Professional Standards for Teachers in Adult Education

Maryland's Framework

**Maryland Department of
Labor, Licensing and Regulation**

Division of Workforce Development
and Adult Learning

MARYLAND

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Introduction

Maryland's Office of Adult Education and Literacy Services recognizes the critical relationship between learner outcomes and effective classroom practice. While there is limited research showing direct correlations between specific instructional procedures and adult learning, there are a number of instructional practices and teacher competencies recognized as broadly effective by practitioners, administrators, and learners (Galbraith & Gilley, 1986; U.S. Department of Labor, 1991; U.S. Department of Education, 1992).

Adult Education and Literacy Services convened a statewide *Professional Development Symposium* on July 13 and 14, 2005, to begin charting a new course for the statewide professional development system, to meet the needs of the 21st century. A diverse representation of all 34 Adult Education and Literacy Services grantees took part in the symposium, which was facilitated by presenters from the National Adult Education Professional Development Consortium and Strategic Training and Resources, Inc.
At the symposium, grantees field examined research, reviewed professional development models and made recommendations on needed enhancements. Participants overwhelmingly voiced support and interest in the adoption of teacher standards as one of the first steps in improving instruction and strengthening the professional development system. The standards were viewed as an opportunity to clarify the skills and knowledge that lead to learner achievement and quality instruction in the adult education classroom. Standards would also foster a closer alignment between teachers' needs and professional development activities.

This document provides background on the development of the teacher standards framework.

How Were the Standards and Competencies Developed?

In January 2006, Adult Education and Literacy Services initiated a practitioner workgroup to begin the task of reviewing, adapting, and recommending a set of teacher standards. Comprised of teachers, local program administrators, English as a Second Language specialists, correctional education representatives, and instructional specialists, and adult education and literacy services staff, the workgroup began by reviewing the national PRO-NET adult education teacher competencies. PRO-NET, a project funded by the United States Department of Education, Division of Adult Education and Literacy, engaged in a multi-year process to develop teacher competencies and performance indicators for adult education programs. In addition, the workgroup examined Maryland's K-12 Professional Development Standards and teacher standards from five other state adult education programs: Pennsylvania, Ohio, Kentucky, Colorado noting the similarities and differences among the standards.

Following the review process, the workgroup customized a draft set of teacher standards, competencies, and evidence indicators that reflected the core knowledge and skills that Maryland's adult education teachers need to know and be able to demonstrate. To ensure that the standards would serve as a useful tool for teachers, the workgroup also designed a self-assessment instrument that practitioners could use to identify their own professional growth needs.

What Process Has Been Used to Gain Public Comment?

Public engagement activities were conducted to solicit input on the teacher standards.

- Focus groups were held with practitioners to validate the appropriateness and relevancy of the draft standards and competencies.
- Student focus groups from Baltimore City Community College, Dorchester County Public Schools, Greater Homewood Community Corporation, Hagerstown Community College, South Baltimore Learning Center, and Wicomico County Public Schools provided input from adult learners.
- The document was posted on the Maryland Adult Literacy Resource Center website for public comment from the field and interested parties.
- Input was sought from key stakeholders, such as the Center for Applied Linguistics.

Recommendations were incorporated into this draft document and approved by the Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation.

How is the Standards Framework Organized?

The standards framework consists of three components:

- o **Six standards** - the broad descriptors of knowledge, skills, and abilities related to effective adult education instruction
- o **A series of competencies** - the specific skills associated with each standard, and
- o **Evidence of competency statements** – sample behaviors or practices that demonstrate the existence of the competency

As an adjunct to the framework, a self-assessment tool (a separate document entitled, *Professional Standards for Teachers Self-Assessment)* will assist teachers in examining their current knowledge and skills and determining appropriate professional development needs.

How Can the Standards Be Used To Improve Instruction?

The standards framework can be used by administrators and teachers to assess their own performance in providing quality instruction and services to adult learners. The standards provide program administrators with a rubric for what adult education teachers should know and be able to do. By completing the self-assessment, teachers can identify their strengths as well as areas needing improvement. The self-assessment can help teachers better understand the skills and knowledge that they may want to seek out through professional development activities and personal exploration. This process will help to ensure well-qualified teachers who are capable of meeting the diverse needs of adult learners.

