An Evidence-based Adult Education Program Model Appropriate for Research

John P. Comings and Lisa Soricone
Harvard Graduate School of Education

Maricel Santos
San Francisco State University

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National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy

Harvard Graduate School of Education
101 Nichols House, Appian Way
Cambridge, MA 02138

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

In 2003, the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL) published *Establishing an Evidenced-based Adult Education System,*[1] which described an approach to improving policy and practice. That monograph defined evidence-based practice as:

> *The integration of professional wisdom with the best available empirical evidence in making decisions about how to deliver instruction.*[2]

Empirical evidence is the knowledge researchers develop through well-designed, rigorous studies. *Professional wisdom* is the knowledge practitioners develop as they work with students, and as they take research findings and apply them in their programs. Neither source of knowledge alone is sufficient to ensure effective policies and practice, but together they provide the best guidance available for programs.

Establishing an Evidenced-based Adult Education System describes steps that could lead to the establishment of an adult education[3] system based on professional wisdom and empirical evidence. The first step is a review of the available empirical evidence and professional wisdom in order to define program models that meet the requirements for good practice. A program model describes what teachers, adult students, counselors, administrators, volunteers, and program partners (such as businesses, unions, health centers, and training programs) should do to provide both effective instruction and the support services adults need in order to persist in their learning long enough to be successful. The program model described in this monograph came about as the result of taking this first step.

Although this model could also be used as a way to evaluate programs for other purposes, here it describes the context in which research on approaches to instruction and support services could be productive. Without well-defined program models, research may take place within programs that exhibit a range of quality, and some programs may have design elements that make research findings unreliable. For example, when research testing two approaches to teaching reading takes place within programs that do not have the support services necessary to help adults persist in their learning, the research may show no difference between the two approaches. This could be because the students were not engaged in learning long enough for a difference in the effect of the teaching approaches to be apparent.

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[1]   This paper can be viewed at http://www.ncsall.net/fileadmin/resources/research/op_comings3.pdf
[2]   This definition can be viewed at http://www.ed.gov/offices/IES/speeches/evidencebase.html
[3]   In this monograph, adult education refers to adult basic education, adult English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), and adult secondary education programs that help students improve language, literacy, and math skills; acquire a high school equivalency; and transition to postsecondary education or training.

Establishing an Evidenced-based Adult Education System also describes a range of methods that researchers could use to conduct evaluations of interventions meant to improve services, and suggests a hierarchy based on how well each method predicts impact.[4] However, adult education programs and classrooms are complex enterprises designed for teaching and learning, not for the purpose of conducting research. *Establishing an Evidence-based Adult Education System* acknowledges that ethical, logistical, and budgetary constraints often make it difficult to employ rigorous methods. This monograph seeks to establish a way for researchers to choose programs that offer an opportunity to employ the most appropriate research method for identifying and evaluating effective interventions.

Four Program Components

This monograph describes program models as having a *program quality support* component, and three chronological program components: *entrance* into a program, *participation* in a program, and *re-engagement* in learning.

- The *program quality support* component is the organizational structure that supports students and teachers in their efforts to learn and teach. This component includes the goals the program is attempting to achieve, the way it organizes that effort, the relevance of that effort, the resources needed to accomplish it, and the way those resources are improved over time.

- *Entrance into a program* includes recruitment—how programs describe and publicize their services to attract students and help them make an informed choice to begin a course of study—and the intake and orientation process—how programs assess the needs and goals of students and prepare them to be successful learners. This component also includes wait-list management, as this issue addresses situations in which a learner wants to enroll in a program but cannot due to lack of available classes.

- *Participation in a program* includes instruction—how programs help students learn— and support services—how programs help students participate, persist, and engage in learning long enough to reach their goals.

- *Reengagement in learning* includes the ways in which programs help students continue learning after they stop participating in program services, resume participation when they are able, and begin postsecondary education or training after completion of program services.

The four components that make up a program model are defined by *principles*. A principle describes a guiding assumption about how to design the program quality

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4   For a debate about the prioritization of research methods, see Slavin (2002, 2004) and Belzer & St. Clair (2005) for divergent perspectives.

support component and three program components in ways that are sufficient for research. These principles are derived from empirical evidence and professional wisdom, and defined through a process that balances the advice from empirical evidence and professional wisdom with the constraints inherent in the field of adult education.

Each program model should target a specific student population, which is defined by instructional goals and needs. *Establishing an Evidenced-based Adult Education System* describes several specific populations (such as beginning ESOL students who are literate in their own language, ABE students reading at the 5th to 8th grade level, or GED students with good literacy and numeracy skills). However, this paper describes a generic program model, without the specific elements for each population. Later publications will describe program models for each group of students, but those models will incorporate the principles described in this monograph.

This monograph proposes a set of principles that describe programs in which researchers can conduct studies that compare different approaches to instructional and support services. Though this program model is based on the best available professional wisdom and empirical evidence, it is untested. This model should be tested to assess its impact on participation—in terms of gains in skills and knowledge—in programs that conform to it. Once the model has been tested, further research could evaluate the relative merits of different approaches to instruction and support, or evaluate different definitions of each principle. Chapter Seven sets out a research agenda to test and improve this model.

Relevance to Researchers

In his review of outcome and impact studies, Beder (1999) found that most studies were "flawed in ways that severely compromised the validity and utility of their findings" (p. 74). Even in those studies that were well designed and executed, the nature of adult education programs produced flaws that compromised the findings. Three specific aspects of research are dependent on program design, and the principles set out in this document address all three. Research that seeks to develop or evaluate interventions needs:

- A study sample of adult students who persist long enough in their programs to show learning progress.

- Study samples of students who are at the same academic level (beginning, intermediate, and advanced, for example) so that the findings can be generalized from the study group to other students who have the same needs and goals.

- Programs that have the ability to deliver services in accordance with the guidelines of the proposed intervention.

Programs that meet these three criteria for research are also programs that meet the needs of the students who are enrolled in them.

Methodology

The team that drafted this paper reviewed the existing adult education literature to discover a consensus about program design. After the review, the team concluded that:

- Only a few studies describe research that defines principles that could be included in this paper.

- Several sources present theories that are based on research and observation or on educational philosophy that define principles that could be included in this paper.

- The literature includes several attempts to describe the field's professional wisdom in terms of principles for good practice. These documents refer to each other and draw from the same sources, and, therefore, they represent an informed opinion drawn from the existing literature and the professional experience of well-respected practitioners and academics.

- Only some of the principles derived from the existing adult education literature are defined in ways that would allow an observer to determine with confidence that a principle is demonstrated in a program.

The team devised the following strategy to address the four limitations listed above. First, the team drew from the professional wisdom sources to define a set of principles. Then, the team looked at the theory and research literature to identify sources that support or contradict these principles. Finally, the team proposed ways to verify that a program is operating under these principles.

After the first draft of this document was completed, it was shared with experts to seek feedback that informed this final list of principles. Since the research base in this field has few studies that test the impact of any of these principles, the input of this expert panel helped the team make the decision as to which principles are important, and how to verify that they exist within a program. A list of the experts consulted for this monograph can be found in the Acknowledgments.

Although the team found a consensus on the set of principles, statements that defined how the principles could be identified in practice were usually unclear. For some principles, particularly those related to the program quality support component, the team was able to build on previous work in the field to propose a clear approach to verification. For other principles, particularly those related to instruction and support services, that clear approach seemed impossible without further empirical study. Readers should, therefore, view these principles as often representing one end of a continuum, not a specific point.

The Next Step

We feel that the existing literature is insufficient to serve as the sole source for defining program models for research or accountability purposes. This document, therefore, provides general, rather than specific, advice to researchers, policymakers, and program staff. One approach to developing specific advice would be to pursue a comprehensive agenda of research and evaluation. However, this would be an extremely long process and sufficient resources to support it are not available at this time. Another approach would be to convene a group of experts to review this document and its supporting literature and then make decisions as to how to define these principles with greater specificity.

The next step in refining this document, therefore, may require convening a jury[5] of experts to review the document and then employ their knowledge and wisdom to provide greater specificity. In legal proceedings, a jury develops a consensus after weighing evidence of many different types, but the jury is given direction as to the hierarchy of that evidence—evidence from an eyewitness account is stronger than circumstantial evidence, for example, and hearsay is not admitted. In this case, a jury could, for example, help make a decision about enrollment policy. The literature supports managed enrollment, in which new students enroll in programs at specific times, as opposed to open enrollment, in which new students can enter a program at any time. However, some of our reviewers cautioned that strict managed enrollment is difficult to achieve in adult education, and that some approaches to classroom management can ameliorate the problems caused by open enrollment. A jury could weigh the existing evidence and then clearly define the forms of enrollment that should serve as the minimum standard for adult education programs. The jury might describe a modified form of managed enrollment as the standard, unless the program employs one of several specific approaches that address the problems of open enrollment.

The jury should be made up of scholars, practitioners, administrators, policymakers, and students. The jury would use research assistants to help review this document, its supporting literature, and other sources. The agencies that fund research and support program services would have to agree to abide by the findings of an independent jury, but they should participate in the preparations that define the hierarchy

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[5] David Rosen first suggested the use of a jury for this process on the CALPRO electronic list in April 2005. His exact words were: "As I was sitting in a Boston courtroom this week, waiting to be empanelled to perform my civic duty, it occurred to me that life-and-death issues, as well as all of the other concerns which affect the well-being of people and corporations, are decided in our society using a different 'evidence-based' process, one where a broad range of evidence—including testimony—is offered, but then judged by a jury. I wondered: if this is good enough for life-and-death issues, why isn't evidence, decided by a jury (of experts) good enough for most decisions about education practice? Maybe it is, and maybe 'expert juries' from our field should be part of the definition of 'gold standard' professional wisdom. In any case, I think the legal metaphor offers an interesting alternative to the medical metaphor we have been using recently in discourse about standards for adult education practice based on evidence."

of evidence and set out a framework for describing program models. In some cases the strongest evidence may fall at the bottom of the hierarchy. In other cases the evidence may be contradictory. The jury would use its knowledge and wisdom to resolve these situations.

The following set of steps could lead from this document to a consensus on what constitutes an adequate program. Those steps are:

1. Funding agencies agree to abide by the eventual recommendations of a jury of experts.

2. A jury of experts is convened and provided with research assistance.

3. Funding agencies and the jury work together to define a hierarchy of evidence and a framework for describing the program models.

4. The jury weighs all the evidence and makes decisions on what constitutes effective adult education programs by employing the hierarchy of evidence.

5. The jury describes effective programs (probably along a continuum from sufficient to excellent).

6. The jury articulates a research agenda that would resolve important questions or develop new knowledge that would improve program performance.

This process would: (1) give the field of adult education a consensus on what constitutes services that are worthy of the time its students invest in programs, (2) define programs in which research might be productive, and (3) provide an agenda for useful research.

Design of This Document

The list of principles, even without the summaries of supporting literature, proved too long and complicated to be useful for researchers or practitioners. The team solved this problem by describing the principles in three ways:

1. A *Summary of the Principles* sets out the findings in simple language, without reference to the supporting literature. This summary provides researchers and practitioners with an understanding of what the program model might look like in practice.

2. A *Complete Set of Principles* sets out all of the details and supporting literature for all of the principles. Each principle is named, described, and linked to the evidence that supports it. The evidence sets out the professional wisdom, theory, and research that support the principle. For each principle, the paper attempts to describe ways to verify that a

program's design is consistent with the principle, but these descriptions are at an early stage of development. The reader should note that the discussion of each principle varies in length, due to the fact that the amount of professional wisdom, research, and theory available to support each principle is somewhat different. The difference in length in the discussion of each principle should thus not be viewed as indicative of the relative importance of the principles, but as a reflection of the current state of information on the topics that they cover.

3. A *Research Site Identification Protocol* sets out the findings in a way that allows researchers to verify that a program is operating under these principles. This protocol should help two different researchers come to the same conclusions. The research site identification protocol is comprised of a short list of core principles that allow a researcher to identify research sites quickly and easily.

CHAPTER TWO: SUMMARY OF PRINCIPLES

Program Quality Support

Programs should have a well-defined role, demonstrated by:

- A clear statement of mission, philosophy, and goals that guides all aspects of program services, and that is designed to meet the needs of each program's community, as well as the policies of its state and national funding agencies.

Programs should have a management system, demonstrated by:

- A governing body, such as an advisory board or board of directors, that oversees program activities, meets regularly, and represents the local community.
- The use of data for the purposes of program improvement and accountability.
- A regular planning process that involves multiple stakeholders.
- A regular process of evaluation that involves multiple stakeholders and serves the dual purposes of program development and accountability.
- Stable funding and adequate management of its financial resources, including maintaining financial records, establishing and monitoring a budget, and engaging in fundraising.

Programs should have a system to manage their human resources, demonstrated by:

- A clear process for recruiting and hiring instructional and support staff.
- A clear policy or set of standards for determining what constitutes qualified staff that has the skills, knowledge, and life experiences to address the needs of adult students.
- A professional development plan that takes into account the needs of the staff and provides them with opportunities to receive training, practice new skills, and receive constructive feedback.
- Treating staff as professionals and providing working conditions that support student progress and staff improvement.

