



AGENCY OF EDUCATION

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Adult Education and Literacy Professional Development Handbook FY 2017

This handbook explains how professional development is organized for teachers and other staff of adult education and literacy centers in Vermont. The purpose of this document is to inform staff of information relevant to professional development (PD) that does not change from year to year.

Overview of topics:

1. Defining professional development
2. Where to find opportunities for professional development
3. Orientations—2 required online courses
4. Competencies for staff and standards for the professional development system
5. Your individual professional development plan
6. Your annual professional development transcript
7. Tips for getting more out of professional development
8. Selected online resource list

1) Defining professional development

“The processes and activities designed to enhance and/or change the professional knowledge, skills and attitudes of adult educators so that they can improve the learning of learners” is our overall definition of professional development.

Adult educators in Vermont enter their positions with a variety of educational backgrounds and professional experiences. Some were educators in the K-12 system or faculty in the higher education system, some have taught English abroad, and still others were community organizers, counselors, or even accountants. Ongoing professional development is essential for understanding and implementing the evolving body of research, professional practices, and professional wisdom that undergird the field of adult education and literacy.

2) Where to find opportunities for professional development

The Vermont Agency of Education’s Adult Education and Literacy team designs activities specific to strengthening the practice of adult education and literacy in Vermont.

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A **calendar** of professional development activities is produced and updated throughout the year. The calendar is informed by the results of needs assessment surveys that all staff are encouraged to complete, and state/system priorities. The calendar is a clearinghouse for a variety of professional development activities. Many of the activities are available at no charge to adult educators. In many cases statewide funds support the cost of these activities.

The calendar is shared on an email list. All staff are encouraged to join the “**didja know**” list, a moderated listserv for the adult education system at the Vermont Agency of Education. Subscribe by sending a request to miranda.scott@state.vt.us

Other opportunities are available for professional development outside of those listed in the calendar that you may learn about through your other professional networks in your town, region, or beyond, or online. Office managers, program assistants, and others may be interested in pursuing professional development opportunities outside of the calendar. Speak with your supervisor for approval to participate. Consider speaking with your supervisor or manager about utilizing other sources of funds for professional development at your learning center, if fees are required.

3) Orientations—2 required online courses

Vermont New Teacher Training is a non-facilitated, free online orientation course designed to introduce new adult education staff to essential knowledge and skills as they begin their job assignments. The course content was developed in collaboration with the Staff Orientation Workgroup, comprised of instructors and local administrators across the state. It is anticipated that completion of the course will range between 4-6 hours. Centers are highly encouraged to have new instructors complete the course prior to beginning instruction, whenever possible.

The course addresses seven key components:

- Lesson 1. Introduction to the Adult Learner
- Lesson 2. Adult education in Vermont
- Lesson 3. The Enrollment Process
- Lesson 4. Planning and Delivering Instruction
- Lesson 5. Collecting, Documenting, and Reporting Student Achievements
- Lesson 6. Policies and Procedures
- Lesson 7. Professional Development

The course is more than a reading tutorial – it’s interactive. This means there are activities and assignments that will keep staff engaged.

The Orientation to Equipped for the Future Content Standards is a second course. It is similar in that it is online, self-paced, free, and 4-6 hours in duration.

Managers have an enrollment key and an access manual to help new staff begin the courses. **New staff are required to complete BOTH courses within 6 months of hire.**

4) Competencies for staff and standards for the professional development system

Staff competencies define what adult educators need to know and be able to do. They are an important tool for staff to use to identify the areas in which they already excel, to identify where they need improvement, and to prioritize these needs in an individual professional development plan (see also section #5).

Items 1-13 are pertinent to most roles.

1. I develop and maintain a knowledge base in adult learning and development.
2. I know how to instruct and/or refer adults who have learning disabilities and other special needs.
3. I understand and am sensitive to the demands and responsibilities of adults as workers, family members, citizens, and community members (*Equipped for the Future* life roles).
4. I demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and understanding of technology that I need to stay current with my position.
5. I assess my own needs for professional growth, and I develop a plan and monitor my own progress toward my professional development goals.
6. I use a variety of instructional strategies and tools appropriate to the needs of adult learners.
7. I identify and respond to learners' individual and group needs, interests, and goals when developing instructional plans and working with students, consistent with the program's mission and goals.
8. I create a physical and interpersonal climate that is conducive to learning by drawing on adult learning theory, knowledge of learners' cultures, and interpersonal dynamics.
9. I model communication, negotiation, decision-making, and problem-solving skills for learners, and I use these skills with co-workers to enhance program operations.
10. I work with learners to identify their needs, strengths, and goals; I advise or refer them to the appropriate programs and levels of instruction.
11. I use the results of assessment on a regular basis to plan instruction and/or monitor students' progress.
12. I guide learners in the development and ongoing review of their educational plans.
13. I collect and manage accurate data for program improvement and accountability.

