been a change since then, other than that the San Diego Community College District Foundation had a name change and became the Foundation for Educational Achievement.

MILLER: Oh, it was really just a name change there?

RICKARD: It's just a name change. The board of directors is the same, the CEO, ex-chancellor of the district [Garland Peed], is the same, so there's been no [other change] since that mid-'80s. . . .

MILLER: Correction.

RICKARD: Correction. There has been no change in the jurisdiction.

MILLER: One of the more positive features of CASAS is its adaptability to changing needs. Your first tests were the life skills reading and listening tests designed for local agencies with these federal grants. But you now have several kinds of specialized departments within the umbrella of CASAS. Tell us how you got there.

RICKARD: Well, as I said earlier, as life changes, so must the assessment system because we're trying to meet the needs of our adult learners who come to our programs. In the mid-'80s, there were two major new needs in our population. One, in the early '80s the Job Training Partnership Act came into being, JTPA, and many of our programs began serving learners whose goal was employment, to get a job and to keep a job. We were asked at that time to develop an appraisal that would be more appropriate for adult learners whose goal was employment. So the first Employability Competency System [ECS] appraisal of basic skills was developed in the mid-'80s at the request, at the need of our Consortium agencies, who were now serving more learners whose goal was employment. And our Consortium wanted an appraisal whose content focus was more focused on the competencies that we consider employability or pre-employment competencies. So we

were still measuring the reading, we were still measuring the math, but it was the math in the context of interpreting a paycheck stub, reading in the context of interpreting OSHA [Occupational Safety and Health Administration] or safety rules within the workplace, following a set of directions in order to get a machine to work. We were still focusing on the same kinds of reading competencies, but the context of the content was more appropriate to the learner's goal, which was employability. So that was one shift.

Also in late 1985, California passed new welfare legislation called GAIN, Greater Avenues for Independence. We were again at that time asked by the California Department of Social Services to develop an appraisal of basic skills that could be used by all fifty-eight county welfare departments, that would assess . . . give them a quick appraisal of what a welfare recipient's basic skill level was and whether or not that welfare recipient might need a referral to adult basic education or English as a second language programs. So we developed the GAIN Appraisal of Basic Skills. We included a reading section, a math section, and also a listening comprehension section because of the large number of limited-English-proficient people that California is dealing with [on] welfare. That was put in place in 1986 in all fifty-eight counties,

and all GAIN participants as a part of their orientation process were given the GAIN Appraisal. If they needed a referral to adult education, we set up a system whereby that score, that information, could come to the adult ed agency, and the adult ed agency wouldn't need to retest. So we were really trying to set up a more articulated system. And this was the first time that we started looking beyond adult ed, a collaboration or a better articulation with some of our other agencies that—

MILLER: Other state agencies.

RICKARD: Other state agencies and other county agencies that we deal with. Since this was statewide, and since the CASAS assessment system was in place across all of the federally-funded ABE programs in California, the Department of Social Services wanted to have something that matched [and] would feed into that system. And so, by us developing a customized GAIN Appraisal for use by county welfare departments, the results would be meaningful to the referrals into education.

MILLER: Almost a seed, a beginning for one-stop service that's so popular now.

RICKARD: Yes.

MILLER: So in vogue now, perhaps I should say. And the GAIN work was also to help in the employability programs, but also for those who needed the basic education before they could enter employability.

RICKARD: *Right, exactly. The other thing that was very close on the heels of* JTPA and GAIN was IRCA, the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986. This legislation had a huge impact on California. We had in California 1.6 million [undocumented immigrants] adjust [to legal status] under IRCA, and I think that this was one of the major . . . what I call *earthquakes* in adult education in California, to have that large of a number of people—many, many who were functioning at beginning levels of ESL—seriously, tremendously impact our ESL programs in California.

Because CASAS was designed as an open-architecture system—it was designed from the very beginning to be able to respond to new, changing, emerging needs—we have been able to respond to these needs. The competency [list] can be added to based on new emerging needs. With an item bank concept, new assessment can be constructed based on new needs. But we're not throwing out the old system. It truly is a systems approach to the delivery of assessment and instruction. So we were then able to look at the needs of this new population.

One absolute critical need was to determine. . . . Since we were not going to be able to serve 1.6 million—we did not have the capacity in California—we really had to set up some type of a pre-enrollment appraisal that would help agencies determine who had priority to ESL services in California. So that was the impetus for the development of the IRCA Pre-Enrollment Appraisal. [It] included a brief oral component, it included a listening comprehension component, and it included a reading component. The development was funded by our California Health and Human Services. That [agency] was the administrator, the single point of contact for the IRCA SLIAG [State Legalization Immigrant Assistance Grant] monies coming into California. So [through] the Health and Human Services, in coordination with the IRCA Amnesty Unit of the California Department of Education, we were asked to develop the IRCA Pre-Enrollment Appraisal and make it available to all agencies in California serving the IRCA SLIAG population. That was put in place over a three-year period, and I believe we assessed over 600,000 eligible legalized aliens within a very short period of time.

Because there was a huge need for teachers, and many teachers had no background in adult ed, we were involved at that

time in setting up a statewide teacher training tele-conference, with an uplink site at KPBS here in San Diego and downlink sites at fifteen different locations throughout California, to train approximately five thousand new teachers to be able to serve the IRCA amnesty population.

MILLER: IRCA led directly then a few years later into your citizenship component.

RICKARD: As the result of—

MILLER: Of legalizing 1.6 million people in California. [Chuckling]

RICKARD: —legalizing 1.6 million people in California, we became very closely involved, again under the auspices of the California Department of Ed, in working with the western region INS [Immigration and Naturalization Service]. One of the areas that we assisted with was developing a citizenship test that the western region INS could use that was more standardized than what they were currently doing. So that after the person adjusted to permanent status, and after

MILLER: Met residency requirements.

RICKARD: And met the residency requirements, and then went in for their interview, they also had to demonstrate a knowledge of the history and the government of the United States. At the time, each INS

examiner was asking a set of questions. It was not standardized, in terms of difficulty, in terms of the types of questions, the complexity of the questions that were asked. At the request of INS western region, we developed a standardized citizenship test that was then put on videotape. That was then made available to all of the other regions in the United States. That was our first step into the arena of the testing of this population for citizenship.[2]

MILLER: Maybe we just ought to mention that although you greatly . . . for JTPA and GAIN, you greatly expanded the employability function of CASAS and for IRCA and citizenship, that you didn't start from scratch for those, because the original competency list had a section that dealt with vocational and a section that dealt with government and law.