Programs should provide a suitable environment for learning, demonstrated by:

- Instructional services that are provided at flexible hours and convenient locations.
- A physical environment that supports adult learning and is safe and comfortable for students and staff.
- A psychologically safe environment that protects the confidentiality of students and staff and demonstrates respect for the cultures of students, staff, and other stakeholders.

- Appropriate learning materials that are designed for use by adults—including written materials and technology—and other resources such as office equipment and volunteers.

Entering a Program

Programs should have an organized recruitment process that:

- Makes use of new and existing networks and partnerships with businesses and other organizations.

- Employs a diversity of recruitment strategies (e.g., community needs assessment, media, and personal contact).

- Clarifies the nature of the program and its requirements and provides potential students with the information necessary to make appropriate choices.

- Includes recruitment approaches that are suited to the target population and reflect their languages, cultures, and interests.

- Incorporates data on recruitment success and feedback from students in order to improve recruiting practices.

A program should have an organized approach to intake that includes:

- An assessment of each student's goals, skill level, and support needs.

- A presentation to each student of a realistic assessment of his or her skill level and the time and effort required for achieving his or her goals.

- An individual learning plan for reaching the student's goals that includes ways to address persistence support needs.

- Information about students' rights and responsibilities.

A program should provide students with an orientation that:

- Provides a clear picture of program services.

- Makes clear what is expected of participants in the program.

Programs should have procedures to accommodate students who are placed on wait lists, and these procedures may include:

- Provision of limited services.

- Opportunities for self-study.

- Referral to other services.

Participating in a Program

Programs should have an effective approach to classroom management, demonstrated by:

- Appropriate staff-to-student ratios, which should be informed by the instructional goals and characteristics of the student population.

- Intensity and duration of instruction sufficient for the particular learning needs of adult students and the learning task they are attempting.

- Managed enrollment, rather than open enrollment (which frequently brings new students into a class).

- Class levels (e.g., beginning, intermediate, advanced) based on a clear understanding of students' abilities and needs, avoiding as much as possible the practice of multilevel classes in which students have profound differences in skills.

Programs should have an effective approach to classroom management, demonstrated by:

- A safe classroom environment that reduces the anxiety of adult students and encourages them to take risks in their learning.

- Instructional activities that promote active learning, that is, activities that involve students in "doing things and thinking about the things they are doing" (Bonwell & Eison, 1991, p. 2).

- An organized curriculum that addresses the needs and goals of adult students.

- A range of instructional approaches appropriate to students' skill levels, goals, and learning preferences.

- Instructional tasks that are relevant and meaningful to students' life contexts.

- A comprehensive assessment policy for diagnosing and placing students, evaluating their progress, and determining their achievement, with this information clearly explained and shared with students to the extent possible.

Programs should have an effective approach to supporting persistence, demonstrated by:

- A system for monitoring student persistence.

- Instructional and counseling services that promote the development of students' self-efficacy around learning.

- Educational and personal counseling that is intended to help adult students persist in their learning and attain their educational goals.

- A clear and purposeful system for identifying students' needs for support services and providing the necessary services or referring students to agencies that can provide those services.

Re-engagement

Programs should have an effective system for supporting re-engagement in learning, demonstrated by:

- A system for monitoring student departure from a program, applied to instances of both dropout and program completion.

- A plan for helping students who stop attending classes to find suitable ways to re-engage in learning until they reach their goals.

- A network of appropriate support services for student transition to postsecondary education, including counseling to help students make informed choices about opportunities to continue their education, and help for students who successfully move on to a new setting (e.g., another program, employment, continued education).

CHAPTER THREE: SUPPORTS TO PROGRAM QUALITY

In order to provide instructional and support services that meet the needs of students and foster their sustained progress in learning, programs must provide the supportive foundation of a well-run organization. Weak programmatic infrastructure has been identified as a major shortcoming of adult education programs and an obstacle to conducting research in the field (Beder, 1996, 1999). An effective program has an articulated purpose that is defined by its mission and philosophy and influenced by the social, economic, and political context in which it functions. The effective operation of a program requires attention to planning; development and maintenance of a system of accountability (comprising governance, data collection, and evaluation and monitoring); organized efforts aimed at program improvement; and creation of long-term stability. A program should demonstrate respect for its students' cultures, protect their individual confidentiality, and offer services at convenient times and locations.

This section presents a set of principles that defines effective supports to program quality. Researchers may not find programs that meet all of these principles, but the principles serve as a framework for making a decision as to whether a program is designed and managed in such a way that research will be successful. Researchers can also use this framework to identify program weaknesses that might explain why their intervention worked well in some programs and not in others.

Researchers should be interested in this group of principles because the success of their studies is dependent on programs that have sufficient management resources to carry out an intervention correctly and keep their students long enough for that intervention to be successful. The principles in this section describe programs that have sufficient management resources to support instruction that is likely to be effective and to support students to persist long enough in their studies to achieve some progress. These principles are arranged under four primary elements of this component:

- A well-defined role

- An effective management system

- Human resource management

- A suitable environment for learning

Well-Defined Role

Each adult education program has three stakeholders that should define its purpose: funders, a student population, and a community in which it operates. An effective program offers services that are consistent with the needs of these three stakeholder groups. Two principles describe a program that has a well-defined role.

*1. **Organizational Mission**: A program should have a mission statement, philosophy, and goals.*

Definition. This principle helps a program's staff pursue activities that contribute to the same outcome. Several different missions have been proposed for adult education programs. These include a focus on: particular subgroups of adult students, such as women or workers (Howell, Carter, & Schied, 2002; Mojab & Gorman, 2003); the academic achievement of students (Stein, 1993); lifelong learning (Hake, 1999; Massachusetts Department of Education, 2001); economic outcomes (Balatti & Falk, 2002); improved labor market participation (Baptiste, 2001; Jansen & Wildemeersch, 1998); and critical consciousness (Brookfield, 2001, 2002; Mojab & Gorman, 2003; Tisdell, 1998). While these missions may vary across organizations, they generally reflect the aim of improving adults' capacity to participate in society and improve their lives. This document does not advocate a particular mission, but, rather, that the organization *have* a mission, that the staff be aware of the mission, and that the activities of the organization be consistent with the fulfillment of that mission.

Professional Wisdom. The professional wisdom literature supports the importance of an organizational mission statement, philosophy, and goals as a foundation for effective adult learning (Cook, 1996; Mayer, 1987; Rosenberg, 2003; Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, 2000; Wrigley & Guth, 1992). Cook (1996) recommends that a program have a mission statement that "defines the program's role and purpose: the population served, the nature of services provided, and guiding principles and philosophy" (p. 22). As an example of a mission statement, Mayer (1987) offers the following: "The purpose of this literacy program is to enable adult native speakers of English to acquire necessary basic skills in reading, speaking, and writing, so that they may be able to participate more fully in society" (p. 1-2). With respect to philosophy, Mayer suggests that it include "what the learner population needs or wants (based on the community assessment), how they learn, and how that learning is best facilitated by the program" (p. 1-3). As two sample philosophies, he proposes the following:

> *This program believes that the adults of our learner population want to learn basic literacy skills, and that they can learn them best by being tutored one-to-one using the principles of adult education, a curriculum based on phonics, and materials drawn from the literacy problems students face in their everyday lives.*

> *This program believes that the adults of our learner population want to be empowered to take more control over their lives, and that this can happen best by engaging them as partners in the learning process and consulting them at all times in the selection of instructional materials so they can learn in a way that best suits their definition of their own needs. (p. 1-3)*

Mayer (1987) adds that a program's statement of purpose should comprise a definition of literacy, such as "the ability to use the basic skills of reading, speaking, writing, and

computation to function in today's society" (p. 1-2). Mayer (1987) also suggests a written statement of "expected results" for students and the community as an additional source of guidance for program direction. These statements of purpose should inform all aspects of a program's operation, as well as instructional strategies and materials (Mayer, 1987; Rosenberg, 2003). Expected results may pertain to both learners and communities, as the following examples illustrate:

> *This program intends to enable its adult learners to improve their reading comprehension skills, so that they may then also improve their economic condition.*
>
> *This program intends to increase the level of awareness of the literacy problem among the business community, the public at large, and elected representatives, so that private and public support for and involvement in adult literacy can be increased. (Mayer, 1987, p. 1-3)*

Theory. A theoretical basis for this principle can be found in the literature on organizations. In order to perform effectively, an organization requires a purpose and direction. Purpose and direction are generally expressed through the organization's mission, philosophy, and goals. The mission lays out the purpose of the organization's work and provides a focus for establishing organizational priorities (Schein, 1992). It provides "a foundation for … strategies, plans, and work assignments" (Drucker, 1974, p. 75). As Schein (1992) points out, organizational philosophy provides "a way of emphasizing special things to be attended to in the organization" and articulates a set of values "around which to rally the troops," serving as "a reminder of fundamental assumptions not to be forgotten" (p. 251). The clear definition of purpose provided by an organizational mission and philosophy is necessary so that commitments of people and resources can be reviewed and revised in a rational way, rather than "at the mercy of events" (Drucker, 1974, p. 74). Goals act in support of the organization's mission by concretizing it and facilitating decisions on the means of carrying it out (Schein, 1992).

Research. While no research specifically addressed the effect of having a mission on outcomes such as student achievement, a national study by Aguirre International analyzed nine ESOL literacy programs to identify program issues and describe innovative approaches (Wrigley, 1993). The study found that the features of successful ESOL literacy programs include regular evaluation and adjustment of program mission. The author notes that it is often easier for programs that receive money targeted for a specific effort, such as family literacy or ESOL for the homeless, to make decisions about program goals and implementation than it is for programs adding an additional class to an existing program, since targeted efforts permit programs to begin with a clearly articulated philosophy of literacy teaching.

Verification. Evidence of this principle could be obtained by reviewing program brochures, program descriptions, and grant applications, where programs may describe their mission, philosophy, and goals (Mayer, 1987). In addition, verification of the principle could take place through interviews with a sample of program staff who would be asked to articulate the mission statement, philosophy, and goals of the program, and describe the congruence between these elements and the curriculum, materials, and activities of the program.

2. <u>Awareness of the Program Environment</u>: A program should demonstrate awareness of its role in its community, state, and nation by:

- Maintaining communication with relevant agencies and stakeholder groups.

- Keeping informed of current trends—such as legislative policies, economic trends, and views on literacy—that influence programs and the lives of adult students.

- Engaging in advocacy efforts that raise community awareness.

Definition. This principle ensures that a program's design is consistent with the needs of its community and the policies of state and national funding agencies. It also ensures that the program has community support and is linked to community resources. These links to communities are important for four reasons.

1. Programs do not operate in isolation. Aspects of the community, including demographic, economic, legislative, and cultural trends, affect program services and the lives of the students who participate in them. Such trends can determine who needs services, what kinds of services are most appropriate, and what resources are available to provide them.

2. Adult students themselves are members of communities and are, therefore, affected by conditions and changes in such things as housing, safety, labor market conditions, and public assistance requirements. It is essential, therefore, that programs maintain an awareness of the larger communities from which their students come, and in which students will apply the skills and knowledge that they acquire through participation in a program.

3. Adult students often require services to address needs that cannot be met by educational programs, such as child care, housing, health, substance abuse recovery, and mental health. It is, therefore, important that educational programs be integrated into a larger network of community services to facilitate students' use of the full range of community services.

4. Programs should be integrated into communities as a means of ensuring a broad base of support for literacy and adult education services. Advocating for literacy and funding for it can be accomplished more

effectively when literacy is perceived as an issue of the larger community, not just of the programs that provide services.

Professional Wisdom. The professional wisdom literature supports the need for programs to maintain an awareness of, and connections to, their surrounding communities (Cook, 1996; Massachusetts Interagency Literacy Group, 1990; Mayer, 1987; Rosenberg, 2003; TESOL, 2000). As Stein (1993) points out, program goals should be defined in relation to community needs and socioeconomic realities.

Developing and maintaining awareness of communities can be accomplished in a number of ways. Mayer (1987) suggests performing or participating in a community-needs assessment, communicating with other organizations to address illiteracy, and forming partnerships to reach common goals. Literacy Volunteers of America[6] (1998, 2000) suggests writing letters to other community-based, educational, job training, and social agencies in order to seek collaborative linkages; participating in meetings with other agencies; sharing lists of agencies among organizations; developing procedures for referrals to other organizations; and developing written agreements between agencies around collaborative efforts. Stein (1993) recommends that programs: (1) organize annual communitywide meetings to solicit input into community goals and operations, (2) regularly update information on community demographics to monitor and address changes in community needs that affect the program's operations and goals, and (3) participate in formal and informal community, citywide, and statewide networks to share information, coordinate resources, and stay informed of changing needs.

While programs need to maintain an awareness of the communities surrounding them, they also should build awareness of both their services and broader literacy issues within those communities. Mayer (1987) suggests that programs be "vocal in (their) support of literacy in the community"; programs should "help the community to understand the need for everyone to have literacy skills," and "join with others in mobilizing the community in support of public policy and specific services that address adult student needs" (p. 1-4).