In addition to the above, the rest of the items are pertinent to teachers.

14. I develop and maintain knowledge base in my primary content area(s) such as literacy, math, ESOL, workplace, family literacy, etc.
15. I sequence and pace instruction appropriately.
16. I can instruct adult learners in the multi-level classroom.
17. I am sensitive to and I accommodate diverse learning styles, abilities, cultures, and experiences, including learners who have disabilities and other special needs.
18. I effectively integrate current and appropriate media and technology as a tool for instruction.

We have standards to guide the quality and nature of our professional development system as follows:

<p style="text-align: center;">Standard</p> <p>Professional development that continually improves the instruction and learning for all adult learners:</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Sample indicators</p>
<p>1. Deepens practitioners' knowledge of content areas, instructional strategies, and assessment strategies based on research and professional wisdom to help learners meet their goals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Uses various types of classroom assessment appropriate to learners. (b) Provides opportunities for reflective practice. (c) Prepares instructors to address new content through varied teaching strategies. (d) Uses instructional and professional materials that reflect research and professional wisdom and offer evidenced-based content instruction.
<p>2. Prepares practitioners to create supportive learning environments and hold high expectations for all learners.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) PD planning takes into account the principles of universal design. (b) PD providers are trained in the principles of universal design. (c) PD planning takes into account the diversity of the professional development population including issues related to gender, ethnicity, race, poverty, first language, and disabilities. (d) PD providers use differentiated instruction to meet the needs of all learners.
<p>3. Uses data from multiple sources (e.g., needs assessment of practitioners, programs, teachers, and funders; student data) to determine PD priorities, monitor progress, and help sustain continuous improvement for programs and learners.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Identification of practitioner needs takes into account the perspectives of teachers and program leaders, state and program data, developments in research. (b) Needs are identified through a variety of needs assessments methods (needs surveys, PD evaluations, program data, etc.) (c) The system uses teacher data to plan appropriate offerings. (d) Individuals have PD plans that are related to program improvement plans (which are linked to state priorities and requirements). (e) PD offerings are aligned with students' programs and state education agency's goals.

<p style="text-align: center;">Standard</p> <p>Professional development that continually improves the instruction and learning for all adult learners:</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Sample indicators</p>
<p>4. Uses multiple evaluation strategies to guide improvement and demonstrate its impact.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) The state and local systems have formative evaluation processes to gauge how well the professional development is reaching and serving all practitioners. (b) Evaluative information is collected at different levels (e.g., participant satisfaction, participant learning, participant change in thinking or practices, and organizational impact) as identified in research. (c) As resources and conditions permit, the impact of the professional development on student learning is evaluated.
<p>5. Enhances practitioners' abilities to evaluate and apply current research, theory, evidence-based practices, and professional wisdom.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) The research base related to PD is made explicit. (b) There are specific learning activities designed to help practitioners understand how to find and use research. (c) Practitioners are encouraged to examine research critically. (d) Practitioners are given opportunities to apply research to their own practice. (e) Practitioners are given opportunities to research their practice.
<p>6. Occurs over a period of time, uses teaching and learning strategies appropriate to the intended goals, and employs a variety of delivery approaches and methods.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Activities have clear goals and objectives. (b) Practitioner learning/instruction takes place over weeks or months. (c) The PD includes opportunities for application of new learning. (d) PD is available in varied formats such as face-to-face and online workshops, courses, study groups, sharing groups, university-based classes, self-study, technical assistance, program-based work, etc. (e) The system offers a variety of activities designed to build the technological comfort and competence of practitioners.