RICKARD: Right.

MILLER: So it was building on something that was already there rather than starting from scratch as these needs emerged.

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[2]From 1992-1998 CASAS served as an approved INS testing agency. The CASAS Basic Citizenship Skills Examination assessed basic knowledge of U.S. history and government and the ability to read, understand, and write basic English. Over 205,000 immigrants applying for citizenship were tested. The INS ended that testing program August 30, 1998.

RICKARD: Yes. Going back to . . . the system was designed as an open-architecture system. The base was there. As these needs emerged, we were building a very, very solid base, linking the assessment with curriculum and instruction. So as we had these new needs, we had the calibrated items in the bank to address these needs. If we didn't have everything that we needed, we had ongoing item writing and field testing. All during the 1980s we never stopped, in terms of development. It was an ongoing development cycle as the needs changed. So we were then able to respond to JTPA, and then to GAIN, and then to IRCA, and other needs along the way.

You know, we haven't talked about special ed.

MILLER: Special ed, where you took the scale down.

RICKARD: [Yes], and looked at adults initially with developmental disabilities and how we might better assess them. We haven't really talked about the adults with learning difficulties, looking at research and how this system can best meet their needs. We had several special projects dealing with incarcerated adults in the jails and our state prison system. And we also at this time, in the late '80s, developed an assessment for the Federal Bureau of Prisons, which is currently in place throughout the United States, dealing with limited-

English-proficient adults within the Federal Bureau of Prisons, assessing their listening and reading needs.

MILLER: And the homeless that came in?

RICKARD: Yes, in the early '90s we started working with programs that were funded through the McKinney Act, and they had a need to be able to have some determination whether lack of basic skills was one of the barriers, amongst many of course, contributing to the homelessness.

MILLER: Did they use the ECS or did they use the life skills, or both?

RICKARD: They used the ECS appraisal because it was more appropriate. Because of its employability focus, it was more appropriate to the population and the goals for this population. So we simply used what we had used for JTPA.

MILLER: So, as these various needs have emerged and you have grown to meet them, you actually have kind of several major subdivisions now with their own managers within your system.

RICKARD: We have, for example, special education. Special education has been a part of CASAS since its inception in 1980, but over the years we have looked at what the changing needs are of the special education population. We started out focusing primarily on the developmentally disabled adults and looking at below the A level

and how can we best measure this population. And in more recent years we have received three different grants from the U.S. Department of Education, two of them looking at the CASAS system and validating it on secondary students with learning disabilities that move into post-secondary settings, including adult ed and community colleges. And we are currently working on one three-year funded project that is looking at adults with developmental disabilities and assessing them in supported work, behavioral assessment in supported work situations. And that's just winding up its third year, and that will be disseminated. So we have continued over the years. Because we have had a sustaining effort, we have had one of our program managers have full responsibility just for focusing on the needs of this population, the field testing involved, and we actually have. . . . It's been one of our longest-standing committees in the CASAS Consortium, the Special Ed Committee. The Special Ed Committee never disbanded. [Chuckling] They are still going.

MILLER: And you also have managers for the 321 grants.

RICKARD: Yes.

MILLER: And an employability manager.

RICKARD: Right. Also, in terms of employability, an emerging need in the 1990s was with workplace literacy, and more of our agencies were working with the workplace. We looked at what we had done with the Employability Competency System, and although that was fine for getting a job, keeping a job, we wanted to expand that to meet some emerging needs for literacy learning in the workplace. So in the early to mid-'90s we began developing WLS, the Workforce Learning Systems, which is really designed for those already employed that want to upgrade their skills. It includes a task analysis of what the literacy tasks are in certain jobs, it includes an appraisal of where the workers are in relation to the jobs, and it sets up a plan for customized training and customized education to help those workers in that particular workplace. So that was an offshoot of ECS to WLS, and we have not only a manager that just focuses on that, but, within California and nationally, a corps of certified trainers that have been trained to provide the training and the follow-up technical assistance to put that in place.

MILLER: You've just mentioned a corps of certified trainers. I was going to ask you, if I were Mary Jones from Center Town, U.S.A., and wanted to give CASAS tests, could I just order them?

RICKARD: Well, what we have found over the years is that in order to implement good assessment we really have to provide training. It would not be responsible for us to just put the tests out without training in the proper use. So we have had a policy over the last nineteen years that in order to be able to implement the system, to be able to order materials to implement them in your program, we would provide training for you. And that has been absolutely one of our quality control points that has worked over the years.

I've talked a little bit about Certified Trainers. Our involvement with the National Diffusion Network over an eleven-year period was extremely helpful to us because we were able to learn from nationally funded programs throughout the United States strategies that worked, best practices, what works in terms of an installation, an adoption that has a sustained effort over time. And there's a lot of research that this is based on, but one of the things that we gained from our NDN experience was that you need to provide training, you need to provide follow-up technical assistance, and you need to give the programs tools for ongoing program evaluation. Within that system, we learned that it was really necessary to develop a corps of what we call Certified Trainers, both within California and nationally. When we go in

and work with another state, our goal is to develop capacity within that state to sustain the effort themselves and not rely on us to come and continually give training to new agencies. So, when we work with a state in adopting CASAS, we first go in with existing Certified Trainers to provide training to the pilot programs that we'll be implementing. After they have had the experience of implementing a year, we identify those that would like to move into Certified Trainer status. In the second wave of training, we involve those local facilitators who implemented in their agencies, who want to move to the next step, and they become observers and co-trainers in training the next group. We then, in the third step, watch them and observe them as they do an initial training. And then, if satisfactory, they become certified to train other agencies. Our Certified Trainers receive ongoing training to improve their skills at our Summer Institute.

[End Tape 1, Side B]

[Begin Tape 2, Side A]

MILLER: This is tape 2 of the Pat Rickard interview. Pat, CASAS has had, needless to say, a major impact on California's adult education programs—or perhaps I should say on California, since it's now

gone beyond adult education programs. Could you just please summarize that influence, in California to start with?