Some sources focus on specific program contexts. Gillespie (1996), for example, calls for strong partnerships between employers and educational programs in workplace education. Crandall (1993) suggests that programs must offer alternative points of entry to community members and other individuals with special skills and knowledge that may be beneficial for working with adult ESOL students.

Theory. The importance of maintaining an awareness of an organization's environment is noted among organizational theorists. As part of an organization's efforts to determine

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[6]   Now part of ProLiteracy.

its purposes and policies, Bryson (1988) suggests that organizations identify "the external threats and opportunities in the environment and the social obligations of the firm" (p. 30). Drucker (1974) points out the need to follow external trends, such as demographics, which can affect the market for the services offered by a program. In addition, establishing linkages beyond a program serves to build a "broad, sound, solid advocacy base," which helps to move an organization forward (Drucker, 1990, p. 85).

Research. While there is scant research on the importance of maintaining awareness of community needs, a national study by Aguirre International (Wrigley, 1993) of nine ESOL literacy programs noted that successful programs make use of curriculum that is based on a needs assessment that "identifies both the educational needs of immigrant groups in the community and the particular needs of those attending the program" (p. 2).

Verification. This principle could be verified through interviews with program leadership, who would be asked to describe the needs of the program's community, state, and nation. In addition, programs could provide a range of relevant documentation such as:

- Letters sent to other community-based educational, job training, and social service agencies in order to seek collaborative linkages.

- Agendas of meetings held with other community-based, educational, and social service agencies.

- Questionnaires that seek community input.

- A community assessment that includes current demographics, other community resources that provide adult education, and other human services in the community.

- Projections of demographic, social, and economic trends (LVA, 1998, 2000).

- Joint grant proposals or Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with other social service organizations or employers.

Effective Management System

An adult education program cannot operate without an effective management system. The five principles in this section—governance, data collection and use, planning processes, evaluation, and financial management—describe an effective management system. In addition, these principles serve to ensure the stability and continued improvement of a program and provide the means for making a program accountable to its multiple stakeholders. By establishing a governing body, a program ensures that some oversight will take place; regular monitoring of program activities maintains a focus on the program's mission and philosophy. Data collection processes provide valuable information that supports planning and evaluation functions, and allows programs to be

accountable to their stakeholders. The planning and evaluation processes help an organization to clarify the direction of its work, and adjust its operations and policies in order to make improvements when needed. Financial management ensures that programs will have the resources necessary to provide services over time. Human resources management helps to ensure that programs maintain a qualified staff, with opportunities for growth and improvement. In addition, human resources management can provide the physical and mental conditions under which staff can do the best job possible.

3. *Governance:* *A program should have a governing body, such as an advisory board or board of directors, that oversees program activities, meets regularly, and represents the local community.*

Definition. While staff members are focused on the daily operations of a program, a governance group safeguards the program's integrity and viability (Cook, 1996). The structure and membership of the governing body may vary from one agency to another (Cook, 1996). The purpose of this group is to ensure accountability, as well as provide effective administration of all program activities (TESOL, 2000).

Professional Wisdom. The professional wisdom literature supports the need for programs to have a system of governance, such as a board of directors or an advisory committee, and by-laws (Cook, 1996; LVA, 1998, 2000; Mayer, 1987; ProLiteracy Worldwide, 2004; TESOL, 2000). The governance process should involve students, staff, and community members (Cook, 1996) and be reflective of the different elements of the community on which the organization depends for support (Mayer, 1987; ProLiteracy Worldwide, 2004). The governing body ensures the stability of the organization through leadership, guidance, and oversight related to policies and organizational direction (ProLiteracy Worldwide, 2004). The governing body has multiple responsibilities, which include updating and reviewing by-laws, policy development, planning, evaluation, budget and finance, personnel, public information, and organizationwide decision-making (Cook, 1996; Mayer, 1987). The governing body also assesses and manages risk for the organization, and supports the organization financially through fundraising and public-awareness efforts (Mayer, 1987; ProLiteracy Worldwide, 2004).

Theory. Organizational management literature provides some justification for the inclusion of a governing body as a support to program quality, particularly the use of a board of directors. Drucker (1974) describes three key functions of a board of directors. First, it serves as a "review organ" (p. 631) made up of experienced people who are available to management for counsel and advice and who can "act with knowledge and decision in a crisis" (p. 631).

As Drucker (1974) notes:

Somebody has to make sure that objectives are being set and strategies are being developed … to make sure that [the organization] succeeds in utilizing the

strengths of people and in neutralizing their weaknesses … and that its rewards to managers, its management tools and management methods strengthen the organization and direct it toward objectives (p. 631).

Second, a board can remove underperforming top management or program directors (Drucker, 1974). Third, a board serves as a "public and community relations organ" (p. 632), providing access to an organization's constituents. However, as Drucker points out, a governing board of directors must represent "no one except the basic long-term interests" of the program; it must be capable of carrying out its function as the "review organ and as the supervisor of top-management performance" (p. 633). As Drucker (1990) states, "an organization hasn't come anywhere near its full potential until it sees the building of a great and effective board as part of the ministry of that organization" (p. 179).

Research. No research was found that supports or undermines this principle.

Verification. Researchers seeking to verify the implementation of this principle could find evidence of it through the indicators suggested by Literacy Volunteers of America, Inc. (1998, 2000), which include: (1) a written roster of members of the governing body that indicates which segment of the program's community each member represents, (2) written agendas and minutes of meetings to demonstrate that the body meets regularly in accordance with bylaws, (3) descriptions of board member responsibilities, and (4) minutes of meetings documenting action related to policy and program direction for which the body is responsible.

*4. **Data Collection and Use:** A program should gather and use data for the purposes of program improvement and accountability.*

Definition. Over the last several years, accountability has become an increasingly important issue in the operation of adult education programs. The attention to this issue led to the establishment of the National Reporting System (NRS). The data collection that the NRS requires can be of use to programs as they seek ways to improve their services. The data-collection process also provides an important support to planning and evaluation processes. Data collection, therefore, is an important element in both accountability and program improvement.

Professional Wisdom. The professional wisdom literature identifies data-collection processes as supportive of planning and evaluation, monitoring, decision-making, and responding to requests for information (Cook, 1996; Mayer, 1987; MILG, 1990; Stein, 1993). For a data-collection system to operate effectively, staff should understand the role and importance of data collection and record keeping, have the skills or training necessary to carry out such tasks, and have clear, well-defined data-collection

responsibilities (Cook, 1996; Stein, 1993). To ensure the usefulness and feasibility of data collection, Stein (1993) suggests, "teachers, students and administrators be involved in developing data collection procedures that can be integrated into ongoing program activities" (p. 16). She further recommends that processes for a periodic review of this documentation "in light of learner needs and satisfactions, program goals, and funder requirements to assess progress and determine the need for change in program processes and structures" (p. 16) are essential.

The information gathered through a program's data-collection processes should pertain to students, staff, and program activity and performance (Mayer, 1987, p. 6-3). Suggestions for specific data to collect include: demographics, goals, attendance, test scores, other achievements, and outcomes for students; personnel information, background and experience, job descriptions, course certificates, goals, and professional development plans for staff; and program activities (including information on recruitment, intake, orientation, enrollment, wait lists, retention, course descriptions, and support service provision); program operations (including information on staff meetings, board and advisory meetings, and finance); and community information (including demographics, educational needs, resources, and referral links) (Cook, 1996, p. 25; Mayer, 1987, p. A-1).

Data gathered should provide a program and its funding sources with evidence of a program's impact on students (MILG, 1990). Data should be used to prepare reports, such as an annual report to the board of directors or advisory committee, funding sources, or the community at large (Mayer, 1987). Such a report would provide: financial statements; data on students (in aggregate form), instructors, program performance, and program profile; an assessment of the program's accomplishments for the past year or longer; success stories; an updated assessment of literacy problems in the community; and a statement of future goals (Mayer, 1987).

Theory. As Drucker (1990) notes, "for many organizations in the non-profit sector, to be specific about results is still odious. They still believe their work can only be judged by quality—if at all. Some of them quite openly sneer at any attempt to ask: 'How well are you doing in terms of the resources you spent? What return do you get?'" (p. 140). Yet, as Drucker suggests, it is important for organizations to be able to answer questions such as "Are we getting better? Are we improving?" and: "Do we put our resources where the results are?" (p. 140). Data-collection processes allow such questions to be answered.

In his analysis of the role of quantitative data in management, Hayes (1975) points out the value of quantitative information generated about an organization in "problem *formulation*—the way managers think about their problems—how they size them up, bring new insights to bear on them, relate them to other problems, communicate with other people about them, and gather information for analyzing them" (p. 70). In this way, the results produced by the "quantitative people" contribute in "a really significant

way to the *art* of management" (p. 70). Hayes adds that information can be viewed as the "glue that holds organizations together," and thus, "the demand for better information is really a demand for a more accurate basis for communication" (p. 79).

Research. No research was found that supports or undermines this principle.

Verification. Researchers seeking evidence of implementation of this principle could interview program staff in order to learn about the data-collection system and the types of data gathered. In addition, staff could provide examples of reports (internal, annual, funder) that make use of the data collected (ProLiteracy Worldwide, 2004).

5. *__Planning Processes__: Programs should engage in a regular planning process. Plans should be informed by the input of multiple stakeholders (staff, students, and related institutions). Planning should address the following:*

- Student and community needs
- Goals for the program
- Goals for student achievement
- Instructional processes
- Professional development needs
- Persistence patterns
- Community relations
- Staffing and resource needs
- Resources and fund development
- Technology needs and resources

Definition. While a mission, philosophy, and goals help to define what an organization wants to achieve, planning determines precisely how that will happen. The planning process should make use of the data collected by the program, and it should suggest the goals for an evaluation process and ways to use evaluation results to improve the plan. This principle ensures that programs take into account all of the program design issues that could affect student success.

Professional Wisdom. The importance of planning is widely noted in the professional wisdom literature (Cook, 1996; Cumming, 1992; LVA, 1998, 2000; Mayer, 1987; Office of Vocational and Adult Education, 1992; ProLiteracy Worldwide, 2004; Rosenberg, 2003; Stein, 1993; TESOL, 2000). The literature suggests that the planning process should involve multiple stakeholders and should make use of multiple sources of information in order to ensure the relevance of plans and the feasibility of carrying them

out. Planning should thus be undertaken with input from students, staff, funders, community and board members, and other interested parties (Cook, 1996; Hayes, n.d.; OVAE, 1992; Rosenberg, 2003; Stein, 1993).

OVAE (1992) suggests that plans should "match community needs regarding location of classes, skills taught, and type of program services offered" (p. 6). Planning should also involve the review of a variety of sources of information, such as assessments of the needs and resources of students, staff, program, and community; census data; reports of public hearings; data on program recruitment, enrollment, retention, and wait lists; reports of student goals and achievement; and results of program evaluation, including student and staff satisfaction with the program (Cook, 1996; OVAE, 1992; Rosenberg, 2003). One area highlighted among practitioners is the need to ensure that plans for professional development are aligned with overall program planning to ensure a coherent match between professional development efforts and the larger goals of the organization (Joyce & Showers, 1995; System for Adult Basic Education Support, 1995; Smith, Hofer, Gillespie, Solomon, & Rowe, 2003). In addition, planning should take into account relevant research in adult learning, as well as the program mission and philosophy (Cook, 1996). TESOL (2000) suggests that a good planning process should begin with information about: target population and community needs, program and community relations' goals, program needs, resources and fund development, retention patterns, and technology plans.

Although the sources referred to above do not specify what a plan should look like, they do offer some suggestions pertaining to plan characteristics. Several sources agree that plans should be written, widely disseminated, and reviewed and revised on a regular basis (OVAE, 1992; Rosenberg, 2003; Stein, 1993). Plans should also comprise clear goals and objectives (Cook, 1996; LVA, 1998, 2000; OVAE, 1992) and indicate implementation steps, timelines, and expected outcomes (Cook, 1996; LVA, 1998, 2000). Literacy Volunteers of America (1998, 2000) notes that plans should provide for the production and review of data and reports on outcomes or results for each goal or objective listed in the plan. Finally, Mayer (1987) and Cook (1996) suggest that plans be both short- and long-term in nature. Mayer (1987) recommends establishing long-range (three- to five-year) goals and one-year action plans. Cook proposes a number of mechanisms that can be used for short- and long-term planning (e.g., self-review guides, focus groups, use of outside consultants, peer review, and agency retreats).

Theory. As an organizational process, planning is necessary because, as Drucker (1974) states, "we can make decisions only in the present and yet we cannot make decisions *for* the present alone" (p. 125). Planning, therefore, should answer the question: "*What do we have to do now* to attain our objectives tomorrow?" (p. 126). As Drucker states, "management has no choice but to anticipate the future, to attempt to mold it, and to balance short-range and long-range goals" (p. 121). Drucker goes on to say that plans, therefore, must be both short-range and long-range. Specifically, he says:

> *The present and the immediate short range require strategic decisions fully as much as the long range. The long range is largely made by short-run decisions. Unless the long range is built into, and based on, short-range plans and decisions, the most elaborate long-range plan will be an exercise in futility. And conversely, unless the short-range plans, that is, the decisions on the here and now, are integrated into one unified plan of action, they will be expedient, guess[work], and misdirection. (p. 122)*

Among educational institutions, "considerations of educational curriculum, materials, methods, and approaches … become appropriate and useful only after sensibly selecting education goals and directions" (Kaufman & Herman, 1991, p. 3). A planning process will "identify, derive, and select shared visions and purposes so that curriculum and instructional planning may be rooted in common payoffs" (p. 3). Planning "identifies where to go, why to go there, and provides the basic criteria for determining if and when you have arrived" (p. 4).