The self-assessment is designed as a non-threatening, confidential tool for teacher use. The results of the self-assessment are used to complete the Professional Development Planning Chart that the teacher submits to the local administrator. This chart is an important element in planning individual and program-wide professional development activities that respond to teacher needs.

Local programs can determine the most appropriate times for teachers to complete the self-assessment and submit the Planning Chart. For example, programs may ask teachers to complete the self-assessment in the early spring so that they can adequately plan for professional development needs for the following fiscal year. While it is not recommended that new teachers be asked to complete the self-assessment until they have spent sufficient time in the classroom, programs should introduce new teachers to the standards and competencies during orientation.

Maryland Adult Education Teacher Standards

The adult education teacher should be able to:

Standard 1: Help establish and support program goals and responsibilities.
Practitioners conduct their work within the context of the program's mission, goals, and priorities. As such, the ability to collaborate and communicate effectively with administrators and instructional colleagues is important. The competencies for this standard focus on collecting, managing, and sharing data and ideas to improve instruction and program quality. The role of the teacher in working with program staff to increase student retention is also addressed.

Standard 2: Provide a positive adult education-learning environment and promote lifelong learning.
Providing a learning environment that is conducive to quality instruction as well as supportive of lifelong learning is critical to the success of adult students. The competencies in this standard focus on the development of a learning community that facilitates and encourages interaction and lifelong learning, demonstrates sensitivity to the needs of adult students, and builds positive attitudes toward self-directed learning and achievement. The importance of fostering learner persistence is also addressed.

Standard 3: Plan, design, and deliver learner-centered instruction.
Planning, designing, and delivering instruction is at the heart of the learning process. Competencies for this standard include the development of instructional plans, sequencing and pacing of classroom activities, and linking instruction to learner needs and abilities. The competencies encompass the delivery of appropriately planned lessons that utilize evidence-based and contextualized instruction, provide ample time for students to practice and apply their learning, and employ a variety of strategies, resources, and materials.

Standard 4: Assess learning and monitor progress.
Assessing learner needs, monitoring progress, and providing feedback are essential components of the instructional process. Competencies for this standard focus on collecting and sharing information about learner characteristics, needs, and progress through both formal and informal assessments and then using the information to plan appropriate instruction.

Standard 5: Implement technology.
The use and integration of technology can greatly enhance the instructional process. Competencies for this standard are derived from the *Maryland Adult Education Technology Standards*, and the competencies encompass the understanding and integration of technology resources into instruction.

Standard 6: Maintain knowledge and pursue professional development.
Instructors are the primary facilitators of student learning and must have the requisite skills and content knowledge to guide the instructional process. Competencies for this standard emphasize development of a core knowledge base related to adult learning as well as content matter and instruction, including language acquisition, reading and numeracy development, and strategies for working with English language learners, and low-skilled individuals. The competencies for this standard focus on the acquisition of knowledge through an assessment of professional growth needs and participation in professional development activities, followed by the transfer of learning into instructional practice.