RICKARD: In California, from 1980 until now, what we have in place is a curriculum that better meets the needs of our adult learners and the variety of different learning needs. We haven't mentioned yet the Curriculum Index and Matrix, but I think I'd like to bring that in here. We, as a Consortium in California, as we identified the competencies and as we were developing the Item Bank, also [had] a committee of the Consortium identifying appropriate, relevant competency based curriculum materials that targeted the competencies at specific [instructional] levels. That was a major effort in the 1980s. As a result of that effort, book publishers, commercial publishers started actually developing materials that targeted the competencies. California was such a huge market in adult education that publishers began paying attention to what the needs were. So we in California and the California CASAS Consortium, as a result of the very focused identification of this core of competencies that were appropriate and needed by the adult learners, were able to focus the efforts nationally on a variety of publishers of curriculum materials, to provide better and more age-appropriate materials for our programs. That has had a major

impact. I would say that today if you walk into our classrooms in California, you're much more likely to see appropriate curriculum and instruction taking place as a result of this effort in the '80s and '90s.

Also, I think that throughout California you will see a better placement process in place than we had in the early '80s. Our learners are being placed into more appropriate program levels. We are better charting a learner's progress through program. We are in California able now to articulate across programs, where we could not do that in the past. In 1980, we in San Diego, if we talked and said, "We have 40 percent of our learners at the beginning level," that had very little relevance to what San Francisco called their beginning level. And, in fact, our beginning level was much lower in San Diego than San Francisco's, quote, *beginning level.* But by putting in place this assessment system, we for the first time were able to clearly articulate levels across program, to report progress across programs, and to better communicate across the Consortium the progress that our learners were making within program and exiting program. I think that has had a major effect on the quality of our delivery system.

MILLER: And of course we've got sixteen years of data now on that learning, the outcomes of the 321 testing.[3]

RICKARD: We have one of the most significant databases in the nation on our adult learners, and, over a period of years, not just learning gains but other outcomes: completing a level, completing a program, passing the GED. We have a much better handle than we've ever had in the past on whom we're serving, what are their needs, why are they coming to our programs, what are their goals, and then what are the learning outcomes that have been achieved? We had none of this in 1980. We have probably one of the richest databases of any state in the nation now.

MILLER: Okay, and in addition to the data on our 321, I think you mentioned that you also have the largest database on welfare recipients.

RICKARD: Right. We have over a ten-year period, with the GAIN Appraisal being put in place across all fifty-eight counties in California, we have assessed over five hundred thousand welfare recipients over a ten-year period. So we have a very rich database to be able to

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[3]Section 321 of the Adult Education Act provides funds, administered by the states, to eligible local agencies. They are referred to as 321 agencies. The funds may be referred to as ABE grants. Agencies that receive these funds are required to report demographic and assessment data.

describe our welfare population, to be able to describe their basic skill needs within, by county, across counties, and across the state. The data hasn't changed too much over a ten-year period. Approximately 60 percent of our welfare recipients in California are in need of basic skills as a part of their ability to get and keep a job and get off welfare.

MILLER: Which ought to have huge impact on policy, but somehow they make policy without acknowledging that, don't they? [Chuckling]

RICKARD: Right. Well, the new policy is get a job, any job, then get a better job. We'll see how well that goes with some of our adults who really lack very basic literacy skills.

MILLER: Pat, you mentioned the impact that had been on curriculum and the kinds of materials that were available and so on. And I guess ideally one would say, "Select competencies, build your curriculum, and assess," but is it fair to say that assessment has in large part driven curriculum in California?

RICKARD: I think the competencies have driven curriculum. The assessment has all been developed to measure—

MILLER: Based on the competencies.

RICKARD: Based on the competencies. If I were to say what has driven our program in California, it goes all the way back to the very

beginnings of this conversation where we talked about the move to a more competency based approach, that it's more relevant for our adult learners. It's perceived by our adult learners as more relevant to their needs. And in fact, our adult learners very much have been a part of this process in saying, "What are our needs and what are the competencies that are needed to achieve our goals?" It has been very much learner-centered and learner-driven as well as field-based. The learner is a part of that field, and it's been very much a field-based, field-driven system. So I wouldn't say that the assessment has driven it; I would have to say the competency—

MILLER: The competency list upon which the assessment was built—

RICKARD: The competencies have driven the system because there has been a widespread buy-in that these are important, these are high-priority, and are needed. The curriculum materials have been identified based on those competencies. All of the assessment has been developed based on those competencies. So it's not the case, like in the K-12 program, where the board of education adopts a test and then the test starts driving the curriculum. I would have to say that within our system, both within California and other states, the assessment makes the teacher more aware of, and it's more overt,

what is important. Because, yes, what is measured by definition becomes important, but because we started with the competencies first and then the assessment, I think that the competencies drive the system. The assessment supports that, but the assessment makes real to the learner, to the teacher. . . .

MILLER: The need to address the competencies.

RICKARD: The need to address the competencies. It simply informs the instructor and the program manager of the competencies that have been mastered and the competencies that are needed.

MILLER: Okay. Now, also part of the impact—and we've talked about these but I think we just need to mention them again under impact—are the other state agencies, the JTPA, the GAIN, the corrections. Do we need to add anything to that, as far as impact is concerned?

RICKARD: I think that I'd have to go out of state and look at impact that we've had. And I mentioned the Federal Bureau of Prisons has now adopted CASAS customized appraisals specifically that are used not only in California in the federal prisons but throughout the United States in all of the federal prisons. Several national programs have also used CASAS instruments as a part of their evaluation. The National Even Start Evaluation used the CASAS life skills pre- and post-tests as a part of the national evaluation of

Even Start programs. The National Evaluation of Adult Education programs that took place between 1990 and 1994, funded by the U.S. Department of Ed with a contract to Development Associates—CASAS received a subcontract, and our role was to provide the assessment and the data collection arm for that national study. CASAS assessment was used throughout the ESL programs and some of the ABE programs in that national study. So California has indeed with this project shared enormously our experiences and what we have developed with the rest of the nation.

MILLER: Okay, let's go on with that. You were talking about these evaluation programs, you mentioned to me at some point earlier that you're going to be used in another evaluation study that's just getting started.