Research. No research was found that supports or undermines this principle.

Verification. This principle could be verified through interviewing program leadership about their planning process. More specifically, Literacy Volunteers of America (1998, 2000) suggests that a program should have copies of its annual plans. In addition, programs should have at least two of the following types of documentation substantiating that the plan has been implemented:

- Procedures established to carry out the program, community relations, and fund-development functions

- Flyers, letters, or other printed materials related to the plan

- Plans that note expected outcomes or products, and the projected completion dates

- End-of-the-year statistical or annotated accountability reports of the outcomes and results for each goal and objective listed as part of the plan

6. *Evaluation:* *Programs should engage in a regular process of evaluation that involves multiple stakeholders and serves the dual purposes of program development and accountability. Evaluation should assess the effectiveness of recruitment, intake, orientation, instruction, counseling, transition, and support services.*

Definition. This principle helps ensure that programs make the effort to reflect on their operation and performance with the aim of improving the services they offer. The design of evaluations should be guided by the evaluation's purposes, such as assessing both program performance and program operations. Evaluation should be integrated into program operations in such as way as to provide feedback to staff, students, and other stakeholders on all aspects of a program, and to inform planning processes.

Professional Wisdom. The importance of evaluation as a program process is widely acknowledged in the professional wisdom literature (Cook, 1996; MILG, 1990; OVAE, 1988; Rosenberg, 2003; Stein, 1993; TESOL, 2000; White & Hoddinott, 1991). This literature suggests that evaluation should not be limited to the examination of student achievement but should also provide programs with the opportunity to examine all of their operations. As Stein (1993) notes, "Unless programs take the need for demonstrated improvements in program quality as seriously as they take the need for demonstrated improvements in the areas of student achievement and community development, they will find it impossible to make systematic improvements in results in these areas as well" (p. 21). Specifically, she suggests that programs put structures and processes in place that enable the program to "step back and look at itself in the context of the community to determine:

> *Whether its goals are consonant with its mission and philosophy, and reflect community goals.*
>
> *How well it is meeting program goals.*
>
> *Whether its structures and processes are appropriate for meeting program goals. (p. 15)*

In addition, evaluation should link assessment to instruction, as well as to student goals and needs (OVAE, 1988; TESOL, 2000). Evaluation should serve the separate purposes of program development and program accountability, and the evaluation for each purpose should be separate and distinct (White & Hoddinott, 1991).

According to Cook (1996), evaluation should be viewed as an ongoing process, integrated into all program activities. MILG (1990) suggests, "an effective approach to evaluation should include formative evaluation of program design and start-up, monitoring of ongoing program performance, and intensive, periodic summative evaluation studies" (p. 13). Evaluation should include:

- Collection and review of formal and informal data in areas such as recruitment, enrollment, retention, and wait lists; student goals and achievements; staff and student satisfaction with the program

- Assessment of the appropriateness and efficacy of program services

- Revision as needed of program goals and objectives

- Plans for modification and improvement of program design

- Consideration of impact and resulting needs in areas such as staffing, finance, facilities and resources, professional development and support services (Cook, 1996, p. 23).

Evaluation should involve a range of stakeholders including, staff, students, and board members, as well as cooperating groups, organizations, and programs (OVAE, 1988; Stein, 1993). All evaluations should employ subjective and objective criteria and make use of both qualitative and quantitative measures (White & Hoddinott, 1991). Information obtained through the evaluation and monitoring processes should inform program decisions and planning (MILG, 1990; OVAE, 1988; Rosenberg, 2003). The evaluation process could be facilitated through periodic sessions, during which staff review and analyze data, and programwide meetings to review evaluation results (Stein, 1993).

Theory. The importance of evaluation as an element of program design is supported by theorists, such as Weiss (1998), who notes that the purpose of evaluation is the "improvement of program and policy" (p. 5). The evaluation process establishes clear questions to be addressed, and results in the systematic collection of evidence from a variety of people involved with the program. Evidence, as Weiss points out, may be presented in quantitative terms, or "crafted into telling narratives" (p. 4). Evaluation allows program leadership to "draw conclusions about the ways the program is run, or its near-term consequences, or its effectiveness in fulfilling the expectations of those who fund the program, manage and staff it, or participate in its activities" (p. 4).

Research. No research was found that supports or undermines this principle.

Verification. This principle could be verified through interviews with program staff about their evaluation system. Specific evidence of this system might include copies of evaluation instruments and evaluation reports.

*7. **Financial Management**: A program should have sustainable funding and manage its financial resources effectively by:*

- Maintaining financial records

- Establishing and monitoring a budget

- Engaging in fundraising

Definition. This principle ensures that programs make effective use of their financial resources and take action to generate continued future resources. As Fingeret (1992) notes, programs require stable funding sources to avoid a crisis approach to literacy in which programs are dependent on short-term funding. All programs, therefore, must manage their finances in order to promote sustainable funding.

Professional Wisdom. The professional wisdom literature identifies the need for programs to develop and maintain financial management systems (Cook, 1996; Fingeret,

1992; Mayer, 1987; MILG, 1990; ProLiteracy Worldwide, 2004; Rosenberg, 2003; Stein, 1993; TESOL, 2000). Cook (1996) suggests that a program's financial records should be in accordance with accepted accounting principles and provide useful information to program directors for planning and evaluation purposes. In addition, programs should establish annual budgets, based on a fiscal calendar; develop them with appropriate input from staff and students; coordinate with planning and evaluation; and allocate resources to best meet the needs and goals of the program. The most important aspect of financial management is maintaining an adequate and diversified financial support base, as well as seeking funds and funding sources consistent with mission and long-range goals (Stein, 1993).

Theory. Organizational theorists recognize that financial management is an important aspect of the administration of nonprofit programs, including adult education programs. As Shim and Siegel (1997) point out, without adequate resources, programs are unable to either carry out or expand the services they provide to their communities. Programs need to provide for the tasks of financial analysis and planning, investment decisions, financing decisions, and management of financial resources. These activities should be directed toward achievement of long-term stability.

Knowles (1980) notes that financial management is essential to program operation. He suggests that an organization set a financial goal, based on an estimation of its expenses and likely sources of revenue. He cautions against setting goals too low, because this may contribute to poor financing of adult education programs. In addition, he recommends that programs prepare a budget for financial planning and control, and notes the importance of maintaining records of financial transactions, as well as annual audits and financial reports.

Financial reporting, according to Herzlinger and Nitterhouse (1994), should enable organizational leaders to assess the financial performance of the organization. It provides the information necessary for financial analysis, which answers fundamental questions, such as: (1) are organizational goals consistent with a program's financial position and methods of financing? (2) is the program ensuring that funds will be available for future "generations" of a program? (3) is there an appropriate match between sources of financial resources and the uses to which they are put (e.g., short-term vs. long-term)? and (4) are current resources sustainable? Financial analysis may not lead to final answers to such questions, but can be helpful in directing further investigation of financial questions and concerns.

A key aspect of financial management is ensuring the influx of revenue to support program activities. As Drucker (1990) points out, money tends to be scarce in nonprofit organizations, such as ABE programs. Programs need to develop a strategy for raising money to allow the organization to carry out its mission, without subordinating the mission to fund-raising. Rather than "going around with a begging bowl, asking for

money because the *need* is so great," Drucker suggests a focus on fund development, which he defines as "creating a constituency which supports the organization because it *deserves* it or developing a membership that participates through giving" (1990, pp. 56–57). Knowles (1980) recommends developing a detailed plan for producing required income. Sources of income may include appropriations from general funds of an organization, contributions from outside sources, and fees to participants.

Research. No research was found that supports or undermines this principle.

Verification. Researchers wishing to verify the implementation of this principle could discuss the financial management system with staff. Specific evidence of the management system may be observed in a budget, financial reports, minutes from finance committee meetings, financial policies, forms filed with the IRS, a financial or accounting procedures manual, audits, and investment policies (ProLiteracy Worldwide, 2004).

Human Resource Management

The most important resource in any program is its staff. Consequently, a program must take measures to ensure the appropriate: selection of staff, working conditions, and professional development. Adequate human resource management supports staff stability and program improvement by ensuring that staff members are qualified, committed, and well trained. The principles in this section focus on the hiring process, teacher credentialing and competencies, professional development, and professionalism.

8. <u>The Hiring Process</u>: Programs should have a clear process for recruiting and hiring their instructional and support staff.

Definition. The hiring process refers to the procedures that programs use to recruit, interview, and hire their instructional and support staff. Programs will have a difficult time monitoring or improving the quality of their instructional and support services if they are unable to articulate the qualities they look for in their teaching and counseling staff.

Professional Wisdom. A few professional wisdom documents speak to the need for having a clear, systematic approach when hiring instructors and support staff (ProLiteracy Worldwide, 2004; Stein, 1993). Cook (1996) points out, "when a program hires judiciously, supervision and professional development consist primarily of supporting the work and growth of a competent, committed staff" (p. 41). What constitutes a "judicious" hiring decision will likely vary according to the particular needs of a program. However, a program should have a staffing plan that reflects its mission and goals (Mayer, 1987; Rosenberg, 2003). ProLiteracy Worldwide (2000) indicates that

the recruitment and hiring process enables a program to "[clarify] its expectations of staff" (no page number, on-line document, Section C11 on organizational management). Mayer (1987) recommends that the program make clear how paid and volunteer staff will be used, and that a program create written job descriptions for all staff, both paid and volunteer. The need for written job descriptions is also mentioned in Rosenberg (2003), Cook (1996), and TESOL (2000). The interview and hiring processes should involve multiple appropriate stakeholders (i.e., supervisors, staff, students) (Cook, 1996).

The hiring process also represents an opportunity for the program to ensure that the ethnic and racial composition of the instructional staff reflects the composition of its student population (Mayer, 1987; MILG, 1990; Rosenberg, 2003). Adult education expert David Rosen emphasized the value of aligning the ethnic and racial composition of the staff and students in a recent electronic mailing list discussion about staff diversity in the ABE field:

> *Many programs have difficulty recruiting/attracting and retaining African American male adult learners. A community-based program I have visited in Boston, actively concerned to address this problem, has hired several well-qualified African American male teachers, some of whom have also been in circumstances similar to the students they have recruited. They are good teachers, good role models, and they can understand and empathize from experience. So far—in its second or third year now, the program has a 100% retention rate. (Rosen, 2004, NIFL-ESL posting)*

Also, to facilitate the hiring of instructional staff that reflects the diversity among the students, Stein (1993) suggests creating opportunities for former students and other community members to develop the skills and knowledge necessary to qualify for staff positions.

Theory. The emphasis on effective hiring processes in adult education programs builds on principles in organizational management. Peter Drucker (1986), a leading expert on modern-day business organization, underscores the critical importance of good hiring decisions in business organizations:

> *Executives spend more time on managing people and making people decisions than on anything else, and they should. No other decisions are so long-lasting in their consequences or so difficult to unmake and yet, by and large, executives make poor promotion and staffing decisions. By all accounts, their batting average is no better than .333: at most one-third of such decisions turn out right; one-third are minimally effective; and one-third are outright failures. In no other area of management would we put up with such miserable performance. Indeed, we need not and should not. Managers making people decisions will never be perfect. But, they should come close to batting 1.000, especially because in no other area of management do we know so much. (p. 119)*

Drucker's ideas support the direct link between effective hiring decisions and program stability in adult education. In contending that hiring decisions "reveal how competent management is, what its values are, and whether it takes its job seriously" (p. 127), Drucker (1986) also provides the adult education field with a strong rationale for making sure that program managers know how to develop and follow a procedure for recruiting and hiring teachers, counselors, and other program staff. Drucker (1986) outlines some important steps that executives need to follow when making hiring and promotion decisions, such as clearly understanding job qualifications (see also the next section, Principle #9: teacher credentialing and qualifications), meeting with several candidates before making a decision, and helping the new hire understand the job assignment. It's clear that in applying Drucker's (1986) guidelines to the hiring of adult education teachers, the process requires purposeful allocation of time and energy on the part of program leadership—a critical step if the field is to break away from what adult education scholar Cecil Smith calls the "'anyone we can get' approach to hiring teachers" (Smith, 2006, p. 190) in adult education.