<p style="text-align: center;">Standard</p> <p>Professional development that continually improves the instruction and learning for all adult learners:</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Sample indicators</p>
<p>7. Models theories of adult learning and development.</p>	<p>(a) PD activities have theory and application components. (b) PD activities build on participants' prior knowledge. (c) PD activities foster motivation and build confidence of participants. (d) PD activities promote active learning, a spirit of inquiry, and reflection.</p>
<p>8. Fosters program, community, and state level collaboration.</p>	<p>(a) PD activities address questions such as how to build and sustain community collaborations of service providers and other stakeholders. (b) PD activities include training in community planning processes and team-building.</p>
<p>9. Builds learning communities that foster collaboration and peer learning among practitioners.</p>	<p>(a) The PD system includes opportunities for ongoing learning through participating in online discussions, webinars and courses, adding to PD wiki areas, contributing work to on-line collections, presenting to peers, writing for newsletters and journals etc. (b) PD offerings provide opportunities to build the capacity of program teams to work collaboratively on program improvement (e.g., curriculum development projects, program evaluation projects, content standards development, building resource collections).</p>
<p>10. Requires leadership at the state and local levels that promotes effective professional development and fosters continuous instructional improvement.</p>	<p>(a) Lead teacher, program director, professional development provider, state director of adult education and other leadership positions are identified, and individuals who are interested in pursuing, or who are in those positions, are provided with the training they need to fill those positions. (b) Leaders solicit input from practitioners regarding PD priorities. (c) Leaders coordinate efforts and facilitate communication across national, state, and local levels. (d) Leaders guide the alignment of student, program, and state goals. (e) Leadership strengths and needs are identified with a variety of tools.</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">Standard</p> <p>Professional development that continually improves the instruction and learning for all adult learners:</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Sample indicators</p>
<p>11. Provides policies and guidelines to support practitioners in accessing and benefiting from quality professional development and in accessing career pathways.</p>	<p>(a) Instructional staff (and other staff as needed) are supported by paid:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. professional development time; ii. substitutes to allow for participation; and iii. planning time for instruction. <p>(b) Regular staff meetings are held to enable practitioners to share in decision-making for their program.</p> <p>(c) Time is provided for practitioners to develop an individual professional development plan, access professional development that supports the plan, and receive supportive monitoring by supervisors.</p> <p>(d) Staff advancement is supported through credentials, degrees, and career ladders with compensation commensurate with experiences and qualifications.</p>

5) Your individual professional development plan

This is a thoughtful plan that you develop and revisit often to keep your efforts and activities for your professional growth on track. It has four components including assessment of your current knowledge and abilities, designation of goals and priorities, creation of a plan to achieve those goals and priorities, and a regular review of your progress with ongoing revisions to your goals and priorities.

You make this plan with the input and direction of your supervisor, and use student and program data to inform your plan. One suggestion is to consult with co-workers at your center for additional feedback on your plan.

While this plan is individual and can take the format that best suits you and addresses the four components, there is a format that you are encouraged to use. It is available at the end of the AEL Policy Statements. **Each staff person is required to maintain an IPDP, according to AEL Policy.**

6) Your annual professional development transcript

The professional development coordinator tracks your participation in professional development activities. You can request a transcript at any time from your contact at the Vermont Agency of Education. Please indicate by when you would like it, and for activities covering what timeframe.

You may have participated in professional development activities outside of the calendar that you would like to include on your transcript. Send the following information to your contact at the Vermont Agency of Education: your name, a copy of the certificate of completion and/or agenda of the activity, the title of the activity, the name of the trainer/ facilitator, date(s) of the activity, time involved, and description and goals of each activity.

7) Tips for getting more out of professional development

Be ready to apply, extend, and embed your learning, i.e.:

- Bring samples of your work and the questions that you have pertinent to the topic;
- Attend with a partner from your site with an interest in the topic;
- Make a new professional connection and follow-up with each other about applying your learning;
- Ask the facilitator or trainer if you could email or call with any questions after the session; or
- When you return to your site, share your learning and new ideas at a staff meeting.

Remember that your physical comfort affects your ability to participate. Consider the following:

- Bring water or other snacks in case they are not provided or they are not to your preferences;
- Stand up and move around as needed; or
- Bring manipulatives like silly putty, tennis balls, knitting, etc. to focus your mind.

8) Online resources, selected list

There are many great resources available on the internet for adult educators. Some organizations offer online, facilitated and self-paced **courses** specifically for adult educators. (Check for course descriptions, schedules and fees). Such resources include:

- [World Education](#)
- [ProLiteracy](#)
- [National Reporting System \(NRS\)](#), click “Trainings”

Other points of interest on the internet for self-directed professional development include:

- [LINCS](#)—Literacy Information and Communication System
- **Practitioner-oriented publications**
 - [Focus on the Basics](#) (National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy)
 - [The Change Agent](#)
 - Field Notes: [SABES](#) (System for Adult Basic Education Support)

- Equipped for the Future’s Teaching/Learning Toolkit provides adult educators with tools and ideas for **designing instruction** using Equipped for the Future’s content standards: [Equipped for the Future: Teaching/Learning Toolkit](#)
- Technology Integration Self-Assessment is an interactive, personalized professional development planning tool specifically to support adult educators’ integration of technology in instruction: [Adult Ed Online](#)