RICKARD: I've just come from a meeting where we talked about the national adult longitudinal study [Longitudinal Study of Adult Learners], and this is a study that's under the auspices of NCSALL [National Center for Study of Adult Learning and Literacy], which is out of Harvard University and World Education. Steve [Stephen] Reder from Portland State University is responsible for this aspect of the study, and they will be looking at, on a pilot basis, learners who

are within program in some programs in Oregon. And of course Oregon has implemented CASAS statewide across all of their programs, so they will be using the CASAS TOPS [Tracking of Programs and Students] system and the CASAS test data as a part of the data collection for that effort. They're also considering the use of CASAS for learners outside of the program participation.

MILLER: A control group.

RICKARD: A control group, tracking them over a three-year period. So it would include home interviews plus assessment, and incidences of learners' literacy practices, both for those that are participating in programs and those that aren't participating in programs, over a three-year period. So, we're looking forward to being a part of that national study.

MILLER: Okay. Other than these national studies, you certainly are used in many, many states in the country. How many now? You've had state adoptions, and then in other states there are just major agencies that use the system.

RICKARD: We have had state adoptions in approximately eighteen states. We have a presence in all fifty states. And by *a presence*, I mean that there may be individual programs within that state that are using the CASAS system but they're not statewide. Also, when I say *a*

state adoption, in a few cases that adoption is not the adult education system. In one state it's with the JTPA system statewide, and their adult education system as of yet has not—

MILLER: Hasn't come on board.

RICKARD: It hasn't come on board, but the state JTPA system has implemented statewide. In one case, the state Department of Corrections has adopted CASAS statewide and the ABE system has not. In some states such as Oregon, CASAS has been implemented statewide across almost all of their agencies, JTPA, Health and Human Services, corrections, community college system, volunteer programs, welfare, and—

MILLER: And whatever else comes up.

RICKARD: And what is really very powerful about that is, in the case of Oregon, they now have a statewide database across programs that looks at the literacy needs of their adult population, no matter what agency is serving them. So I think Oregon has made great strides. We have states such as Connecticut that have adopted and have been implementing CASAS since the mid-'80s. And not only have they implemented across their adult education system, but it's being used in their JTPA system and in their Welfare to Work system. In some states they have a policy that they're not going to

have, quote, *statewide adoptions*. But each county, county by county, makes their own selection, and currently an example of that would be Florida, where we're working with a number of different counties, and very large counties in southern Florida, but there is not a statewide adoption.

MILLER: Not an official statewide adoption.

RICKARD: So, it varies from state to state. In some states it may be that it's implemented in a few local programs for ABE and ESL, but not statewide anywhere. So, if you look on it that way, we have a presence in all fifty states at this point, but statewide adoptions in approximately eighteen. And we're currently working with about four other states who . . . because of state mandates and new state laws, must put in place an accountability system within the next year. And so—

MILLER: So they're looking for one ready-made. [Chuckling]

RICKARD: Yes, and they'd like it instantly. [Chuckling] I think that this is a good place to talk about what does it take to implement a system versus a test. Implementing a system—

MILLER: CASAS is not a test. CASAS is a system. [Chuckling]

RICKARD: Well, it's a systems change.

MILLER: Of course it is.

RICKARD: It's a change agent for a whole system. It impacts curriculum, it impacts instruction, it impacts the placement process, movement of students from level to level, it has implications for ongoing staff development, it provides very excellent validated tools for program evaluation. But change takes place over time. Change, no matter what the innovation, no matter what the change is, it doesn't happen instantly. And it requires planning, it requires training, it requires ongoing technical assistance, it requires buy-in from administrators, coordinators, and instructors. This just doesn't happen overnight. Sometimes we'll get a call from a state and they'll say, "We've heard about this CASAS [first *A* mispronounced, as in *cat*] thing. Could you please just send us the test for our review?" And we're used to that by now. In the end they—

MILLER: You say, "Yes, I'll be pleased to send you some information about CASAS." [emphasizing correct pronunciation]

RICKARD: Right. And in some cases it ends up as a banker's box of review materials, based on what their needs are. So, it's been an interesting experience over many years to look at what does it take to implement a systems change. So we have a lot of data now.

MILLER: You had earlier mentioned being invited by the National Dissemination Network, or rather the Joint Review Panel, to

submit data for validation, and you got that. But I think maybe just to point out how significant that is, there have been very few adult education programs that have ever been validated at the national level.

RICKARD: There have been very few. The External Diploma Program [EDP] is another example of a federally funded—

MILLER: Validated.

RICKARD: It's federally validated and it's one of the very few. . . . CASAS is one of the very few. The EDP is one. There was a—

MILLER: A reading program at Kentucky.

RICKARD: A reading program out of Kentucky, project FIST [Functional In-Service Training] out of New Jersey, Project CLASS that we mentioned earlier, the Clovis project.

MILLER: I think that's it.

RICKARD: Those basically are the only ones over the fifteen-year history of the National Diffusion Network. CASAS is the only one of those that we just mentioned that went back for revalidation, and was successfully revalidated in '93. In '93 we had data not only from California, but we now had replication data, statewide replication data, from Connecticut, from Oregon, and from North Carolina that we used as a part of the process. And again, we

looked at the claims of: implementing this system produces better and more appropriate, accurate placement of learners into program; it produces more accurate monitoring of learners within program; and learners in these programs achieve more and better outcomes than learners in other programs. And we were able to substantiate. . . . Those claims were revalidated, and it's the only adult assessment system that has ever been validated.

MILLER: Very good. It's not only California [and the nation] that you've influenced. How much time have you spent in Australia now, Pat? [Chuckling]

RICKARD: Well, that's an interesting connection. I think it was in the mid- to late '80s, there was a researcher in Melbourne who was looking [internationally] at others who were doing research on competency based approaches to adult education, and in the literature she had run across the word *CASAS*. We received a letter of inquiry as to what we were doing here in California, and over a period of several years continued to correspond. We shared some of our annual reports with the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology and this researcher. As we had new data we shared it. And then in the mid-'90s—

MILLER: About three years ago.

RICKARD: About three or four years ago, one of the professors from the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Patrick Griffin, was in the United States and visited CASAS, to actually meet us to gather more information while he was here on other business. As a result of that meeting, he became very intrigued with what we were doing, could see the relevance to programs that he was involved in in Australia, and so we invited him to the Summer Institute. As a result of his attendance at the Institute and his talking with other National Consortium members, he invited us to come to Australia to do some presentations at different cities around Australia to see what the interest might be. And there was quite a bit of interest. As a result of that first trip where we did presentations in Sydney and Melbourne, we met with some federal staff in Canberra, we presented at the University of Tasmania, and to adult educators, to employment and training people, and to their welfare equivalent, we were invited back the following year to do two weeks of training. So, as a result of that, CASAS is being implemented in some programs in Australia. Patrick Griffin is now at the University of Melbourne and offers an institute each year, and as a part of that institute, we have several certified trainers that provide training sessions.

