



## Professional Development Handbook

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

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### Overview of topics:

1. Defining professional development
2. Where to find opportunities for professional development
3. "Orientation to Adult Education and Literacy in Vermont", online course access
4. Competencies
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

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### 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 within Learning Works 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 under gird the field of adult education and literacy.

### 2) Where to find opportunities for professional development

For Learning Works, a **professional development coordinator** at the Vermont Department of Education, Division of Lifelong Learning, Adult Education and Literacy team designs activities specific to strengthening the practice of adult education and literacy in Vermont.

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Each year beginning in the fall, a **calendar** of professional development activities is produced for Learning Works. The calendar is informed by the results of the annual needs assessment survey that all staff are encouraged to complete and the Learning Works Professional Development Committee. The calendar is published on the Learning Works website at [http://learningworksvt.org/html/prof\\_development.html](http://learningworksvt.org/html/prof_development.html)

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 subject to change; these changes are updated on the website and also announced through a moderated listserv for Learning Works at the Vermont Department of Education called “didja\_know.” There is usually about one message per week pertaining to a new resource or opportunity for professional development.

All staff are encouraged to join the “**didja\_know**” listserv. Subscribe by sending your request via email to [crystal.moodie@state.vt.us](mailto:crystal.moodie@state.vt.us).

Other opportunities are certainly 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, other specialized administrative functions, and others may be interested in pursuing professional development opportunities outside of the calendar. In all cases, speak with your supervisor for approval to participate. Consider speaking with your supervisor or manager about utilizing other sources of funds such as **discretionary** professional development funds, if fees are required.

### 3) “Orientation to Adult Education and Literacy in Vermont” online course

**Orientation to Adult Education and Literacy in Vermont** is a non-facilitated, free online orientation course designed to introduce new Learning Works 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 six – ten 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. Learning Works 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 and on their toes.

Managers have an enrollment key and an access manual to help new staff begin the course. Any questions can be directed to the professional development coordinator.

### 4) Competencies

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 #4). Professional development opportunities listed in the Learning Works professional development calendar are aligned to competencies to make it easier for staff to address their priorities.

*Items 1-13 are pertinent to most roles in Learning Works.*

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.

## **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 other staff that you work with at your center for other 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 on the Learning Works website, professional development page.

## **5) Your annual professional development transcript**

The professional development coordinator tracks your participation in professional development activities. Each summer, your annual professional development transcript is sent to you from the Vermont Department of Education.

If you have participated in professional development outside of the Learning Works calendar that you would like to include on your transcript, this is possible. Send the following information to the professional development coordinator: 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 or goals of the activity.

## **6) Tips for getting more out of professional development**

Be ready to apply, extend, and embed your learning:

- 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
- 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:

- 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
- Some staff focus their minds by bringing manipulatives like silly putty, tennis balls, knitting, etc.

## 7) Online resources, selected list

There are so many great resources available on the internet for adult educators. Here is a sampling.

Some organizations offer online, facilitated and self-paced **courses** specifically for adult educators. Check their website for their course descriptions, schedules and fees:

- AEPro: <http://www.aeprofessional.org/>
- ProLiteracy: <http://www.proliteracy.org/>
- Professional Studies AE: <http://www.ProfessionalStudiesAE.org>
- Thinkfinity: <http://www.Thinkfinity.org>
- National Reporting System (NRS): <http://www.nrsweb.org/>, click "Trainings"

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

- **Practitioner-oriented publications**  
*Focus on the Basics:* <http://www.ncsall.net/?id=31>  
*The Change Agent:* <http://www.nelrc.org/changeagent/index.htm>  
*Field Notes:* <http://www.sabes.org/resources/publications/fieldnotes/index.htm>
- Online **discussion lists** on 10 or more different topics, moderated by content area experts and sponsored by the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL): Go to <http://www.nifl.gov>, select "discussion list" to join.
- The Adult Literacy Education **wiki** collects resources on a variety of topics: [http://wiki.literacytent.org/index.php/Main\\_Page](http://wiki.literacytent.org/index.php/Main_Page)
- 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: <http://eff.cls.utk.edu/toolkit/>
- Technology Integration Self-Assessment is an interactive, personalized professional development planning tool specifically to support adult educators' integration of technology in instruction: <http://adulthoodonline.org>