Research. There is relatively little research on teacher hiring processes. However, a recent study by Liu (2005) provides the adult education field with important insights into the ways that hiring processes influence new teachers' job satisfaction and their "fit" with the school. In his study, Liu (2005) defines hiring in this way:

> *Hiring … is not simply a one-way process. It should properly be viewed as a two-way process in which schools and candidates exchange information and assess one another. In any hiring interaction, two important decisions must be made. The employer must decide whether to extend a job offer, and the teaching candidate must decide whether to accept a job if it is offered. For these two decisions to lead to a good match between the new teacher and his or her school, both must be well informed. (pp. 3–4)*

Liu's study, which surveyed 480 new teachers about their hiring experiences, indicated that new teachers who reported being given a thorough and accurate preview of their jobs also reported feeling more satisfied with their jobs than those who reported not getting this kind of information during the hiring phase. Liu also found that the relationship between the effects of job previews and job satisfaction were not the same for teachers at low-SES[7] schools and those at high-SES schools: the effects of job previews on job satisfaction were positive for teachers at high-SES schools but the effect was not significant for teachers at low-SES schools. In other words, it seems that getting a thorough and accurate job preview doesn't appear to boost a teacher's sense of job satisfaction if they are working at a low-SES school. In his analysis of these findings, Liu (2005) suggests, "a good job preview might do little to help new teachers cope better with the difficulties of teaching in a low-income school. … [T]he types of challenges they face turn out to be very complicated and unfamiliar, and they do not already have the skills to

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[7]   SES refers to socioeconomic status.

handle them. New teachers who are committed to teaching in low-income schools might also be particularly idealistic. As a result, they might not lower their expectations of schools and teaching after experiencing an accurate job preview" (p. 13).

Liu's findings provide important leverage for adult education programs to make their hiring processes "information-rich" (Liu's terminology) for the candidate. Also, given that adult education programs face many of the same struggles that low-income schools do (e.g., lack of money and resources, student attrition, teacher turnover), Liu's (2005) findings also indicate that preparing teachers for the challenges of teaching in adult education must go beyond simply providing good job previews.

Verification. To verify that a program maintains a protocol for hiring and a staffing plan, a researcher could request any of the following documents or related materials, as outlined by Mayer (1987), ProLiteracy Worldwide (2004), and TESOL (2000): personnel policies or policy manuals; job postings and descriptions for paid and unpaid staff; recruitment materials and advertisements; job applications, interviewing procedures and guidelines; evidence that policies and job descriptions are approved by the governing body and reviewed on a regular basis; resource lists that indicate the program's strategies for identifying potential sources of volunteers and instructors; and postings of Equal Employment Opportunity Commission signs.

9. <u>Teacher Credentialing and Qualifications:</u> Programs should have a clear policy or set of standards for determining what constitutes qualified instructional and support staff, and they should ensure that the skills, knowledge, and life experiences of their staff are sufficient to address the needs of adult learners.

Definition. This principle addresses the range of competencies, skills, and knowledge that program staff need to work in adult education programs. This principle ensures that the staff has the appropriate credentials and skills to meet the needs of the adult students in the program. In the last several years, a number of states (e.g., Massachusetts, New York, and Texas) have established credentials specifically designed for adult education teachers, though not all of these credentials are mandatory, and in some states, K–12 certification is sufficient to teach in adult education programs. However, in many states, teachers do not need certification at all. Most programs look for candidates who have a college degree and have experience working with adult learners (Bingman & Smith, in press; Tolbert, 2001). In addition, ESOL programs often look for individuals who have overseas experience, since such experience can increase teachers' understanding of cross-cultural and language issues that arise in ESOL classes. In the absence of a universal set of standards for teachers, and because programs may have difficulty in filling part-time, low-paying positions, some programs maintain a policy of flexibility in hiring people with an equivalent combination of education and experience.

Professional Wisdom. Several professional wisdom documents address the range of credentials and competencies that a person needs to work in adult education. Sabatini, Ginsburg, and Russell (2002) propose that adult educators need to be informed about current discussions about credentialing and instructor competencies. Adult educators must consider the kind of "knowledge, skills, practices, and proficiencies that define competence in teaching in general and that are specific to the adult literacy educator" (p. 241).

Programs should articulate their expectations of teacher competence in terms of desired credentials, competencies, or life experiences (Mayer, 1987). Most professional wisdom documents address some aspect of all three categories. For example, in their work in Canada, White and Hoddinott (1991) identify a university education or its equivalent as a suitable credential. They highlight the need for competencies in the following areas: knowledge of the teaching of a particular skill (e.g., reading) or content area (e.g., math); facility with the language of instruction; and broad knowledge of the field of adult education. In terms of life experience, White and Hoddinott (1991) indicate that adult educators should have knowledge of the community in which they are working.

TESOL (2000) highlights possible credentials that would qualify a person to work with adult English-language learners, including a bachelor's or master's degree in TESOL, or a TESOL certificate from an accredited institution; adult education credential with authorization to teach ESOL; a certificate of completion from a provider's preservice TESOL training program; or a combination of adult-level ESOL teaching experience and training. TESOL (2000) also recommends that staff have "appropriate training in cross-cultural communication" (p. 27; see also Stein, 1993).

A team at the Pelavin Research Institute (Sherman, Tibbetts, Woodruff, & Weidler, 1999), as part of a federally funded project to improve the quality of adult education programs, identified a core list of instructor competencies and performance indicators. Programs should use these competencies to create hiring and staff development plans. The competencies are organized into six categories:

- Maintains knowledge and pursues professional development

- Organizes and delivers instruction

- Manages instructional resources

- Continually assesses and monitors learning

- Manages program responsibilities and enhances program organization

- Provides learner guidance and referral (Sherman et al., 1999, p. 15)

The Pelavin team indicated that it was not necessary for an individual instructor to become proficient in each of the six domains. Some aspects of the competencies (e.g.,

managerial responsibilities) may be relegated to other staff members who are not charged with instructional duties. It is clear that instructors cannot become proficient in any of these domains, however, without appropriate training and ongoing professional development. As such, programs must provide for the professional development of adult educators to support quality instruction.

Theory. We draw again upon the work of organizational management expert, Peter Drucker (1986) who urges employers to "think through the assignment" (p. 122) as one of the few key principles in making effective staffing decisions. Drucker points out that while a job description, once written down and filed away, may not change, job assignments do change frequently and unpredictably. Drucker charges the employer with the task of understanding the "heart of the job assignment" (p. 123); in other words, the nature of the assignment that the employee is expected to fulfill immediately, as well as over time (in the subsequent year or two). This kind of short- and long-term perspective provides adult education programs with a good rationale to link changing program needs and staffing decisions.

James Hall (1988) observes that adult education programs often do not give sufficient attention to staffing procedures, such as the review of job descriptions and job specifications, for a variety of reasons. One reason is that programs are often so busy with the day-to-day business of running the agency that staffing procedures seem relatively unimportant compared to other decisions regarding program development, budgets, and student concerns. Another reason is that programs are often "organized around short-term funding … [or] carry with them an ethos of being ad hoc" (Hall, 1988, p. 213). Hall observes that, when programs lack a sense of permanence, they "feel justified in operating their agencies without establishing staffing policies and procedures, even though such policies would facilitate the success of staffing decisions by increasing the consistency and rationality of those decisions" (p. 214). Hall (1988) also points out that developing clear job specifications contributes to the development of meaningful staff evaluation procedures. As such, adult education programs should not feel as if time spent developing policies for determining what constitutes qualified instructional and support staff is "wasted" time and energy. In fact, these human resource procedures ultimately may contribute to the improvement of instructional and support services.

Research. The adult education field can draw upon K–12 research about the role of teacher qualifications (Cochran-Smith, 2001). Sparks (2002) found that teacher quality is one of the most powerful determinants of student outcomes. Darling-Hammond (2000) found that investments in "teacher education, licensing, hiring, and professional development may make an important difference in the qualifications and capacities that teachers bring to their work" (Darling-Hammond, 2000, p. 1). However, the Fordham Foundation (1999) puts forward an alternate view that tempers the link between student outcomes and teacher education and credentialing. A policy report from the Foundation states that there is a "paucity of evidence linking inputs [e.g., teacher education activities,

completed requirements] with actual teacher effectiveness. In a meta-analysis of close to four hundred studies of the effect of various school resources on pupil achievement, very little connection was found between the degrees teachers had earned or the experience they possessed and how much their students learned" (p. 18). The current debate in K–12 suggests that the adult education field should resist the temptation to oversimplify the notion of teacher qualifications and student outcomes.

While there is scant research in the adult education field on this question, Brooks et al. (2001) cites a study conducted in the United Kingdom, which found that students made more progress with teachers who had a "qualified teacher status" than students whose teachers did not have this designation. Beder and Carrera (1988) reported improved student attendance (although not a statistically significant improvement) in classes where the teacher was trained in andragogical approaches. No significant differences were found based on learner satisfaction.

Verification. Researchers could request a program's staffing development plan, or interview program administrators about the qualities and characteristics the program considers desirable in their instructional staff. TESOL (2000) suggests other documents that can indicate the kinds of credentials and qualifications instructors are expected to possess: transcripts from accredited institutions, letters of satisfactory completion of apprenticeships or internships with appropriately trained and experienced instructors, documents of satisfactory completion of training workshops, and portfolios evidencing knowledge of theory and methodology of TESOL.

10. *Professional Development*: *Programs should develop and follow a professional development plan that takes into account the needs of their instructional staff and provides instructors with opportunities to receive training, practice new skills, and receive feedback on their teaching.*

Definition. The term "professional development" is used broadly to refer to "a variety of training, educational, support, and communication procedures designed to promote and utilize the talent and commitment of members of a staff" (Balmuth, 1987, p. 28). Mayer (1987) views professional development efforts as integral to a program's quality assurance procedures. Professional development strengthens a program by providing staff with a common knowledge base and enabling them to apply this knowledge to their practice (see Wise & Leibbrand, 1993). Balmuth (1987) states that although no one would speak against the need for professional development in adult education, it is easy to see how professional development efforts get short-changed when programs struggle to manage their limited resources of time, energy, and money (p. 28). This principle ensures that programs are aware of the professional development needs of their staff and take steps to make professional development resources and opportunities available.

Professional Wisdom. Several professional wisdom documents speak to the characteristics of effective professional development plans. These documents suggest five critical topics to consider when creating an effective plan:

1. **The range of topics to be covered as part of the professional development and training offered to adult educators** (Cook, 1996; Hayes, n.d.; MILG, 1990; TESOL, 2000). Cook (1996) recommends a broad spectrum of topics that should be addressed in a program's professional development activities, including "adult learning, instructional approaches, knowledge of the community, awareness and understanding of diverse cultures, recordkeeping and administration" (p. 46). The focus on diversity awareness and training is also endorsed by MILG (1990) and TESOL (2000).[8] TESOL (2000) also identifies the need for training in the use of technology and for research in both second language acquisition and adult literacy development. White and Hoddinott (1991) suggest that instructor input should inform decisions about what training is offered, which increases the likelihood that the instructor will participate in and complete the training.

2. **The amount of time allocated to professional development and training** (Stein, 1993; White & Hoddinott, 1991). White and Hoddinott (1991) make an important distinction regarding the initial and ongoing training of literacy instructors. Initial training for all newly hired literacy instructors should be 30 hours in duration. The 30 hours of training should include 16 hours of instruction on topics such as adult learning and adult literacy, 6 hours of a supervised practicum, and 8 hours of independent assignments. They also recommend that ongoing training should include at least 30 hours of training per year for full-time staff (defined as staff who work 20 or more hours per week), and at least 15 hours of training per year for part-time staff (defined as staff who work 15 or fewer hours per week). All training, whether initial or in-service, should be made "compulsory, free, and provided during paid time" (p. 29).

3. **The collaborative nature of professional development** (Cook, 1996; Jacobson, 1998; MILG, 1990; OVAE, 1992; Stein, 1993). The professional wisdom literature emphasizes the importance of involving instructors in decisions and planning regarding their professional development (Kutner, 1992). TESOL (2000) highlights the collaborative benefits of professional development activities: instructors can become members of professional teacher organizations and also seek out opportunities to collaborate with K–12 ESL teachers, adult educators in

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[8]   McGroarty (1993) notes that it is unwise to "offer a universal template for cross-cultural training that fits all adult ESL classrooms equally well" (no page number, on-line version). However, she emphasizes that adult educators need to participate in the design of their own cultural training, as well as work with learners to identify culturally appropriate techniques, issues, content, and materials that promote learning.

content areas (e.g., math), support staff, and instructors in other programs in which students may eventually enroll (e.g., workplace staff). According to Cook (1996), programs should encourage their instructors to "continually examine, rethink, and refine their craft in collaboration with colleagues" (p. 47). The program should also organize opportunities for the instructors to come up with collaborative projects (e.g., student publications), share lesson plans, curriculum ideas, and materials, and talk about problems and concerns. Mayer (1987) also notes that in-service professional development promotes morale and encourages "the exchange of ideas and resources among instructors" (p. 3-2).

