

Letter from the President

It's been a very busy autumn full of evaluation projects. (I think I say that every year!) We've been doing lots of project travel both here in the Boston area and to various parts of the country. In 2017, as in previous years, we've been fortunate to have a great mix of clients in a variety of fields. Although we've always done several stints of evaluation consulting each year, in addition to carrying out full evaluations, we recently have stepped up our consultations. So I'd like to remind past, present, and potential clients that we are available to work with you on shorter-term efforts such as readying your organization for evaluation, evaluation planning, writing evaluation proposals, and developing or reviewing logic models and theories of change.

Cheers, Irene



Fare thee well to our long-time colleague, Elizabeth Bachrach

"It's time to say goodbye, but I think goodbyes are sad and I'd much rather say hello. Hello to a new adventure." - Ernie Harwell.

As 2017 draws to a close, we bid farewell to Elizabeth Bachrach, Senior Research Associate, who has worked at GRG since January 2000. After almost 18 years at GRG, Elizabeth is leaving GRG to start a new phase of her career. During her long tenure at GRG, she has managed and contributed to scores of evaluation projects. Her first five years at GRG were in our Cambridge office, after which she moved out to California in 2005, where she started up and staffed our Los Angeles office for five years. For the past seven years, she has been telecommuting to GRG from her hometown of West Bloomfield, MI., where she is exploring local opportunities.

We are grateful to Elizabeth for her high level of professionalism, strong research skills, dedication, loyalty, consistently graceful client interactions, conscientiousness, and collegiality as she agilely conducted a vast array of evaluation research projects. Examples of evaluations she led range from TV shows and outreach campaigns (both prime-time and children's programs), to various curriculum projects (from math to forensic science to school readiness to engineering design to Holocaust education), to an educational savings program, to several leadership and professional fellowships, to an out-of-school program for refugee youth, to arts shows and oral history projects, as well as not just one but two different five-year NSF-funded Climate Change Education Partnerships. And there were many more!

Through her body of work, she has contributed substantially to GRG's success. She has taken on some of our most challenging evaluation projects and she helped those clients become satisfied evaluation consumers. She has mentored many research assistants and graduate student interns over the years. She has also been a strong support to other project managers and Irene, lending a hand both in a pinch and in a sustained way.

We will very much miss Elizabeth because she has been an integral member of the GRG "family" for such a long time, but this isn't goodbye because we'll stay in touch. Once a GRGer, always a GRGer, and now she joins the ranks of certified FOGs (Friends of GRG). We wish her the very best as she starts new adventures in her professional career!

A Recently Completed Project: The STARS Scholarship Program Evaluation

This past summer, GRG completed an evaluation of the STARS Scholarship Program. Created in 1997, STARS is fully funded by the Iowa West Foundation and administered by the Council Bluffs Community Education Foundation. The STARS Scholarship program

awards \$2,000+ wrap-around scholarship and emergency funds to full-time college students who are Pell-grant eligible, have a high school diploma or GED, and are a parent or custodial grandparent. See

http://commedfoundation.org/stars_home.php

Last month, Irene Goodman gave a presentation with our client, Brenda Moran, Ph.D., STARS Scholarship Program Director, at the annual conference of the National Scholarship Providers Association (NSPA) in Seattle, during which Irene presented findings from our evaluation and Brenda talked about how the funders have used the evaluation results and recommendations. Her board accepted GRG's recommendations regarding lowering the number of scholars served while increasing the amount of the scholarship, mandating financial literacy, giving preference to applicants seeking in-demand degrees, and giving preference to applicants 25 or older. Programmatic restructuring is underway, with full implementation anticipated in July 2018. This type of use of evaluation findings is heartening to us evaluators!

GRG's Evaluation and Education Resources Blog

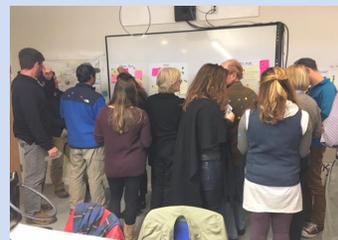
GRG staffer Karen Gareis thinks the only thing better than learning something new is telling other people about that new thing. Not coincidentally, she serves as GRG's Director of Professional Development. In that role, she gathers links and resources that are relevant to our work and shares them in the form of (roughly) biweekly blog posts. Our updated GRG website, which will debut in early 2018, will feature Karen's blog. In the meantime, here is a sneak preview of some of her very interesting recent offerings:

- an article explaining why arts advocates may NOT want to see arts education integrated into other disciplines (<https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2017/10/04/arts-integration-is-a-suckers-game.html>),
- a survey development resource with validated items measuring a variety of personal constructs (<http://ipip.ori.org/newIndexofScaleLabels.htm>), and
- an article on the importance of social cues and interactivity in learning (<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/26/opinion/sunday/good-robot-teacher-secrets.html>).

A Current Project: Consulting to New England Science & Sailing Foundation (NESS)

For the past couple months, GRG has been serving as evaluation consultants to the New England Science & Sailing Foundation (NESS). NESS is a non-profit ocean adventure education program with the following foundational values that apply to all of its various programs: experiential learning, personal growth, inclusiveness, and stewardship. From its Stonington, CT base, NESS serves students from a variety of Connecticut and Rhode Island public school districts, including New London, Hartford, Norwich, and New Haven, as well as a private school in Harlem (NYC).

GRG has been reviewing past and current evaluation/assessment efforts, analyzing historical data from their NESS SEA AmeriCorps program and other NESS programs, and facilitating review and further development of NESS program logic models. To that end, Colleen Manning and Irene Goodman met with 19 NESS staff members to discuss and clarify team members' desired short-term, mid-range, and long-term outcomes for participating students; the photo here shows dot-voting in action! It was an excellent session with fully engaged staff, animated discussion, and insightful comments.



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