MILLER: From here that go over there, you mean? Or that you have certified over there?

RICKARD: That we have certified.

MILLER: Over there?

RICKARD: We have several certified trainers.

MILLER: In Australia?

RICKARD: Right, in Australia.

MILLER: I know you've done some preliminary work with Mexico, but nothing has ever been finalized there. Is that correct?

RICKARD: We have had ongoing meetings over a number of years with our counterparts in Tijuana, in Mexicali, and our program manager, Jane Eguez, has had several meetings with staff from Mexico City, both staff in Mexico City that are dealing with adult literacy issues nationally and vocational training issues nationally. Again, the talks are ongoing. We have not at this point had any implementations in Mexico. As a result of a project several years ago, we do have a Spanish literacy test that's functional and context-based.

MILLER: [Chuckling] Okay, so as you went beyond California, you formed another consortium.

RICKARD: Well, we extended the concept of the California CASAS Consortium. And it happened gradually. One of the strengths of the Consortium is it provides an ongoing needs assessment to set priorities for needed development and implementation. So, we looked at the model that has been so successful over so many years in California, and I truly believe the strength of CASAS is the Consortium. As states began adopting CASAS, we were struggling with the need for ongoing technical assistance, ongoing staff development, nurturing of the Certified Trainers in other states. So it was absolutely a natural thing to simply extend the Consortium to a National Consortium. We have maintained the California Consortium over many years, but now have a National Consortium, and California has a seat in that National Consortium, but it includes representatives from all of the other eighteen states that have large-scale implementation. We have also included a few states that have a large-scale implementation. It might not necessarily be—

MILLER: Even if it's not a full-state adoption?

RICKARD: It's not a full-state adoption, but a significant number of counties in that state have adopted. They have state Certified Trainers, and we need to maintain ongoing training for those Certified Trainers.

We have also in the last year set up a policy steering committee of the National Consortium to address national policy issues that deal with accountability, that deal with reporting, that deal with consistency of data across states. And that group is simply a subcommittee of the National Consortium.

MILLER: Their working committee. [Chuckling]

RICKARD: Yes.

MILLER: Okay. You mentioned that during initial development and implementation that CASAS, the parent organization and also the districts in the early Consortium, were fully funded through California's federal project funds. That's no longer true.

RICKARD: Correct.

MILLER: What does the state still fund CASAS to do?

RICKARD: Currently our funding is for the ongoing management of the accountability system. We are not funded with the California federal funds for item development. We are funded to provide training, technical assistance, training materials to all federally funded adult basic ed agencies in California, to collect and analyze the data, and provide reports as required, both for federal and for state policy makers. We are funded to provide some staff

development for teachers and for coordinators, and we're funded to provide TOPS software to the agencies that want it.

MILLER: Are you still providing the tests for the agencies that have to test?

RICKARD: Yes. If an agency is chosen as a part of the sample for that year, and they need additional testing materials, those are included as a part of the contract.

MILLER: And the data collection for accountability has broadened just recently.

RICKARD: Yes.

MILLER: Do you want to just mention that? It used to be just the 321 agencies.

RICKARD: Right. There is an increasing demand for more accountability, not only at a federal level but from our state legislature. So, in addition to the federal ABE reporting requirements, in the last few years we have had several state laws passed that have really impacted adult ed. One is S.B. [Senate Bill] 645, and the follow-on legislation [S.B.] 394, which requires that adult education programs report out learning gains and other program impacts—program level completion, program completion—and the discussion and the policy of how all of this is going to happen is still in flux. But that's one of the pressure points.

We have had an increasing need, because we have so much state funding for adult education programs in California, to be more accountable for the learning outcomes. What is the cost benefit of all the money that is being put forth to our programs in California? So, expanding from the very good, well-maintained and institutionalized accountability system that we have in place for our federally funded programs, we were asked to expand [data collection] to other adult schools that were not receiving ABE 321 funding, but [were] providing services and receiving state dollars from CDE [California Department of Education].

We also expanded it this past year to the GED/high school level, which currently is not a part of the [current State Plan for California, but is an eligible part of the] federal [ABE] program. Although there is talk that we need to reconsider whether or not we should include the GED/high school as a part of our [next] State Plan. But for state funding purposes, it was included. So this year, fall of '97, for the first time [data collection] was expanded to include all programs serving ABE, ESL, citizenship, GED/high school completion, and vocational. The data is just coming in at this point. We have been working with a statewide Data and Accountability Committee made up of representatives

from the three professional adult education organizations in the state: CCAE [California Council for Adult Education]; ACSA [Association of California School Administrators]; and CAAEA [California Association of Adult Education Administrators]. And as a footnote, you can say what they mean.

MILLER: Yes. [Chuckling]

RICKARD: And the California Department of Education has convened a state Policy and Issues Committee comprised of representatives of these three organizations. A subcommittee of the Policy and Issues Committee is the Data and Accountability Committee. We've been working very closely with this committee to help implement this expanded accountability across the adult education programs. They have been absolutely instrumental in making it happen this fall.

MILLER: Now, you were talking about the expanded accountability here. At this point that does not involve testing in those other areas, does it?

RICKARD: No.

MILLER: Isn't it the demographics and the goals and the outcomes and the completions?

RICKARD: Right.

MILLER: But no test data as such?

RICKARD: Well, for example, with the GED/high school program, if the person is there in order to get a GED, the GED certificate is the testing, and that's the most appropriate. So, in looking at CASAS as a comprehensive adult student assessment system, that's appropriate.

MILLER: Absolutely.

RICKARD: The GED practice test, the GED, that's very appropriate as an outcome. If the person is going for their high school diploma, the reported outcome is: did they indeed get a diploma? With our vocational training programs, many of them already have embedded certification tests that are tied to state licensing requirements, and so the outcome for that particular learner is that they not only completed that particular vocational training program but achieved or passed the certificate, that in some cases is a state certificate which enables them to get a job in that particular field.