4. **The need for instructional leadership along with professional development** (Belzer, 1998a; Cook, 1996). Cook (1996) emphasizes the role of the supervisor in an adult educator's professional development. In the same way that principals in K–12 schools are increasingly required to serve as instructional leaders (Darling-Hammond, 1997), adult education staff (perhaps the director, or a lead teacher) must demonstrate instructional leadership and guidance in order for the staff to benefit from professional development and training (Cook, 1996). Instructional leaders encourage teachers to apply their training to their classroom teaching and provide classroom observation and follow-up. ProLiteracy Worldwide (2004) highlights the importance of recognizing instructor's professional development achievements, which is another duty that supervisors can fulfill. According to Cook (1996), supervisors need "a sound understanding of the learning process; substantial experience and knowledge of instructional practice; and the ability to convey ideas clearly and to elicit and extend the expertise of teachers" (p. 44). This kind of guidance and supervision helps to strengthen the link between professional development and classroom practice. Similarly, Mayer (1987) suggests organizing case conferences with expert consultants to help when an instructor and student are unable to make progress.

5. **Comprehensive approaches to evaluating the impact of professional development efforts** (Kutner, Sherman, Tibbetts, & Condelli, 1997). Kutner and colleagues (1997) put forth a framework, referred to as "the essential triangle of change" (p. 9), that outlines the dynamic relationship between three areas of impact of professional development efforts: impact on teachers, programs, and students. Two assumptions underlying this framework include: (1) professional development must be viewed as a process of change that occurs not just in teachers, but in programs and students as well; and (2) for professional development to have an impact on students, teachers and programs must change. Based on this framework (Kutner et al., 1997), a program's professional development efforts can be viewed as a measure of the program's commitment to supporting teachers' efforts to improve their teaching.

Theory. Professional development expert Dennis Sparks (2002) describes quality professional development as "driven by a compelling vision of student learning and a data-based assessment of current reality" (p. 1-4). Today's schools, he argues, demand a kind of professional development that must be sustained over time, and be collaborative in nature. Sparks (2002) provides a conceptual framework for making decisions about the future of professional development in adult education. An assumption in this framework is that professional development cannot be viewed as an ancillary part of the adult education system but, rather, as a central catalyst for change, including improvements in teacher knowledge and practice, as well as changes in the "cultures and structures of the organization in which [teachers and administrators] work" (Sparks, 2002, p. 1-4). Another assumption is made by Drago-Severson (2004), who suggests that the adult education context should be viewed as a place of professional growth for teachers and administrators.

Richardson (1998) provides important insights into an apparent conflict of ideas regarding the role of professional development in adult education. She observes that a common perception is that teachers are resistant to change, making the benefits of professional development difficult to sustain, and on the other hand, teachers "change all the time" (no page number, on-line version). This conflict of ideas prompts Richardson to examine the theoretical underpinnings that support two models for professional development—the training model and the reflective, collaborative model—and to highlight the value of models that "take advantage of the voluntary nature of change" (no page number, on-line version). The training model diminishes the opportunity for voluntary behavior, as it is usually organized by "someone from outside the school determining that a process, content, method, or system should be implemented in the classroom" (no page number, on-line version). An alternative approach is a reflective, collaborative model that places greater responsibility on the participants to reflect on their teaching, articulate their assumptions, and provide a rationale for their practices.

Research. In a review of the research on professional development in adult education, Bingman and Smith (in press) examined studies, mostly conducted in the K–12 context, and generated a list of characteristics of quality professional development:

- Sufficient duration (Joyce & Showers, 1995; Porter, Garet, Desimone, Yoon, & Birman, 2000; Smith et al., 2003; Stein, Smith, & Silver, 1999)

- Opportunities for the instructor to make a connection between what is learned in the professional development and the teacher's own work context (Fingeret & Cockley, 1992; Ottoson, 1997)

- An emphasis on analysis and reflection, rather than simply a demonstration of techniques (Arlin, 1999; Bollough, Kauchak, Cros, Hobbs, & Stoke, 1997; Guskey, 1999; Joyce, Hersh, & McKibbin, 1983)

- Opportunities for instructors to make their implicit knowledge about teaching explicit (Gardner, 1996; Tibbetts, Kutner, Hemphill, & Jones, 1991)

- A focus on helping teachers study their students' thinking (Ancess, 2000; Carpenter & Franke, 1998)

- Inclusion of a variety of activities (e.g., presentation of theory, demonstration, practice, feedback, and classroom application) (Elmore, 1996; Joyce & Showers, 1995; Joyce, Wolf, & Calhoun, 1995; Mazzarella, 1980; Stein & Wang, 1988)

- Promotion of collaboration among teachers from the same program (Porter et al., 2000)

- Assurance that what the instructors learn is supported by program and district priorities (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001)

In a study of teacher change, Smith and colleagues (2003) examined the impact of three professional development models. The team of researchers found that the hours of participation and the quality of the professional development activity (as rated by the researchers or the teachers) were more important determinants of teacher change than the model of professional development employed. On the individual level, the study found that teacher change was more likely to be demonstrated by teachers who (1) were paid for preparation time; (2) worked in programs that had not previously addressed learner persistence (the focus of the professional development); (3) worked in programs in which teachers had freedom to influence curriculum changes and were involved in program decisions; and (4) received at least one or more benefits, such as health insurance, as part of their position. In light of White and Hoddinott's (1991) guidelines for minimum hours of professional development mentioned above, it is important to highlight that only 28% of the teachers in Smith and colleagues' (2003) study experienced minimal change, even after 18 hours of professional development. Smith and colleagues (2003) concluded, "professional development, while necessary, is not sufficient by itself to drive changes in practice" (p. 127).

Research conducted by Bruce Joyce and his colleagues on effective staff development indicates that teachers need to engage in ongoing study of the new skill if staff development is to have an impact on their teaching (Joyce & Calhoun, 1998; Joyce & Showers, 1995). Joyce focuses on the role of the staff developer who is responsible for observing teachers teach and discussing with them their implementation of what they are learning. According to Joyce, one of the key goals of staff development is to enable teachers to achieve *executive control* of new skills, referring to teachers' ability to consistently and appropriately implement newly acquired skills and strategies in their teaching. Joyce further argues that the point at which the teacher demonstrates executive control is the point at which the impact on student learning occurs.

In a survey of professional development efforts around the United States, one-third of the states reported using adult learner achievement (as measured by quantifiable

indicators and gains) to assess the impact of professional development efforts (Tolbert, 2001). As mentioned earlier, however, Kutner and colleagues (1997) have made a strong case for viewing the impact of professional development as change in instructors, programs, *and* learners. A study by Belzer (2003) provides the empirical warrant for broadening the scope of impact: She surveyed Pennsylvania teachers' perspectives on professional development efforts and found that the teachers defined impact along broader and more diverse lines than just an impact on learner outcomes. The teachers indicated that impact could manifest itself in several possible areas, including change in classroom practice, views on teaching and learning, professional attitudes, program improvement, and the field as a whole. Belzer (2003) concludes that professional development efforts that lead to positive learner outcomes are ideal, but "[g]iven the complexity and variety of intents of professional development activities, the range of practitioner and learner expertise and experience, and program contexts as well as methodological limitation, it is important to seek more nuanced and descriptive ways that capture professional development impact as broadly as possible" (p. 58).

Verification. Researchers could request any of the following documents in order to determine the scope of a program's professional development activities, as gleaned from recommendations put forth by Kutner and colleagues (1997), ProLiteracy Worldwide (2004), Rosenberg (2003), TESOL (2000), and White and Hoddinott (1991):

- Professional development plans
- Instructor portfolios, instructor journals that document professional development activities, policy manuals that indicate what proportion of teachers' work time should be devoted specifically to professional development
- Needs-assessment documents for assessing professional development requirements
- Calendars of scheduled professional development activities
- Copies of professional development training modules
- Materials and agendas for in-service trainings
- Sign-in sheets or registration records for staff attending conferences and workshops
- Completed workshop evaluations of professional development activities attended
- Written evaluations of staff development plans
- Budget plans that indicate money allocated for staff development
- Documentation of dedicated library or office space where teachers have access to books, journals, periodicals, or the Internet to read about current developments in the field

*11. **Professionalism**: Programs should treat their staff as professionals. Programs should also provide working conditions that support the work and growth of their staff.*

Definition. Adult education becomes a profession when teachers have a common knowledge base and can apply this knowledge to their practice (see Wise & Leibbrand, 1993). In addition, adult education staff become professionals when programs have policies and procedures in place that ensure good working conditions. Programs should take steps to support working conditions that are commensurate with those given to professionals with similar qualifications in other educational sectors. Professionalism in an adult education program is an outgrowth of the ways a program supports high-quality teaching and the ways it recognizes and responds to the diverse needs of its instructors. A program recognizes the diverse personal and professional needs of its instructors by providing an environment that acknowledges excellence in teaching; fosters creativity and innovation; and recognizes diversity in teaching styles, teaching interests, and approaches to decision-making.

Professional Wisdom. Several professional wisdom documents underscore the importance of providing adult educators with good working conditions and compensation. Cook (1996) identifies six elements that support the creation of a professional work environment for adult educators:

1. A supportive, respectful, and collaborative work environment.

2. The opportunity for full-time employment.

3. Adequate compensation based on clear and explicit guidelines developed by the agency.

4. Adequate benefits, including, at a minimum, health and hospital insurance, sick leave, and annual leave.

5. Opportunities for advancement or promotion within the agency.

6. Regular opportunities for staff members to evaluate work conditions and supervisory approaches. (p. 6)

Other professional wisdom documents help to clarify what Cook (1996) referred to as a "supportive, respectful, and collaborative work environment" (p. 6). Smith and colleagues (2003) view "well-supported jobs" as integral to the quality of teachers' working conditions. They define "well-supported jobs" as "full time, relatively well-paid, and stable jobs that include benefits, … paid preparation time, and paid professional development release time" (p. 2).

Creating a supportive work environment also means providing teachers with the resources, time, and space to do what they are hired to do—teach. In concrete terms, for example, this means providing teachers with dedicated office space (good lighting, chairs, tables) and facilities (library of resources, computers, printers, copiers) so they are able to plan their lessons. This also means giving teachers regularly scheduled preparation time so they can plan and prepare for their classes. White and Hoddinott (1991) recommend a ratio of one hour of paid preparation time for every five hours of teaching.

Focusing on increases in teacher salary and benefits in adult education is one effective route to improving working conditions, but alone, it is a costly solution for a relatively under-resourced field to bear. Richard Ingersoll (1999, 2003) suggests that it is perhaps more important to focus on those aspects that are under the direct control of program management, such as the relationship between teachers and program managers. Professional wisdom indicates that open lines of communication among the instructors, support staff, and program directors are integral to a collaborative work environment (see items 1 and 6 in Cook's [1996] list above). Program management can facilitate this by providing all instructors and support staff with an adequate orientation so that they "learn about the program's purposes, approaches, opportunities, and expectations of involvement" (Mayer, 1987, p. 3-2; see also, OVAE, 1992; TESOL, 2000). Mayer (1987) encourages communication that engenders feelings of ownership of program and outcomes. Another means of keeping lines of communication open is for program leaders to provide "opportunities for informal exchange among staff" (Cook, 1996, p. 45). In addition, program leaders should "promptly identify and address staff problems such as conflict, grievance, or inadequate performance of duties, establish and document a structured plan for the resolution of any staff problems; clearly communicate the plan, orally and in writing, with staff members involved; and document follow-up and outcome" (Cook, 1996, p. 45). Lines of communication are also kept open if programs establish a system of performance evaluation and feedback for both teachers and administrators (White & Hoddinott, 1991). Mayer (1987) highlights the value of recognizing the accomplishments of the teaching staff, as well as rewarding staff contributions to the program.

TESOL (2000) and White and Hoddinott (1991) emphasize the need to make adult education staff positions full time, as much as is possible. TESOL (2000) also states that programs should support "employment conditions, compensation, and benefits commensurate with those of other instructional or professional staff with comparable qualifications (e.g., the program employs full-time instructional staff and provides part-time instructors with prorated benefits)" (p. 20).

Theory. The work of Eliot Freidson (1987, 1994), who has written on the sociology of work and professionalism in various disciplines, such as law and medicine, provides the adult education field with a conceptual framework for understanding the power dynamics that shape the focus on professionalism in adult education. Professionalism involves notions of power; as Freidson (1987) observes, "To discuss professional empowerment and decision-making profitably … requires distinguishing not only the various kinds of power, but also the various positions that professions hold, and the type and amount of power available to each position" (no page number, on-line paper). Teachers, in general, are not always granted the same respect and status given to other professionals, such as lawyers and doctors, "in part because the public is not persuaded that the competence of teachers is based on a truly esoteric and difficult body of knowledge" (no page number, on-line paper). Freidson (1987) observes that nearly all professions in the United States—

including law, medicine, and teaching—bear the brunt of strong political and economic tides that directly affect how professionals in these areas will be compensated, evaluated, and promoted. This trend presents new challenges to the adult education field, but also signals the need for new strategies:

> *[I]n efforts to empower themselves in areas where they have lacked power previously, professionals must minimize the appearance of being preoccupied with 'bread and butter' issues and maximize justifications grounded in the benefits to clients that would follow empowerment. In the strategic area of attempting to gain more power to determine how resources available to an organization like a school are allocated, the focus of discussion should not be on empowerment as such so much as on how the empowerment of practitioners to make such decisions would in effect improve the quality of their work and so benefit their clients. The forces that have been changing the circumstances of practice for professionals today represent only in part the harsh realities of our national economy. They also represent a perception by both the public and by political leaders that in the recent past the professions have been more concerned with economic benefits than with the quality and quantity of service they provide to their clients. Efforts at greater professional empowerment today are almost certain to fail if they do not demonstrate otherwise. (Freidson, 1987, no page number, on-line paper)*

No adult educator would dispute the need for improvements in adult education—such as increases in teacher salaries, resources, and benefits—in order to strengthen the professionalism of the field. However, based on Freidson (1987), we see that, for true capacity-building in a profession, this focus would be insufficient. The field needs to demonstrate that these economic improvements make a difference in the quality of classroom instruction.

