Greetings from the President

Change is a key motif of this issue. Change is a complex notion that can refer to something gradual or sudden, and it can be positive, negative, or neutral. Because our business requires a fine balancing act between numbers of staff and scope/numbers of projects, I have always taken the view that very gradual growth is most prudent.

At GRG, we have been spared change of the more cataclysmic variety, but we still have changes of significance to report. Some of our growth is due to taking on new projects in areas of health, medical education, humanities, and the arts, while some growth involves expanding our geographic reach, changes in office scenery, and changes in staff.

In September 2004, we opened a second office in Los Angeles, California. As a native Angeleno, for some time I had envisioned our company establishing a corporate presence on the west coast. This past fall, the timing was right, and Elizabeth Bachrach—who has been a project manager at GRG for five years—agreed to blaze the path out there. Happily, since that expansion, we have had a number of clients in California wanting to use our evaluation research services.

In March 2005, we moved GRG headquarters to new premises. Our quarter-mile move from the old office in Harvard Square has been an extremely positive change for us. It's nice to be within a stone's throw of both Harvard and Central Squares, and our office is much newer, more spacious, and certainly more serene than our old one. It has given us room to breathe—and space for activities such as focus groups and concurrent group meetings. We hope you will visit.

In terms of staff changes, two of our stellar research assistants, Dreolin Fleischer and Claire Brown, are leaving at the end of the summer to pursue further education, after several years at GRG. We will be sad to see them go, but we know that moving on is part of a natural growth cycle. We are bringing on two newly minted baccalaureates, who will join Jennie Murack as research assistants.

We are also expanding our staff, having just hired a new project manager who will add to our research capabilities. Senior staffer Colleen Manning is returning to her role as GRG director of research, having worked part-time at GRG these past two years while a doctoral candidate in Public Policy at UMass-Boston. Karen Peterman has recently been promoted to Senior Research Associate.

In many ways, then, change is the order of the day at GRG at this juncture in our history. Of course, the measurement of change is central to GRG's professional concerns. Our clients' organizations develop programs that they hope effect change in their target audiences. GRG encourages them to employ various research tools up front that will help them to design and implement effective programs.

These include theories of change (TOC) and logic models, which have been used interchangeably but focus on different approaches to improving programs. See the page 3 article in this newsletter by Karen Peterman about using these models to chart the conceptual development of a program. In addition, good web resources are www.theoryofchange.org and www.unitedway.org (see their Outcome Measurement Resource Network).

Making change is serious business, but may the changes your organization strives for be leavened with humor.

Irene F. Goodman

Irene F. Goodman, Ed. D.
Founder and President

A World In Motion

The Project

The Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE) contracted GRG to conduct a five-year evaluation of SAE's curriculum, *A World in Motion* (AWIM), now in its 16th year of distribution. Composed of a series of four Challenges for students in grades 4-10, AWIM seeks to bring authentic engineering design experiments into the classroom. While SAE has anecdotal evidence to support teachers' and students' interest in and enjoyment of the program, they are seeking scientifically based research evidence of the program's long-term effects.

GRG's Approach

GRG is conducting a two-part study of the AWIM program. Using a retrospective study, we surveyed industry volunteers, teachers, and student members of SAE's Collegiate Design Series about past use of AWIM. For the upcoming four-year longitudinal study, GRG will recruit teachers and randomly assign them, along with their students, to one of three experimental groups: 1) Treatment Group teachers using the AWIM curriculum for the first time, 2) Waiting Control Group teachers, and 3) Comparison Group seasoned AWIM teachers. Teachers and students will be surveyed, and students will complete standardized assessments as well as AWIM-embedded assessments. All students will be tracked and surveyed once a year for the next four years regarding their Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM)-related attitudes, knowledge, interests, and pursuits.

Results

Preliminary results from the Retrospective Study indicate that those who have used the AWIM program are satisfied, believe it positively affects students' STEM learning, and are interested in using it again.

IN BRIEF

Families First
Positive Parenting

GRG recently carried out two studies for previous client Families First, a Cambridge, MA-based agency that provides parenting education and support to families. The first study examined the effectiveness of the *Positive Parenting* program in transitional shelters in providing improved parenting practices, attitudes, and support. The second study examined similar questions, but it explored the influence of attending individual Families First sessions at non-shelter low-income sites.

WGBH-TV
PEEP and the Big Wide World

GRG is again working with WGBH—this time, to evaluate *PEEP and the Big Wide World*, a new science TV show for 3-5 year-olds. PEEP introduces preschoolers to science using a children's TV program, web-based interactive games, and resources for parents and educators. GRG is exploring the appeal of the series as well as the extent to which the TV series models hands-on science play, how educators use the print guide, and parents' perceptions about their children's use of the *PEEP* Website.

GeeGuides
sayART/seeART

GeeGuides is a Colorado-based group that offers innovative approaches to children's exploration of art. GRG recently completed a formative evaluation for GeeGuides of two of their educational technology products: computer-based *sayART*—introducing children to the language of art in the classroom—and *seeART*—delivered on PDAs in museums while children view works of art. GRG's project manager traveled to Austin, Seattle, and Vancouver, conducting observations, surveys, and interviews.