Competencies:	Sample Evidence of Competency:
1.1 Demonstrates an understanding of the program's mission, goals, and priorities	1.1.1 Follows program's procedures and guidelines
1.2 Maintains accuracy and confidentiality of learner information and records	1.2.1 Follows the program accountability plan that includes a system for secure record keeping and reporting 1.2.2 Follows program requirements for confidentiality and release of information
1.3 Collects and reports accurate data for program improvement and accountability	1.3.1 Collects, records, and reports Literacy Works Information System (LWIS) data accurately in accordance with program's procedures 1.3.2 Collects examples of learner work periodically to document student competencies in portfolio 1.3.3 Solicits feedback from learners regarding instruction and program improvement in a manner that is considerate of the learners' culture and language skills 1.3.4 Submits required documents in the program's assigned time period
1.4 Follows program guidelines to improve learner persistence	1.4.1 Collaborates with colleagues to address learners' barriers to participation 1.4.2 Encourages and supports learner transfers within programs (e.g., ESL to ABE, ABE to GED or EDP). 1.4.3 Utilizes strategies that promote learner persistence 1.4.4 Analyzes student attendance and achievement data to identify and address possible persistence issues such as early leavers (students with less than 12 hours of instruction) or common characteristics of non-completers 1.4.5 Utilizes strategies that promote learner persistence as outlined in Competency 2.5
1.5 Follows program's procedures and guidelines for the maintenance and security of materials and equipment	1.5.1 Counts, tracks, and stores all assessment instruments in a secure location after use 1.5.2 Returns all equipment to the proper location after use 1.5.3 Follows protocols for test integrity
1.6 Makes suggestions for instructional materials and program improvement	1.6.1 Reviews and suggests appropriate instructional materials for adult learners which includes the specific needs of English language learners, low-skilled learners and learners with special needs such as visual, auditory, physical, learning disabilities, Attention Deficit Disorder and others 1.6.2 Participates in program improvement activities 1.6.3 Participates in developing curriculum that reflects the special needs and provides accommodations for Adult Basic Skills (ABE), Adult Secondary Education (ASE) and English language learners (ELL) 1.6.4 Seeks professional development opportunities to enhance skills and practices

Standard 2: Provide a positive adult education-learning environment and promote lifelong learning.

An adult education teacher:

Competencies:	Sample Evidence of Competency:
2.1 Designs activities for and encourages independent study skills	2.1.1 Encourages learners to identify their own educational needs using appropriate techniques for the students' language and skill abilities 2.1.2 Helps learners to set educational and personal goals based on their needs and feedback from others 2.1.3 Encourages learners to use daily life experiences as opportunities for learning
2.2 Facilitates and encourages learner interaction to promote the development of a learning community	2.2.1 Models the sharing of knowledge and skills 2.2.2 Encourages learners to share their knowledge, culture, skills, and opinions to enhance learning community 2.2.3 Acknowledges and utilizes the knowledge that the adult learners bring to the classroom setting 2.2.4 Promotes respectful and appropriate communication with and among adult learners 2.2.5 Creates an environment conducive to learner participation by using appropriate classroom management strategies and skills 2.2.6 Implements fair, consistent classroom practices 2.2.7 Demonstrates the belief that all learns can gain knowledge and skills
2.3 Demonstrates understanding of adult learners' responsibilities as workers, family members and community members	2.3.1 Demonstrates cultural awareness and sensitivity 2.3.2 Guides learners to define their goals as family members, workers, and community members using appropriate techniques for the students' language and skill abilities while exploring cross-cultural issues 2.3.3 Accommodates individual learner needs 2.3.4 Refers adult learners with challenging life issues to the appropriate resources 2.3.5 Helps learners understand the language learning process as it relates to their goals
2.4 Demonstrates positive attitude and reinforces positive learners' attitudes toward potential for success	2.4.1 Holds high expectations for learner achievement 2.4.2 Meets learners where they are and fosters their potential for change and growth. 2.4.3 Challenges learners to go beyond their perception of their own limitations 2.4.4 Encourages adult learners to practice self-evaluation using appropriate techniques for the students' language and skill abilities and strive for continual improvement 2.4.5 Helps learners identify barriers to their learning and formulate possible solutions
2.5 Employs specific strategies for developing and enhancing learner persistence	2.5.1 Engages learners in problem solving activities using appropriate techniques for the students' language and skill abilities that help them manage barriers to participation 2.5.2 Provides activities using appropriate techniques for the students' language and skill abilities that help learners believe they can be successful in their educational goals 2.5.3 Helps learners in setting clear and realistic goals using appropriate techniques for the students' language and skill abilities and then provides instruction that relates to those goals 2.5.4 Uses a variety of assessment strategies that enable learners to see progress toward their goals 2.5.5 Provides instructional activities to keep learners connected to the program and help learners find opportunities for learning outside of the program if they are forced to leave temporarily 2.5.6 Provides learning activities that develop the language necessary for students to access higher level thought processes

Standard 3: Plan, design, and deliver learner-centered instruction.