MILLER: Now Pat, has this covered the ROPs [Regional Occupational Programs] as well, or is it strictly the adult school system, the adults in ROPs?

RICKARD: I'm not certain at this point as we speak in April of '98 how ROPs, both youth and adult, will be involved in responding to S.B. 645

and 394. I know they will, I'm not sure in what way. But for right now, in the fall of '97 adult vocational programs were included.

MILLER: In talking about our current status then, Pat, I know the State Consortium still meets and that there's still a Summer Institute, but they don't serve the same function that they did early on. What's their status now?

RICKARD: The Summer Institute since 1980 has changed in terms of its focus. In the early '80s, as we said earlier, it was a roll-up-your-sleeves opportunity to do nitty-gritty developmental work. The whole system needed to be developed. The competencies, the curriculum, the items, the tests, the training, everything, the ISAM [Institutional Self-Assessment Measure], the CASAS Implementation Measure [CIM], the program evaluation, everything needed to be developed. The shift in focus over the years has been that many of those pieces now are in place. We have a very, very solid base for the system. There are new components that need to be developed and field-tested and refined, but as we expand, and we have a huge turnover in staff in adult ed, the effort has shifted to a need for ongoing staff development.

Staff development is never done. In adult education we have to be ever vigilant, in terms of the ongoing professional development. So, one of the functions of the Summer Institute now is to provide that intensive, hands-on all-day training that's really needed to help agencies implement the system. And for agencies that have been implementing the system for many years, it's an opportunity for them to send teachers and new program coordinators to the Institute to be trained, to come back to help maintain and enhance the system within their district. So that's one major shift over the years. Now we organize the Summer Institute so that one of the three days we include most of the full-day training sessions. And it's heavy-duty, hands-on, and people leave with a huge stack of materials.

The other purpose for the Institute is to provide networking across agencies. And after many, many years, it's one of the best methods of staff development, to provide the opportunity for agencies and staff to come together to share what works. We've now moved into Best and Promising Practices, Programs of Excellence, looking at models of what's successful in one district so that other districts that are grappling with an issue can look at a

district and say, "Aha! That's how they solved the problem." So it's providing a forum for that opportunity.

The third major shift of focus in the Summer Institute is to address new policy issues as they come up and help agencies see how that's going to impact them at the local level. Such as in the summer of '98, we are going to convene a featured panel on accountability, and it will include a representative from the U.S. Department of Education, we'll have somebody from the U.S. Department of Labor, and then we'll have several state directors, including California, that will say, "This is what we're doing in our state to address the increasing need for accountability. Here's how we're dealing with the policy, here's how we're dealing with practice, here's how we're providing the infrastructure support in order for our programs to be able to respond." And it now has expanded so that we can learn from other states. It's not just California sharing what we've done with the rest of the states. But now with other states implementing the system, it's a chance for them to give back or to share what they've done. And we can learn from the other states. I think it's a wonderful ongoing opportunity that we can build on each other's strengths and move forward.

MILLER: Pat, you alluded to it, but just as staff development is never done, developmental needs don't go away.

RICKARD: Right.

MILLER: How do you address developmental needs now since you're no longer being funded by California for development?

RICKARD: We have received some funding from other states with their 353 dollars. For example, when Oregon wanted a customized appraisal that would work across all of their agencies, we were funded by the state of Oregon to develop the BASIS [Basic Adult Skills Inventory System] Appraisal. And as a part of that, we needed to do some item field testing and test field testing. We have been asked by the state of Washington to develop an oral appraisal for their intake process. So we're receiving not full funding but partial funding for item development from the state of Washington in order to do that. When the state of Washington JTPA program needed a customized statewide appraisal for their JTPA program, we were funded to develop that. When that developmental process is ended and we have implemented the research that has been done, then the calibrated items go into our bank. So we're getting help from other states now. As they have specific state needs, they can fund a piece of it. With Oregon, with TOPS

development, they wanted a customized intake entry form that better captured some data elements that were unique to Oregon. Oregon funded the development of that. Iowa has provided funding to CASAS for three separate studies that were done: a norming study, a survey, and an implementation study. The state of Iowa with their 353 money paid for that. We had with JTPA a project in the late '80s called the Project of the States, a consortium of about seven states for JTPA and they wanted a customized . . . not only appraisal but pre- and post-testing. They funded all of that development.

MILLER: So it's a bit here and a bit there.

RICKARD: It's where we see a need. And as the National Consortium identifies a critical need, what we will do is to say if there are three states that have that high-priority need, then can they fund it? And it's more cost-effective to look across states and pool their resources than for each state to develop individually. I'm trying to think of a couple of other instances. In Connecticut we developed a customized appraisal for Connecticut, and have done some further refinement and research for them which they have funded, which contributes then to the system.

The other area where we get funding is we look for grants. We submit proposals for grants. For example, to meet the needs of the developmentally disabled and the learning disabled population, we submitted proposals specifically to get funding in order for us to be able to validate some current assessments with an L-D [learning disabled] secondary population that were transitioning into post-secondary. And now the Power Project. So all of the development of the Power Project is coming from the U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education.

MILLER: So is it fair to say then that you mostly operate now on a fee-for-service basis, as far as development is concerned?

RICKARD: Yes. If a specific state has a specific need for development, then we'll sit down with them and look at what that need is.

[End Tape 2, Side A]

[Begin Tape 2, Side B]

MILLER: This is side B of tape 2 of the Pat Rickard interview. Pat, what do you see in the future for CASAS?

RICKARD: As federal and state accountability needs increase and there is more pressure put on local programs to produce better data, I'll think we'll be busier and busier. [Chuckling]

MILLER: Okay. You think the federal government is taking care of your future then. [Chuckling]

RICKARD: When we first started the system, and as a California Consortium the impetus was program improvement, better services to the learners, learner-focused and learner-centered. It was not high-stakes assessment. Nobody was going to get their funding cut off because of it. No learner was going to be denied services because of the results of assessment. The whole focus of the assessment system and the impetus was better delivery to the learner, better program services, ongoing and better evaluation. But that evaluation was to improve program, to allocate resources, to target staff development. The accountability that we have had in the past for the federal ABE program has been: to provide the data to look at our learners; to report out whom we're serving; are we serving the target need, the least educated most in need; to report out learning gains; and to report out other learning outcomes. But in the past, you as a program director would not have your funding cut off from your federal program if your learners didn't achieve a certain level of learning gain. So, when we talk about low stakes, that's what I mean. The focus was very much on learner/program improvement.