A Developmental Approach to Program Evaluation: Knowing When to Measure Impact

By Karen Peterman, Ph.D.

Today's educators are under increasing pressure to account for their practices. Whether in the classroom, after-school programs, or television and other media, all educational programming must demonstrate impact. Although program developers want to know they have made a difference, it is not always clear *how* or *when* to measure the impact of a program.

I was trained as an experimental psychologist with a focus in child development. As a developmentalist, one spends a lot of time watching and waiting for one set of skills (crawling, for example) to develop into another (the ability to walk). The same is true of evaluation research; programs, like people, are dynamic, living, growing entities. And just as it would be inappropriate to measure the walking abilities of a child who had just learned to crawl, it is equally inappropriate to assess the full potential of a program (i.e., outcomes) that is still in its infancy.

Today, programs are increasingly evaluated before they are mature enough to provide meaningful outcomes data. But this doesn't have to be the case. Below, we present a developmental model for thinking about and measuring impact across a program's lifespan.

Developing Your Idea—Conception

In our experience, educational programs are designed by people with a passion for education and the hope of making a difference. We also believe (and most funders agree) that the most effective programs are developed through a *theory of change*.

Theories of change describe *how* and *why* (based on research and past experiences) a specific set of program activities will impact educational outcomes – they work backwards from the intended outcome to create a program that consists of activities that research has demonstrated should be effective. From there, project teams fill in the details to create a program that is all their own.

Program Development—Infancy

Whether or not your program is designed using theory of change, a *logic model* is a helpful tool to chart components such as program resources, the number of people you hope to reach and how, and the short and longer-term program outcomes.

Logic models are useful for starting you along the developmental path, keeping project development on track, and focusing formative evaluation efforts. Like programs, logic models are likely to develop and change over time.

"Ah, yes, the unanticipated outcome."

CALDWELL.

Permission, Cartoon Features Syndicate

Taking Your Program Out for a Spin—Adolescence

One of the most valuable ways to learn about a program is through *pilot testing*. Pilot tests are appropriate during a program's adolescence (around age two or three in "project years").

A pilot test is essentially a trial run of your program that allows you to learn about program implementation and impact simultaneously. Importantly, the term pilot test connotes to funders that your project is early in its development and thus should not yet be accountable for producing all of the desired outcomes. Like adolescence, the pilot test phase is a time of rapid growth and change – you learn a lot about your program and make informed decisions about exactly what you want your program to be when it "grows up."

Developing a Program's Identity—Adulthood

All programs develop their own identity over time. For example, a program may be defined by the use of specific materials for a set duration of time. As these characteristics are solidified, program implementation will become more prescriptive to ensure impact. It is at this point, and no sooner, that it makes sense to *measure program outcomes*. For some, this stage is years down the road. For others, funding requirements speed up the process. Regardless of when you move into this phase, the more responsive your program has been to previous evaluation efforts (formative evaluation and/ or pilot testing), the better your outcomes will likely be.

A Final Note: Change is Good

No matter the age of your program, there will always be things to learn and changes to make. Inherent in each of these stages is the fact that your program is living and growing. Also inherent in this model is the idea that change is good – it indicates that you are learning and growing with your program to facilitate its development and success.

Karen Peterman, Ph.D., Senior Research Associate, joined GRG in October 2002. She has managed over 15 evaluations and presented her work at multiple conferences. Her research includes needs assessments, focus groups, pilot testing, and both quasi-experimental and experimental designs.

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IN THIS ISSUE

PLEASE NOTE: We have standardized our emails to lastname@grginc.com.

Goodman Research Group, Inc. News

CONFERENCES & PRESENTATIONS

At the *American Evaluation Association* Annual Conference in November 2004, **Jen Beck** gave a presentation about the TV series *PEEP and the Big Wide World*, **Elizabeth Bachrach** presented findings about the TV series *ZOOM*, and **Karen Peterman** chaired a panel about U.S. DOE projects. On a second occasion, **Karen** did a joint presentation with U.S. DOE at the *Eastern Evaluation Research Society*.

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This Spring, our project managers presented results of our evaluations: **Karen Peterman** to teaching teams involved in the Boston-based project *Technology at the Crossroads*, **Jen Beck** on Positive Parenting to the Board of *Families First*, and **Elizabeth Bachrach** to the *Society of Automotive Engineers*.

VOLUNTEERING

This past winter, **Kim Rylander** began serving as a weekly volunteer at *Sawtelle Hospice House* in Reading, MA.

Stefanie Archer serves as a volunteer advocate and orientation leader with *The Network/La Red*, a Boston-based organization that offers free services for battered individuals.

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As a member of the *Social Climate Committee* at her daughter's school in Cambridge, **Irene Goodman** helped with a parent survey on school climate. Research assistant **Jennie Murack** helped with the data analysis.

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In October 2004, **six GRG staff members** participated in the annual *Breast Cancer Walk*, raising $1,200!

NEW DIRECTIONS

GRG opened a **West Coast Office** in fall of 2004, headed up by **Elizabeth Bachrach**, Senior Research Associate.

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In March 2005, **GRG** moved to a larger office space. To celebrate our new office, we hosted local clients and friends of GRG at an Open House in late June.