An adult education teacher:

Competencies:		Sample Evidence of Competency:	
3.1	Plans instruction that is consistent with the program's mission, and goals	3.1.1	Develops learner-centered instructional strategies consistent with the mission and goals of the program
		3.1.2	Develops lessons that focus on needed skills and information, the goals of learner ; and the program objectives
		3.1.3	Implements lessons that align with state standards
3.2	Identifies and responds to learners' individual and group needs, interests, and goals when developing and delivering lessons	3.2.1	Accesses a variety of learner needs assessment resources, such as student questionnaires, goal setting checklists and interviews
		3.2.2	Collaborates with learner to determine instructional content based upon assessments and learner needs, goals and experiences.
		3.2.3	Demonstrates flexibility in responding to immediate learner needs and interests (teachable moments)
		3.2.4	Integrates the language skills to emphasis the holistic nature of language
		3.2.5	Provides instructional activities that incorporate grouping strategies and interactive tasks that facilitate authentic communication
3.3	Recognizes and accommodates diverse learning styles, multiple intelligences, skill levels, language abilities, culture, experiences, disabilities, and other special needs	3.3.1	Effectively manages multi-level classroom instruction
		3.3.2	Plans lessons and activities that accommodate a variety of learning styles and learners' grouping preferences
		3.3.3	Recognizes, accommodates, and shows respect for cultural differences in language , communication, and customs
		3.3.4	Adapts instructional resources to accommodate learners with different English proficiency levels and special needs
		3.3.5	Organizes the physical environment to accommodate disabilities and other special needs
		3.3.6	Differentiates learning activities by process, content, and product.
		3.3.7	Creates tiered lessons
		3.3.8	Includes culturally diverse lessons
3.4	Applies knowledge of the basic principles of adult learning, and teaching, and knows and demonstrates content knowledge	3.4.1	Serves as a facilitator, guiding adults to their own learning
		3.4.2	Connects learning to life experiences and prior knowledge
		3.4.3	Demonstrates flexibility in accommodating adult scheduling and attendance needs
		3.4.4	Provides feedback and honors achievement
		3.4.5	Creates opportunities for learners to reflect on their learning, program and instructional practices and provide input on program improvement
		3.4.6	Uses multiple instructional approaches, explicit and inquiry-based learning field dependent and independent learning , and problem centered approaches to learning; provides multiple types of sensory experiences
		3.4.7	Presents content knowledge that is sequenced and spiraled appropriately to the learner's level and language ability
		3.4.8	Presents content in clear, meaningful ways
3.5	Provides evidence-based and contextualized instruction in basic and life skills.	3.5.1	Provides instruction that is consistent with research and professional wisdom on adult learning and/or adult language acquisition
		3.5.2	Ensures that instruction incorporates tasks that are meaningful to learners in the contexts of their daily lives
		3.5.3	Provides appropriate balance between life skill and basic skill development in the classroom, based on learner needs
3.6	Employs a variety of strategies, resources and materials to facilitate instruction and promote learner interaction	3.6.1	Selects materials and resources that are appropriate for adults at the assessed levels of instruction and that are sensitive/respectful of race, ethnicity, culture, and gender
		3.6.2	Integrates real-life tasks and authentic materials into instruction
		3.6.3	Incorporates a variety of technology and multimedia resources into instruction
		3.6.4	Integrates employment family and community resources and events into instruction
		3.6.5	Uses community resources such as speakers and field trips to extend the classroom into the community
		3.6.6	Uses graphic organizers (outlines, flow charts, diagrams, maps, webs) and mnemonic devices to facilitate learning and memory
		3.6.7	Employs a variety of techniques to stimulate critical thinking and check comprehension and mastery

Standard 3: Plan, design, and deliver learner-centered instruction.
An adult education teacher:

Competencies:	Sample Evidence of Competency:
	3.6.8 Uses modeling and demonstrations to clarify learning 3.6.9 Uses individual, group, and team activities 3.6.10 Uses interactive techniques such as role-playing, discussion, and collaborative learning 3.6.11 Uses games or other activity-based formats to provide systematic reviews 3.6.12 Provides activities that integrate language and culture so learners can understand and function within the diverse culture of the United States
3.7 Sequences and paces lessons appropriately	3.7.1 Organizes a sequential plan that supports the instructional objectives 3.7.2 Adjusts content, pace, and duration of activity according to learners' cues
3.8 Provides frequent and varied opportunities for learners to practice and apply their learning	3.8.1 Provides controlled practice and real-life practice (application) of new material 3.8.2 Incorporates practice in communication, negotiation, decision-making, problem solving, and critical thinking skills into classroom activities 3.8.3 Provides opportunities for learners to share learning that occurs outside of the classroom

Standard 4: Assess learning and monitor progress.