Research. A few studies in K–12 education support the link between improving teacher working conditions and learning outcomes, although for the most part studies examining the link between teacher quality and student achievement focus on teacher credentials and experience (see Rice, 2003). Teacher salaries are often viewed as indirect investments in teacher quality (Rice, 2003). Greenwald, Hedges, and Laine (as cited in Ingvarson, 2003) found that for every $500 spent on increasing teacher salaries, there was a 16% increase in student achievement.

Studies in K–12 have also shown that dissatisfaction with low salaries is not the only factor that contributes to teachers' perceptions of their working conditions. A large-scale survey study of more than 36,000 full-time public school teachers and about 5,000 full-time private school teachers revealed a relatively weak relationship between teacher salaries and reported sense of career satisfaction (Perie & Baker, 1997). Rather, school administrative support and leadership, student behavior and school atmosphere, and teacher autonomy were significantly stronger predictors of teachers' sense of satisfaction

with their job (Perie & Baker, 1997). In related work, Richard Ingersoll (1999, 2003) notes that while teacher retirement and increases in student enrollment are often believed to be key contributors to teacher attrition in the K–12 setting, his research has found that 42% of a sample of departing teachers left due to job dissatisfaction, while only 25% left due to retirement. Specifically, the departing teachers reported feeling dissatisfied not only with the poor compensation, but also with the lack of support from school administrators, low student motivation, and the lack of teacher involvement in school decision-making (Ingersoll, 1999).

These findings have yet to be empirically investigated fully in the adult education context. However, Smith and colleagues (2003) found that teachers who were given time to prepare for their classes, received benefits, and were given a voice in program decision-making processes were more likely to demonstrate change after participating in professional development efforts.

Verification. Researchers could review various program documents to verify this principle, as outlined by Cook (1996), Mayer (1987), and White and Hoddinott (1991):

- Legislative testimony or letters to legislators that support pay raises and expansion of teacher benefits

- Union contracts

- Personnel manuals that outline employee benefits

- Budgetary guidelines that show salaries, benefits, and paid preparation time; teacher-orientation materials

- Policy manuals that outline the frequency and nature of performance evaluations (of both instructors and administrators)

- Professional development plans

- Sample evaluation sheets

- Bulletin boards, program newsletters, or memos that recognize instructor achievements

Researchers could also ask to visit program sites to tour teacher resource rooms and office spaces. They could also interview administrators and teachers to learn about the ways in which programs give teachers regular opportunities to share ideas and participate in program decision-making.

Suitable Environment for Learning

In order to provide an environment that is conducive to learning, adult education programs must pay attention to several aspects of the experience provided by the

program. First, programs should recognize that adults have responsibilities, such as work and child care and, therefore, offer its services at flexible hours and convenient locations. Second, programs should provide a safe, comfortable physical environment that is oriented to adults (e.g., with adult-sized chairs and appropriate learning materials). Third, programs should provide a psychologically safe environment for adults. This can be achieved by taking action to safeguard the confidentiality of student records and discussions between staff and students, and by making a conscious effort to respect students' different cultures. Finally, the program should provide a range of material resources that support learning and are of interest and relevance to adults and their lives. The principles outlined below help to ensure the creation of an environment that respects the needs of adults as students, and provides the material elements necessary to support the learning process.

12. _Flexible Hours and Convenient Locations:_ *A program should offer instructional services at flexible hours and convenient locations.*

Definition. Program hours of instruction should provide the widest opportunities for participation, and the location should be convenient for students. Students who work regular hours might prefer programs that take place in the evening and on the weekend, or they might prefer services that take place at their worksite. Parents might prefer programs that include day care, or that take place during school hours. Young adults who may not have family and work responsibilities might prefer intensive courses that follow a school schedule.

Professional Wisdom. The professional wisdom literature supports the need for programs to offer services at a variety of times and locations convenient for adult students (Mayer, 1987; MILG, 1990; OVAE, 1988; TESOL, 2000; White & Hoddinott, 1991). MILG (1990) stresses that this array of options is necessary in order to accommodate the needs of a range of students, from those available for full-time education to those who work regular jobs. Classes should be offered during both days and evenings within the constraints of program resources (OVAE, 1988; TESOL, 2000; White & Hoddinott, 1991). Classes should be held at locations that are easily accessible by public transportation (OVAE, 1988; TESOL, 2000; White & Hoddinott, 1991). Within urban areas, White and Hoddinott (1991) suggest that classes be held in a variety of locations, such as community centers or other places where appropriate facilities are available. In rural areas, they suggest that classes be offered in local libraries, schools, or any other appropriate available facility.

Theory. Adult learning theorists have addressed the idea that programs should offer services at times that are flexible and well suited to adult schedules. Knowles (1980) states that adult classes should meet "simply, when it is most convenient for the people being served" (p. 141). Lindeman suggests, "institutional arrangements should facilitate adult learning" (Stewart, 1987, p. 232). "Classes should be held at night, on weekends,

and at other times convenient for prospective adult clients. Educational institutions should carefully review their policies respecting registration, admission, student government—all facilities and services—to see that there is not discrimination against adults" (Stewart, 1987, p. 232).

Research. Little research was found on this principle. In a 1970 review of research, Jahns notes a study by Dutton on participation among learners who did or did not receive stipends. Dutton reported that accessibility of classes was more important to the students who did not receive a stipend, than those that did. Close to one half of the non-stipended learners lived within one mile of their class location, compared with only one-tenth of the stipended group. We did not find any research that addresses the specific issue of class hours.

Verification. If hours of instruction are limited to during the day and the days of operation are less than six per week, the program is not meeting this principle unless the program is focused on a specific population for whom these hours are appropriate (a workplace literacy program for example). If students express concern about the difficulty or time required to get to the program's location, the program is not meeting this principle.

*13. **Physical Environment.** A program should maintain a physical environment that supports adult learning and is safe and comfortable for students and staff.*

Definition. An environment for learning includes elements such as light, heat, and the range of supplies (desks, chairs) and kind of facilities (clean bathrooms) available. The environment in which instruction takes place can serve to support or impede the learning process and can have an effect on student and staff motivation. This principle ensures that programs recognize the impact of physical space on the students' ability to learn and work, and then create and maintain a space that is conducive to serious learning.

Professional Wisdom. This principle is supported by the professional wisdom literature (Cook, 1996; Hayes, n.d.; LVA, 1998, 2000; Mayer, 1987; OVAE, 1988; Rosenberg, 2003; Stein, 1993; White & Hoddinott, 1991). Several sources note the importance of a physically safe environment, in which, for example, there are no physical hazards (e.g., falling debris or contaminated air) and there is no risk of violence (Hayes, n.d.; White & Hoddinott, 1991). Facilities should be clean, pleasant, spacious, well lit, and in good repair (Cook, 1996). They should be adequately equipped for program needs, with moveable chairs and tables to support individual and group work, quiet space for teacher preparation, private space for counseling, storage space for supplies and materials, and access to photocopiers and computers (Cook, 1996; Hayes, n.d.; Mayer, 1987). In situations where the program is part of a larger institution, the facilities available to the adult education program should be equivalent to those of other educational programs at that same institution (TESOL, 2000; White & Hoddinott, 1991). Programs should ensure

that space is available during the hours necessary for instruction, to avoid limiting the intensity and duration of the program (Hayes, n.d.).

Theory. In *The Modern Practice of Adult Education,* Knowles (1980) discusses the importance of the physical environment as a contributing factor to adult learning. Knowles states that "the physical setting in which a program takes place and the quality of equipment available for program use unquestionably affect the quality and effectiveness of the experiences the participants will have" (p. 163). While acknowledging the wide variation in the space requirements of different kinds of programs, Knowles (1980) stresses that all programs should strive to meet the criteria of "comfort, convenience, personalization, and maximization of interaction" (p. 163). As he points out, adults should feel at ease in a program's physical environment. Furniture and equipment should be sized for adults and comfortable; the décor should reflect adult tastes, and acoustics and lighting should accommodate adults' "declining audiovisual acuity" (p. 46).

In addition to noting the importance of the physical learning environment, Knowles (1980) also acknowledges the role of office arrangements "in setting the spirit of a program" (p. 166). A program office often serves as the initial point of contact that learners have with a program. Knowles therefore suggests that the office environment be "both efficient and friendly," that it reflect "the quality and modernity, the warmth and efficiency of the program" (p. 166). As Knowles notes, the office "should both sell and serve" (p. 166).

Research. No research was found that supports or contradicts this principle.

Verification. Researchers seeking evidence of the implementation of this principle could evaluate the physical environment for safety and appropriateness. In addition, they might find further evidence that a program takes action in this area by looking for copies of safety policies, both on file and posted throughout the organization, as well as safety procedures written in language accessible to students included in orientation materials.

*14. **Psychologically Safe Environment:** A program should provide a psychologically safe environment by protecting the confidentiality of students and staff, and by demonstrating respect for the cultures of learners, staff, and other stakeholders.*

Definition. In order to promote the full participation of its students, programs must provide a psychologically safe environment. One way of providing such an environment is protecting student and staff confidentiality. Programs should respect learners' right to privacy by creating procedures to ensure that information such as intake results, student achievement data, counseling and other individual records, as well as private conversations, remain confidential and are only shared with authorized staff. Similarly,

the confidentiality of personnel records (e.g., data on background, salary, and other personal information) should also be maintained.

A second way of providing a safe environment for students and staff is by demonstrating respect for the cultures of students, staff, and other stakeholders. This principle ensures that students and staff are comfortable learning and working in a program.

Professional Wisdom. The professional wisdom literature supports this principle (LVA, 1998, 2000; Rosenberg, 2003; TESOL, 2000). Rosenberg recommends, for example, that a program's record-keeping system protect the confidentiality of both student and instructor data, while TESOL (2000) points out the need to establish procedures to ensure confidentiality with both internal and external stakeholders. LVA (1998, 2000) recommends that programs make available to students and staff a copy of a policy statement and procedures that the organization follows to maintain confidentiality and to regulate release of information to other organizations or individuals.

The need to demonstrate respect for the cultures of students, staff, and other stakeholders is also noted among professionals in adult education, particularly in the case of ESOL programs (TESOL, 2000). To achieve this, Stein (1993) recommends that programs specifically integrate educational experiences and activities that affect participants' understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity. For instance, she suggests that orientation for both staff and students include discussions of program rules for communication and respect for differences, and that staff and students participate in training that covers communication skills, working as a team, and respecting difference.

Other practitioners recommend hiring staff that reflect the population of students, including former students, to serve as role models; using literature from a variety of cultures to act as a springboard for discussion; inviting guest speakers from a range of cultural contexts; and regularly recognizing students for what they know and can do in and outside of the classroom.[9]

Theory. This principle is supported by the work of Malcolm Knowles. As Knowles (1980) points out, the need for security goes beyond physical safety to include "protection against threat to our self-respect and our self-image" (p. 85). When this need for security is not met, "various behavioral symptoms" may result. Some people will retreat into their "shell" and withdraw from participation, while others may seek to "protect themselves by taking over, controlling, dominating" (p. 85). To avoid such reactions, programs need to take into account the psychological environment for learners.

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[9] Based on a survey conducted by the System for Adult Basic Education Support (SABES) West Diversity Advisory Board. Available at: http://www.sabeswest.org/diversity/BestPracticesProject.pdf

One aspect of the psychological environment created for adult learners involves paying attention to students' cultures. Adults are "able to do more when learning builds on what they know. This means that the curriculum comes from within the classroom and draws on learners' cultural and personal histories; as such it may include telling, writing and reading stories about their own countries and cultures" (Auerbach, Arnaud, Chandler, & Zabrano, 1998, p. 214). Auerbach and colleagues further point out the value of hiring program instructors and staff who share students' culture, language, and life experiences, since "they can act as role models for students and resources for other practitioners trying to understand issues confronting language minority communities" (p. 216).

Diversity theorists such as Cox (1994) underline the importance of respecting cultures of staff, students, and other stakeholders, pointing out that an individual's self-concept is in part defined by group affiliation. For some individuals "the recognition and preservation" of these group identities is "a matter of personal pride and self-esteem" (p. 44). Thus, as Cox suggests, ignoring group identities undermines something of great importance to individuals, and since group identities affect interpersonal interactions, it is beneficial for programs to find ways to recognize and value the groups operating within it.

Research. In a qualitative study of native adult learners in Canada, Tremblay and Taylor (1998) found that learning environments that are caring, accepting, and encouraging enhance learning. The cultural environment of the program was identified as the most influential factor in contributing to a quality learning environment. Effective learning conditions were supported by program values (e.g., open, nonthreatening, informal), an emphasis on cooperation, and supportiveness.

