



Guiding Principles

By Mary Katherine Moen, State Director of Adult Education, mkmoen@doe.nv.gov, 775/687-9167

Professionalism—We support knowledgeable and dedicated educators by encouraging integrity, professional growth, and self-improvement.

—Nevada Adult Basic Education Directors, 2004

I am participating in a workshop and the current presentation is not applicable to the issues I find in my work-life. I am squirming and gawking, anxious to be somewhere else. The presenter's voice is annoying and he periodically has to clear his throat. It also is the last presentation of a very long day which began at 3:30 a.m. in order to catch a plane to arrive at this meeting place in time for the presentation. There is a low buzz in the large room as several people are rudely whispering or speaking in low tones.

I pick up a pen and paper with the thought of using this time creatively. I decide I will begin writing an essay on another principle that guides the work of the Adult Basic Education system. I search my mind, trying to remember what it is. I have already addressed innovation, service, excellence ... and oh, yes, synergy. And then I remember: our fifth principle is professionalism. And I immediately review my thinking and behavior for the last hour. Have I been comporting myself with professionalism?

Adult basic education's statement about professionalism references integrity, professional growth, and self-improvement. Integrity would dictate that I be honest: Should I have simply left the room when I felt disconnected from the training and done something more obviously productive? Or should I have forced myself to pay more attention — might I have heard something that gave meaning or direction to my work life? Would my professional growth have been enhanced if I had truly listened to the content of the presentation?

I did venture into self-improvement by examining my thoughts and behavior—but that was after the fact. I had a perfect opportunity for self-improvement, but was not aware of it at the time. How can I seize such opportunities in the future?

To me, being professional means being my best self, approaching situations with dignity and respect, and interacting with others with honesty and humility. I wish I had done better during this particular presentation. Perhaps my paying better attention would have supported the speaker and made the experience much more pleasant for at least the two of us.

It is important to me that I remember and exhibit professionalism. I also want our system to be professional. How do I ensure that the adult basic education community is professional?

The first thing our state system can do is provide a system of high quality professional growth opportunities sufficient to enable all levels of personnel to perform their duties successfully. To do that, we must count on your professionalism. We must know that you will make your needs known, that you will "show up and be present" and that you will tell us what works, what doesn't, and what you'd like to see.

Working together, we can ensure professional growth and self-improvement for all of us! Working together we can live in integrity.

Currently the professional development system for Nevada's AELFA-funded programs provides:

- Staff planning and training sessions, including orientation, goal-setting, and direct training for volunteers conducted by individual programs;
- Retreats and meetings planned by programs for their Boards;
- Regularly scheduled meetings for program directors which include a focus on administrative/management training;



Long-awaited National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL) released

According to the 2003 NAAL, the first national study of adult literacy since 1992, American adults can read a newspaper or magazine about as well as they could a decade ago and have made some strides in performing literacy tasks that involve computation. However, there was little change between 1992 and 2003 in adults' ability to read and understand sentences and paragraphs or to understand documents such as job applications.

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), part of the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences, conducted both assessments. The 2003 study assessed a nationally representative sample of more than 19,000 Americans age 16 and older, most in their homes and some in prisons.

Overall, adults have improved in document and quantitative literacy with a smaller percentage of adults in 2003 in the Below Basic category compared to 1992. However, Americans with below basic literacy skills number 41 million, including 11 million who are non-literate in English. "Everyone can't help but agree that this is an unacceptable level," said ProLiteracy America Executive Director Peter Waite.

Some findings based on demographics:

- White adults' scores were up nine points in quantitative, but were unchanged in prose and document literacy.
- African Americans scored higher in 2003 than in 1992 in all three categories, increasing 16 points in quantitative, eight points in document and six points in prose literacy.
- Asian/Pacific Islanders' scores increased 16 points in prose literacy, but were unchanged in document and quantitative literacy.
- Hispanic adults' scores declined in prose and document literacy 18 points and 14 points, respectively, but were unchanged in quantitative literacy.
- Among those who spoke only Spanish before starting school, scores were down 17 points in prose and document literacy between 1992 and 2003.

The report found a \$28,000 difference in the annual earnings between a below-basic adult and a proficient-skills adult. "We've got to get people to move not only from below basic to basic, but from basic to intermediate, because it is only when you get to intermediate and proficient levels that you get livable, sustainable wages," said Waite.

The full report is available at www.nces.ed.gov/naal. See www.proliteracy.org and www.national-coalition-literacy.org for reactions from the field. For responses to frequently asked questions about the NAAL survey, see the helpful FAQ published by the National Adult Education Professional Development Consortium (www.naepdc.org).

NAAL's Framework

Definition of Literacy: Using printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential.

- Prose Literacy: The knowledge and skills needed to perform prose tasks (i.e., to search, comprehend, and use information from continuous texts).
- Document Literacy: The knowledge and skills needed to perform document tasks (i.e., to search, comprehend, and use information from noncontinuous texts in various formats).
- Quantitative Literacy: The knowledge and skills required to perform quantitative tasks (i.e., to identify and perform computations, either alone or sequentially, using numbers embedded in printed materials).

Literacy Levels:

- Below Basic: No more than the most simple and concrete literacy skills.
- Basic: Skills necessary to perform simple and everyday literacy activities.
- Intermediate: Skills necessary to perform moderately challenging literacy activities.
- Proficient: Skills necessary to perform more complex and challenging literacy activities.