There has been a shift in the last couple of years, and as our partners and state agencies and federal agencies are requiring, requesting more accountability, and we're now starting to hear the term *performance-based accountability* come into the common vocabulary, the stakes are going from more low stakes to high stakes. And that truly changes the dynamic of what we're talking about. It becomes even more critical that we are able to have valid and reliable assessment that directly matches our program and learner goals and outcomes, that we have a better data management system that's more automated so that we're not absolutely burdened with the paperwork requirements of the accountability, and that we can better articulate our program success and our learner success to our collaborating agencies in JTPA, Department of Labor, Health and Human Services. So the stakes indeed are going up, and the accountability needs are indeed increasing. That's not going to change. That is not going to go away very soon. I think that what we have so carefully put in place since the early '80s, we are very lucky at this point to have it in place, because we are going to be able to, in those states that have implemented it, be able to respond appropriately to the increased need.

MILLER: To the new demands.

RICKARD: And the new demands. The states that don't have anything in place are really scrambling right now. And as we talked about before, it takes time for systems to change. We have had the good fortune in California to be working on this since the early '80s, and not just CASAS but CASAS in conjunction with 353-funded staff development efforts, 353-funded dissemination efforts over many years. Although the provider has changed, the services, the integrated delivery of services to our agencies hasn't shifted that much in terms of support for assessment, support for staff development, support for dissemination and technology over many years. We have that infrastructure in place. We have the training workshops developed. We have a cadre of Certified Trainers. We have a history now of sixteen years of data collection. We have experience in what works, what doesn't work. We're ahead of the game. We're very fortunate to be ahead of the game. Some states aren't. I think we are well positioned in California to respond to the new accountability needs.

MILLER: Pat, I remember, digress here, early on in the Consortium Dick [Stiles] telling us—I mean he was talking about the importance of accountability and good data—but saying that the way things used

to be is that districts would give everything from local-made tests to ABLE [Adult Basic Learning Examination] to . . . what's the other one?

RICKARD: TABE [Test of Adult Basic Education], WRAT, CAT.

MILLER: To CTBS [California Test of Basic Skills], WRAT, CAT.

RICKARD: The WRAT, CAT, TABE, ABLE, GAIN, Nelson.

MILLER: And that, of course, none of those had any crosswalks, and so all the local districts would send things in to a state—you know, *a* state—he was talking nationally. They'd add them up and divide and come up with an average. And the states would send them in to the feds, and the feds would add them up and divide and come up with an average. [Chuckling] All of which meant nothing.

RICKARD: It was meaningless.

MILLER: Absolutely nothing.

RICKARD: It was absolutely meaningless.

MILLER: Okay, let's get back to this. [Chuckling]

RICKARD: So where we were in the late '70s, we are a long, long ways away from where we were in the late '70s.

MILLER: Yes. Okay, you've been in project management now since 1980 with this project. What keeps you going? What are the rewards for you?

RICKARD: I don't know. [Chuckling]

MILLER: There have to be rewards.

RICKARD: I do love working in adult education. Working in adult education, first with adult learners and then with other adult educators, has been rewarding and gratifying. I think that people that gravitate to adult education seem to be more innovative thinkers, think outside the box, believe that change is possible, are more inclined to try out new things, are more inclined to share and work together. I think that we have had a unique and wonderful opportunity in California that hasn't had many other instances that I can think of, even in other parts of education, and that is a sustaining collaborative effort of a consortium to work with over a period of years. Many times in many states, 309-, 310-, 353-funded projects are one-year projects. Put the money out on the stump, fund the project. The next year, fund another—

MILLER: Put the report on the shelf.

RICKARD: The next year fund a new batch of projects, the next year say, "Well, we've done curriculum, let's do evaluation," and put more money out on the stump. We know from a lot of research over many years that that's not a very effective way to spend our 353 dollars. I think California has been fairly unique over many, many

years of having a very laser-focused vision, with the 353 monies all supporting that vision, that mission, and sustaining that effort, knowing that change doesn't come instantly, that change happens over time, that change requires an intensive effort. I think that California has been incredibly prudent and wise with their 353 dollars to focus the efforts and their determination.

MILLER: I remember Don McCune speaking of that in terms of using the projects to leverage what he wanted to take place at the local agencies.

RICKARD: Yes. Looking at state policy, looking at what was needed in the field, and then looking at how our 353 dollars that come to California could help sustain and move forward those efforts. And I think that Don was a visionary. I think he really helped start the process. I think that Dick [Stiles] has been a visionary, in terms of having a systems vision. Not many people have a systems vision and can look across the broader picture conceptually and say, "This is how each of the pieces can work together to support and move forward this effort." I think it has been a very powerful design and has moved us forward in California a long way.

MILLER: All directly from the collaboration among the different projects. Other than this collaborative work among the projects being a

strength, do you have any other general comments or recommendations about the 353 process in general?

RICKARD: I think that California is moving forward in the right direction. I think we're going to be confronted with some new challenges and some new opportunities in the next few years. What we have coming up is, at some point, a reauthorization of the Adult Education Act. And if it doesn't happen in this legislative session, it will happen. I think it's an opportunity for California and all of the states to look at, again, what are the new and emerging needs, and how can we leverage the resources, broadly, the resources that we have? Not just the 353 dollars, but how we allocate our 321-based grants to further move us forward. I think it's an opportunity to revisit some of the mechanisms that we currently have in place for awarding the 321 grants, and an opportunity for us to look at program quality as one of the indicators and almost a pre-qualification for applying for a 321 grant.

There will be more accountability. There is no question. And no matter what version of what bill comes up in Congress, there is a strong accountability component. That will not go away. We already know that we need to continue to build on what we've done. And I think what we've done and put in place is very good,

but the job is not done. I think in the next few years what we're going to have to do is look at how we can do a better job with fewer resources. We're going to need to look at how we can use technology strategically to better collect data, such as the TOPS, the Tracking of Programs and Students, to be able to put some of these tools in the hands of the local programs so that the data collection burden is not overwhelming, to be able to give the local programs more instant access to the data that they do have, which is what TOPS is doing for them, to give teachers immediate feedback in terms of their test results, and I think that looking at technology we can do that, we can leverage that.