An adult education teacher:

Competencies:	Sample Evidence of Competency:
4.1 Administers appropriate standardized assessments according to guidelines established by the test publisher and the Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation	4.1.1 Attends required training prior to administering standardized tests 4.1.2 Follows guidelines for appropriate test administration, scoring, and reporting 4.1.3 Follows procedures as indicated in *Maryland Assessment Policy and Guidelines*
4.2 Collaborates with learners to identify their needs, strengths and goals, and advises them or refers them to the appropriate level of instruction	4.2.1 Uses appropriate needs assessments to determine learner strengths, needs, and goals upon entry into the program 4.2.2 Conducts on-going needs assessments to provide referrals and to support learner transfers within or outside of the program
4.3 Interprets formal and informal assessment results, reviews the results with learners, and develops appropriate educational plans	4.3.1 Uses assessment results to develop individualized and group educational plans in collaboration with the learners **4.3.2** Provides opportunities for learners and peers to evaluate and give feedback on their learning and performance through reflection and self assessment
4.4 Uses a variety of formal and informal assessments to develop curricula, plan lessons, monitor learner progress, and provide feedback to learners	4.4.1 Conducts formal and informal skill assessments on a regular basis and utilizes the results to modify methods and curricula for learners. 4.4.2 Completes item analysis to guide instruction 4.4.3 Maintains a record of assessment outcomes to monitor progress 4.4.4 Shares assessment results with learners as appropriate
4.5 Identifies those learners needing special assessment	4.5.1. Accesses appropriate tools, information and training needed to identify those learners 4.5.2. Uses learner data and classroom observations to identify those learners requiring special assessments 4.5.3. Confers with supervisor and colleagues if special assessment is required 4.5.4. Refers learners requiring special assessment according to program guidelines 4.5.5. Know alternatives for referrals and what to do if referral is not a viable option

Standard 5: Implement technology.

An adult education teacher:

Competencies:	Sample Evidence of Competency:
5.1 Demonstrates an understanding of technology concepts and effectively utilizes a variety of technologies	5.1.1 Demonstrates knowledge of common uses of computers and technology in business, industry and society 5.1.2 Uses terminology related to computers and technology appropriately in written and oral communication 5.1.3 Operates computers, peripherals, and a variety of available technologies 5.1.4 Applies basic troubleshooting strategies and accesses help or support resources when necessary
5.2 Explores, evaluates and uses technology resources including applications, tools, educational software, and electronic resources	5.2.1 Uses basic computer operations such as editing, file management, and printing 5.2.2 Understands the concept of networks and how to access them 5.2.3 Uses a variety of available software and Internet applications such as Web browsers and search engines 5.2.4 Evaluates and selects technology that is most useful for the specific purpose and context 5.2.5 Evaluates software and electronic resource information critically and competently
5.3 Uses technology to communicate information in a variety of formats	5.3.1 Uses a variety of currently available technology to interact electronically 5.3.2 Uses Internet applications such as listservs, newsgroups and E-mail 5.3.3 Uses productivity tools to publish information
5.4 Demonstrates and applies knowledge of the legal, social, ethical, and safety issues related to technology	5.4.1 Respects current copyright laws, fair use, rights and responsibilities 5.4.2 Designs learning activities that foster equitable, ethical, and legal use of technology by learners 5.4.3 Develops and adheres to appropriate use policies as they apply to chat rooms, Web sites, etc. 5.4.4 Makes learners aware of the dangers of some Internet resources to themselves and their families
5.5 Effectively integrates technology into instruction	5.5.1 Demonstrates knowledge of and uses learner technology standards. 5.5.2 Plans, develops, assesses, and implements instruction-utilizing technology based on learner needs 5.5.3 Minimizes the apprehension and intimidation learners may experience when first exposed to computers 5.5.4 Uses multimedia and telecommunications as available to support instruction 5.5.5 Uses technology to develop/enhance higher order thinking skills including problem solving, critical thinking, informed decision-making, and knowledge construction
5.6 Demonstrates and applies knowledge of the use of assistive technology to enhance learning	5.6.1 Identifies available assistive technology resources (e.g., magnifiers, screen readers, voice recognition software) that accommodate individual learning needs 5.6.2 Uses available assistive technology in instruction, as needed
5.7 Participates in activities and uses resources to support ongoing professional growth related to technology	5.7.1 Identifies and uses educational technology standards 5.7.2 Uses available technology resources to engage in ongoing professional development 5.7.3 Pursues opportunities to develop strategies for utilizing technology to enhance learning