Local note: CCSN Program Developer Sandy Marks worked with adult educators from across the nation at a National Academy of Science workshop to determine accurate scaling for defining NAAL performance levels.



And we got culture, too!

Las Vegas tied with Fort Worth, TX for 44th place in the 2005 edition of *America's Most Literate Cities*. The annual study ranks the 69 largest cities (population 250,000 and above) on newspaper circulation, number of bookstores, library resources, periodical publishing resources, educational attainment, and — new in 2005 — the Internet.

The top five cities were Seattle, Minneapolis, Washington, D. C., Atlanta, and San Francisco. Dr. John W. Miller, president of Central Connecticut State University, authored the current study. More info: www.ccsu.edu/amlc

Paul Carignan tells why he recommends the MPAEA conference ...



I started teaching ESL about a year ago at Western Nevada Community College (WNCC) in Carson City. After about four months, I was lucky enough to attend my first professional conference. I did not know what to expect, but I discovered that the Mountain Plains Adult Education Association (MPAEA) www.mpaea.org provides a valuable connection for adult educators in eight states, many with adult education characteristics similar to ours.

Mile High Rendezvous, April 26-29
Adams Mark Hotel, Denver, CO
www.mpaea.org

Conference highlights

- 21st Century and Community Education
- Adult Basic Education (ABE) Best Practices
- Adult Education Advocacy
- Adult Learner Leadership
- Correctional Education
- ESOL Best Practices
- Family & Intergenerational Literacy
- GED Best Practices
- Higher Education
- Leadership
- On-going Professional Development
- Program Administration
- Special Needs and Learning Disabilities
- Technology

The conference last April brought together several hundred people in beautiful Jackson Hole, WY. Right away I liked the rhythm of the presentations. Each day there was a featured keynote speaker and various tracks of workshops from which to choose. Our contingent tried to split up as much as we could, then share our knowledge over dinner. Our generous hosts also arranged a tour of the brand new world-class wildlife art museum that overlooks the national elk refuge.

The presentations got me thinking about broad issues in adult education, such as how the brain learns, and showcased several strategies I brought back and immediately put to use in my classroom as well. What was really best about the conference, though, were the people. I felt proud to be among people who wore their passion, dedication, and intellect as a badge. I also appreciated the wide age-range of attendees.

The next conference is April 26-29 in Denver, CO. See you there!

... and why he studies online

Armed with a BA in psychology and seeking an advanced degree in adult education that he could attain from Carson City, Paul analyzed online graduate degree programs. He wrote a ten-page report containing a matrix of available options, questions to consider when choosing an institution, and his reasons for choosing Penn State's World Campus Adult Education Masters Degree program. You may request a copy of the report directly from Paul at: carigna3@wncc.edu, 775/445-4451.

Get help — wiki wiki*

The Adult Literacy Education (ALE) Wiki (<http://wiki.literacytent.org>), just over a year old, boasts more than 500 registered users and more than 500 pages of content on research and professional wisdom in adult literacy education.

The wiki is organized by content areas. Currently there are 25 topics, including adult learners' self-study, ESOL, GED research, learner persistence, and young adult literacy. Typically, each topic is organized as follows:

- Questions — most frequently from the field, often posted by people on NIFL electronic discussion lists
- Discussions — usually selected threads from electronic discussion lists, sometimes summarized
- Glossary — a collection of smaller glossaries by topic, e.g., GED, technology, workforce development, etc.
- Research — citations and links to pertinent research in the topic area
- Resources — links to applicable resources

More topics and content within topics can be easily added.

How do people use the ALE Wiki? "In ways yet to be discovered!" said David Rosen, Wiki organizer and senior associate with Newsome Associates in Boston, MA. "But so far, users have looked for answers to questions in a specific topic area; found references to research; looked up puzzling terms in the glossary; remembered a discussion held on an electronic list, found the thread archived in the ALE Wiki, and sent the ALE Wiki address to a colleague."

* *Wiki is a Hawaiian word meaning "quick;" wiki wiki means "very very quickly." For Web users, a wiki is an environment in which (after a free registration and log-in) you can easily add content as well as read it.*

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ESL Basic Training workshop February 24 in Las Vegas

According to veteran ESL instructor Judy Marks, this full-day workshop is “designed to empower new, nearly new, or forgot-everything-they-learned ESL teachers by giving them tools to understand the normal stages of language acquisition and destroy imaginary walls to learning erected by anxious L2 students (the Four Stages of Learning Acquisition & ‘The Affective Filter’ theory).

“Participants will also receive a concise overview of two major teaching methodologies — Total Physical Response (TPR) and The Communicative Approach,” said Judy. “We will emphasize practice, discussion, and activities designed to encourage implementation of these concepts as tools in addressing and reducing emotional and motivational barriers to learning.”

The workshop is free to all Nevada adult educators on a space-available basis. Contact Carla Adkins at the C.A.L.L. program, (702/507-3531 adkinsc@lvccld.org), to register.

Professional development in Nevada
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- Live and Internet-based pre-service trainings;
- A statewide system of professional development offerings with each AEFLA-funded program hosting at least two trainings each year;
- Access to online and self-directed trainings geared to individual needs;
- Support for out-of-state conference attendance;
- Practical information and resources regarding adult education disseminated through various media; and
- Initiation and operation of special projects and activities to encourage creativity and research by teachers and administrators.

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