I think also where we need to look, and I think we are looking that way, is doing a better job of reaching out and providing services to the small agencies and the rural agencies. I think in the past, even though we've done a lot of regional training, it's very difficult with California as huge as it is to get to some of those remote sites.

MILLER: Well, particularly with all the new agencies that came on board a couple of years ago. What was it, 175 new adult schools?

RICKARD: Right, and I just think that some of them are languishing right now because the program administrator is wearing three or four hats.

For that program administrator, for he or she to come and drive three hours to an all-day training on adult ed when they've got to cover continuation ed, JTPA, Carl Perkins, is unrealistic.

MILLER: And welfare and attendance probably. [Chuckling]

RICKARD: So, again, I think strategically we need to look at some distance training, the use of technology to reach out to better serve these small agencies, rural agencies. I don't think that technology is the panacea, but I do think that we're going to be able to do a better job in the upcoming years by strategically looking at how we can use the technologies that are currently available, and will be available, to better do the data collection. On-line assessment, to reach out to the learners, the opportunity is there and it's really exciting to be able to do a better job of assessment with learners because we can do computer simulations. For example—

MILLER: If you have the developmental money to. [Chuckling]

RICKARD: Right. Dreaming. This question prompted a vision and dreaming. I'm sure that that's how you wanted me to respond. So, at a learner level, I think in the future we can provide better more relevant assessment with immediate feedback to the learner. Computer simulations, some of the work maturity skills, some of

those soft skills that are very difficult to measure with a pencil-and-paper test—

MILLER: But very important.

RICKARD: But very, very critical, very important. With the new computer technology, we're going to be able to do that. Oral assessment. Since 1980 we in the California Consortium, and now in the National Consortium, have said, "Oral assessment for our ESL population is really critical, but it's too costly." No program can do a really good job of one-on-one standardized reliable oral assessment. It's too costly. Inter-rater reliability, the time that it takes, the one-on-one nature of it. Now, with some of the new technology, with speakers hooked up to the computer, with the ability to deliver on-line assessment and the student speaking back into the computer, we're going to be able to start exploring some oral assessments that are desperately needed that simply have not been practical for adult education. These are exciting times.

MILLER: That is exciting. We're about to wind up here, and we've mentioned Dick Stiles two or three times, but certainly you can't talk about CASAS and its impact without some really special mention about him. Can you elaborate a little on the role that he has played in the project?

RICKARD: As I mentioned earlier, he was the developer of the CHSPE, the California High School Proficiency Exam, in the California Department of Education in the mid-'70s. He was brought into the Adult Education Unit, I believe, by Xavier Del Buono [Deputy Superintendent, California Department of Education, 1974-86] in the late '70s, and brought with him an extensive background in measurement and evaluation. So that was a resource that wasn't there in the California Department of Education. Dick had experience in the Tacoma-Seattle public schools of implementing assessment and evaluation, and with the Northwest Evaluation Association, had experience with the Rasch and the Item Response Theory and that methodology. So he had some experience with that. He also, as the result of his experience with the CHSPE, had had some meetings and connections with Ruth Nickse and the work that she was doing with the early beginnings of the External Diploma Program and conceptually different ways of assessing. So, when he came into the Adult Ed Unit of the California Department of Ed, he brought with him a wealth of background and experience in this . . . sort of the new measurement and evaluation, which he then shared and helped with the whole psychometric underpinnings of the system. It was he who

identified the key researchers and measurement and evaluation experts that were brought in to support this whole effort.

I think also Dick, more than many other people, had a vision of a systems approach and not just a test approach, and saw very clearly from the very beginning the link that needed to be made with curriculum and instruction. So, when we talk about those three circles that we see so much in training, that really was Dick's vision of the integration of the curriculum, assessment, and instruction, and then the underpinnings, in terms of the most current measurement methodology to support that. I think that he and Don McCune and Ray[mond] Eberhard [Consultant, Administrative Assistant, Administrator, Adult Education Unit, 1975-84 and 1988-98] were extremely supportive over many years in sustaining this effort, and I think that Dick on an ongoing basis has provided that support, not so much the—

MILLER: The technical foundation that the other people didn't have originally.

RICKARD: Yes, the whole psychometric, the whole technical foundation, plus a vision of a systems approach. And then Dick also has a special gift, I believe, in terms of facilitating collaboration, the Consortium effort, including being very inclusive of bringing new agencies into

the Consortium. And as you know, Cuba, there was some grumbling in the mid- to late '80s from the old-timer Consortium members about why we had to have new agencies—

MILLER: Anyone who wanted to come. [Chuckling]

RICKARD: Yes, anybody who wanted to come, and to be very inclusive of the Consortium, because then the complaint was, "And we spend *so* much time catching these people up." But that was very much prompted by Dick and his strong belief and his value system of being very inclusive. So I think those are some things that really need to be said.

Also, I think that I would like to really emphasize that this has been field-based and field-driven. That includes the learners, the adult learners that we have been serving in our program over many years. Most of our agencies do an exceptionally good job of a learner needs assessment. So, when the Consortium members gave input into the core of competencies that they felt were critical, key in terms of implementing a system, they also . . . that was driven by the learners that they were serving in their programs and the needs of those learners. I think that in recent years there have been a number of efforts to identify competencies and look at what learner needs are, but I want to strongly emphasize that

CASAS is learner-centered. It's based very much on the learner, what the learner needs in our program, and the diverse needs of the learners. And that hasn't changed over many years.

MILLER: No, it hasn't. Okay, anything else? This is your last chance, Pat. [Chuckling]

RICKARD: I can't think of anything else, Cuba.

MILLER: Okay. CASAS has certainly had a major impact on California adult education, starting with the statewide CBAE [Competency Based Adult Education] implementation in local programs in 1982,[4] and even earlier for the districts in the Consortium during the initial developmental phase. I think it's safe to say that no other federal adult education project in the nation has reached as many agencies and students as CASAS has. You must have a great sense of pride about the work that you and your staff and the members of your Consortium have accomplished.

RICKARD: Mm-hmm.

MILLER: So I want to thank you, both for this interview, Pat, and for the contributions that you and CASAS have made, and certainly

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[4]Starting in 1982 the State Plan required agencies receiving federal funds to begin implementing a competency based program.

continue to make—don't stop those dreams—to California and to the nation's adult education programs.

This interview was completed as a part of the California Adult Education Oral History Project.