Standard 6: Maintain knowledge base and pursue professional development.

An adult education teacher:

Competencies:	Sample Evidence of Competency:
6.1 Develops and maintains a knowledge base in adult learning theory	6.1.1 Participates in relevant professional development in-services, workshops, courses, and conferences that relate to appropriate instructional approaches, content, and adult learning theory 6.1.2 Identifies how adults learn by using multiple instructional approaches, field dependent and independent learning, problem-centered approaches to learning, multiple types of sensory experiences, and learner reflection 6.1.3 Articulates strategies and cites materials appropriate to diverse cultural, ethnic, racial, age, language and social contexts and backgrounds recognizes that adults are at different stages of learning
6.2 Develops and maintains in-depth knowledge of relevant content areas and related teaching methods	6.21 Has professional preparation and/or training in relevant content areas (e.g. reading, math, English, U.S. history and government etc) 6.2.2 Participates in professional development related to content areas being taught or other relevant areas including language and literacy learning 6.2.3 Demonstrates content area knowledge in the instructional setting
6.3 Develops and maintains knowledge of instructional techniques and referral procedures for learners who have special needs	6.3.1 Demonstrates strategies for (1) screening and identifying learners who have special needs and (2) instructing this population 6.3.2 Implements appropriate accommodations for learners with special language and learning needs. 6.3.3 Demonstrates knowledge of program procedures to refer learners to other services or agencies when appropriate
6.4 Pursues knowledge of technological systems as it relates to instructional and administrative functions	6.4.1 Demonstrates proficiency in using current technology, such as word processing, email, internet, and other means of communicating and accessing information electronically 6.4.2 Designs and delivers instruction that incorporates technology into the curriculum and requires students to demonstrate proficiency by integrating technology in instructional activities 6.4.3 Demonstrates how technology can be used to monitor learning; track attendance, learner progress and outcomes; and communicate information to learners, program staff, and other stakeholders (e.g., legislators) 6.4.4 Participates in technology training in order to explore, evaluate, and use computer/technological resources
6.5 Demonstrates knowledge of own organization, community resources and issues, relevant laws and regulations	6.5.1 Follows policies and procedures in compliance with local, state, and federal regulations 6.5.2 Identifies organization and community resources that can provide materials for instruction and shares information with staff and learners 6.5.3 Designs instructional units based upon learner needs, goals, and interests; incorporates community resources and issues
6.6 Assesses personal needs for professional growth and participates in professional development activities	6.6.1 Reviews Maryland Adult Education Teacher Standards, Competencies and Evidence of Competencies 6.6.2 Reflects individually and with colleagues on instructional practice, program goals, and initiatives (e.g., through practitioner research, study circles, sharing/networking groups) 6.6.3 Works with colleagues and supervisors to select appropriate professional development approaches (e.g. inquiry research, workshops, observation/feedback, product development, partnering, mentoring) 6.6.4 Seeks administrative or collaborative support in developing an individual professional development plan that includes goals and objectives 6.6.5 Regularly reviews learner placement, diagnostic and outcome data to determine professional development needs
6.7 Incorporates new skills and knowledge gained through professional development into the learning environment to enhance the quality of instruction	6.7.1 Integrates new skills and information gained through professional development to enhance the learning environment 6.7.2 Practices and integrates new instructional strategies

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