Verification. This principle could be verified through a review of program policies and procedures. Specific evidence includes a copy of a confidentiality policy statement and the procedures the organization follows to maintain confidentiality and to regulate release of information to other organizations and individuals (LVA, 1998, 2000). Attention to cultural diversity could be verified by looking at the types of materials available for reading, as well as the documentation of training provided to teachers regarding issues of culture and diversity.

15. _Learning Materials and Resources_: *A program should provide and maintain appropriate materials and resources for learning. Materials should be designed for use by adults, and resources should include not only material goods, such as computers and copy machines, but also volunteer tutors.*

Definition. Programs support learning by ensuring that they have available materials (e.g., books, films, computer software) and other resources (VCRs, copy machines, computers, and resource libraries, for example). This principle helps to ensure that programs offer materials and resources that are appropriate and sufficient.

Professional Wisdom. The professional wisdom literature confirms the importance of materials and resources to support adult learning (Cook, 1996; Mayer, 1987; Rosenberg, 2003; Stein, 1993; TESOL, 2000; White & Hoddinott, 1991). Materials should be designed specifically for adults (Stein, 1993; TESOL, 2000) and programs should have materials that match each type of instruction they offer. In addition, materials should reflect the cultural backgrounds, experiences, and interests of students (Cook, 1996). Materials should help to create a "language- and information-rich environment" through posters, student work, and other types of displays relevant to the program's adult students (Cook, 1996).

As part of the environment that supports adult learning, programs should provide and maintain a number of additional resources (White & Hoddinott, 1991), including materials that support instruction, such as tape recorders and CD players, VCRs and DVD players, computers, and copy machines. Programs also should provide resource libraries for teachers, containing teaching aids and other relevant materials, and to the extent possible, libraries or resource rooms where students can borrow materials to supplement their regular classroom work (Cook, 1996; Rosenberg, 2003; White & Hoddinott, 1991). Balmuth (1987) notes the importance of supporting the literacy of new readers by having available supplemental reading materials to encourage more independent reading and reading for pleasure.

Programs also should make use of volunteer tutors to support learning in and outside of classes. Volunteer tutors can be especially helpful to low-level students who may require additional support, or in cases in which classes cannot accommodate the number of students requesting services. To enhance the use of volunteers, Mayer (1987) recommends establishing expectations for volunteers, finding ways for them to participate in the program, and rewarding their contributions.

Theory. No theory was found that supports or undermines this principle.

Research. Brown and Newman (as cited in Balmuth, 1987) highlight the place of supplementary materials, noting that in their study of 207 adult education students reading at 3.0 grade-level equivalent or below, "it was found necessary and desirable to develop considerable supplementary materials both from an interest standpoint and from the need of extending the materials horizontally for the slower members in the group" (as cited in Balmuth, 1987, p. 19). Stauffer (1973) looked at a Laubach literacy program and found that "Tutors who use supplementary teaching materials with their students had 18.4% fewer dropouts. This difference was significant" (p. 72).

Verification. To verify this principle, researchers should seek out descriptions of available materials, and evidence of their use, such as sign-in books for a resource room (ProLiteracy Worldwide, 2004). In addition, resources should be clearly visible through an observation and evaluation of the physical program site.

CHAPTER FOUR: ENTERING A PROGRAM

This chapter describes the four parts of the **Entering a Program** element, each corresponding to a single principle:

- Recruitment
- Intake
- Orientation
- Wait list management

These four parts highlight the range of specific activities that programs undertake in order to ensure that students are assigned to instruction that is at the appropriate level for someone with their needs and goals, and that their early contact with the program leads to their persistence in learning. Seaman (2002) observes that the first impressions students form of programs often influence whether they will remain until they reach their goal or drop out early. These observations are supported by findings from a Development Associates (1993) study, which indicates that 18% of adult learners leave their programs during the first twelve hours of instruction. Initial contact and early experiences in a program may be critical to persistence. In addition, these activities provide programs with the information they need to assign students to an appropriate level.

16. <u>*Recruitment*</u>: *Programs should have an organized recruitment process that:*

- Makes use of new and existing networks and partnerships with businesses and other organizations.
- Employs a diversity of recruitment strategies (e.g., community needs assessment, different media, and personal contact).
- Clarifies the nature of the program and its requirements, and provides potential students with the information necessary to make appropriate choices.
- Includes recruitment approaches that are suited to the target population and reflect their languages, cultures, and interests.
- Incorporates data on recruitment success and feedback from students in order to improve recruiting practices.

Definition. Recruitment refers to the way in which a program describes and publicizes its services to attract adult students. The goals of this principle are two-fold. First, this principle aims to attract adult students who are representative of the potential student population. Second, this principle helps to ensure that adult students are aware of the range of services so they can make an informed decision about whether or not to participate.

Professional Wisdom. State departments of education (e.g., Massachusetts Interagency Literacy Group (MILG) (1990), adult literacy organizations (e.g., ProLiteracy Worldwide, 2004), and leaders within professional development organizations (e.g., TESOL, 2000) are an important source of guidance in the development of recruitment policies and strategies. Two important themes consistently appear in the recruitment guidelines of these institutions:

- Programs should make use of new and existing networks and partnerships (i.e., with businesses and other organizations) as a means of reaching out to the target population (Cook, 1996; Mayer, 1987; Stein, 1993; TESOL, 2000).

- Programs should employ a diversity of recruitment strategies that make use of a variety of program resources (e.g., media, human capital) (Cook, 1996; Mayer, 1987; Stein, 1993; TESOL, 2000; White & Hoddinott, 1991).

Balmuth (1987) quotes Eggert (1984), who maintains that different venue types, and even the type of person who answers the phone, can affect who comes to a program. For example, some adults may prefer an informal library setting to a formal school setting, or an informal person answering the phone to a formal one.

Theory. While no theory explicitly supports or undermines this principle, the need for programs to make clear their goals and requirements to potential learners reflects tenets of adult learning theory put forth by Malcolm Knowles (1980). Adults, argues Knowles, look for relevance in their learning. If they have a reason to learn, perhaps because the skills are applicable to their work or other life responsibilities, they *will* learn. For this reason, programs should be clear about the nature of the program and its requirements, and provide potential students with the information they need to decide whether or not the program offers them something they need and want.

In practice, the application of Knowles' theory can translate into an important orientation toward program recruitment, as reflected in recommendations offered by Darling (as cited in Balmuth, 1987). Darling's recommendations highlight how recruitment efforts should be uniquely developed to address the concerns of potential adult students. For example, she suggests that advertising and recruitment efforts should explicitly communicate how the adult program differs from "the 'regular school program where the adults once failed'" (as cited in Balmuth, 1987, p. 8).

Beder (as cited in Kerka, 1986) found that this recruitment principle also draws theoretical support from concepts in marketing research, such as market segmentation (i.e., grouping potential learners based on similar needs and goals); client analysis (i.e., examination of potential participants' attitudes, perspectives, and demand for services); and assessment of the competition (i.e., identification of the alternative options that may be available to potential participants). From this perspective, potential students are consumers who need information about the kinds of services offered. Marketing

principles might support the use of a community-needs assessment as an approach to recruitment, particularly one that uses recruitment approaches that are suited to the target population and reflect their languages, cultures, and interests. Marketing principles also support the collection of data on recruitment success and obtaining student feedback in order to improve recruiting practices.

Research. The few studies that address this principle indicate that programs should employ a range of recruitment strategies. Based on an interview study of 20 nonparticipants, Beder and Quigley (1990) identified a range of personal contact and media advertising—including word-of-mouth, the use of church networks, television, and door-to-door solicitation—to be effective.

Irish (as cited in Balmuth, 1987) compared the enrollment outcomes of two groups: one group received home visits, while a second group received only flyers. Thirty of the eighty adults who received home visits eventually enrolled in the program, as compared with only two of the eighty-five adults who received flyers only. Balmuth (1987) also cites the work of Cross who suggests that personalized one-on-one conversations are more effective with potential students from lower socioeconomic groups, while media-based strategies may be more effective with students from higher socioeconomic groups. Cross speculates that adults from lower socioeconomic groups appear to demonstrate a "greater need for more personalized one-to-one conversations that can help them make the connection between individual goals and appropriate learning opportunities" (as cited in Balmuth, 1987, p. 5). Similar recommendations are made by Bock (1988).

The use of current or former students as recruitment spokespeople is highlighted by several studies. In a small-scale action research project, Mando and Narbuth (1995–96) found that the involvement of current students as recruiters might be an effective approach to recruiting students. Their study describes a recruitment event referred to as "Bring a Friend to School" day to which current students were asked to invite a friend or family member who might benefit from instruction. Eight of the twelve invited guests enrolled in the program. Balmuth (1987) cites Resnick and Robinson who emphasized the value of providing potential students with "visible models, such as successful students, as encouragement for their own efforts" (as cited in Balmuth, 1987, p. 8).

Verification. To verify whether programs address this recruitment principle, researchers could interview program administrators about their recruitment processes, or they could request a copy of the program's recruitment policy. In this regard, the TESOL (2000) and ProLiteracy Worldwide (2004) guidelines are useful as they provide a range of measures that researchers can employ to assess a program's recruitment strategy. In particular, these two sources list the range of recruitment documents and related materials that a researcher could request. For example:

- With respect to community planning, researchers can review demographic data, needs assessments completed by other organizations, minutes of meetings with other agencies about community needs, and results of surveys or questionnaires about community needs.

- With respect to the program recruitment plans, researchers can review documents such as student-recruitment plans or community-relations plans, or reports that describe how feedback influences future recruitment efforts.

- With respect to the integration of feedback, researchers can ascertain whether programs conduct learner surveys or focus groups to gain feedback and evaluate the impact of recruitment efforts.

- With respect to the development of recruitment and marketing materials and methods, researchers could consider various characteristics of effective communication in the materials and methods: demonstration of cultural sensitivity, use of plain language, use of graphics, or availability in various languages.

17. **_Intake_**: *A program should have an organized approach to intake, and the intake process should aim to complete the following:*

- An assessment of each student's goals, skill level, and support needs.

- A presentation to each student of a realistic assessment of his or her skill levels, and the time and effort required to achieve his or her goals.

- An individual learning plan for reaching those goals, that includes a plan to address support needs.

- A presentation to each student about her rights and responsibilities.

Definition. Intake refers to a set of procedures used for decision-making purposes. Adult education programs should view intake as an important opportunity for both programs and students to exchange information. Programs gather information from potential students about their skills, needs, and goals, while potential students gather information about the kinds of services offered by the program. Intake sets the stage for the orientation to specific learning goals and program expectations, a component to be described in the next section. In cases where there is no match between program services and student needs, intake represents an opportunity to provide either referrals to other services, or counseling about educational alternatives. This principle ensures that adult education programs have intake procedures that prepare students to enter an appropriate level of instruction and persist long enough to make measurable progress.

Professional Wisdom. Several professional wisdom documents call for a systematic assessment of student needs, goals, and skill levels (Balmuth, 1987; Cook, 1996; Hayes, n.d.; Mayer, 1987; MILG, 1990; ProLiteracy Worldwide, 2004; Stein, 1993; TESOL,

2000). Some students may enter the program aware of their learning needs and able to explain their learning goals clearly. Other students may have a general sense of why they want to enroll but may not be aware of the skill areas they need to address. According to White and Hoddinott (1991), effective intake procedures should provide students with "a realistic assessment both of their current skill levels and of the personal commitment of time and effort required to achieve their particular goals" (p. 22).

Working with adult students to develop a learning plan may be an important element of effective intake. White and Hoddinott (1991) suggest that learning goals be established early on in the enrollment process and revisited at regular intervals, such as after every 40 hours of instruction. Sherow (2000) suggests a goal attainment scaling measure as a tool to help students address their learning goals. The use of personal interviews as part of the intake process is also a widely accepted component of intake. Mayer (1987) calls special attention to the need for skilled interviewers in this regard. Intake also serves as an important time for the program to inform students of their rights and responsibilities, including the availability of support services.

Presently, there does not appear to be a clear consensus in the field as to which measures or tools should be used to assess student skills. The most popular assessments include the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE), the Adult Basic Learning Examination (ABLE), and selected portions of the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS). Tests developed specifically for ESOL students include the Basic English Skills Test (BEST) and the Basic Inventory of Natural Language (BINL). While standardized tests enable programs to assess many students in a cost-effective, timely fashion, many adult educators seek out alternative measures because these tests do not reflect the meaning-based language and literacy skills that programs seek to build. White and Hoddinott (1991) criticize the use of standardized tests for initial assessment and placement of students since they "do not yield the kinds of information that can meaningfully contribute to the development of a learning plan" (p. 22). This critique is particularly relevant if tests are inappropriately used, such as when the skills of nonnative English speakers are assessed with tests developed with native speakers in mind (Van Duzer & Berdan, 2000). Other measures that programs could use include: interviews, background questionnaires, histories, and writing samples (see Wrigley, 1992).

Theory. Adult learning theory supports this principle. As Knowles (1980, 1984) proposed, adult learners are goal-oriented, and as such, any efforts that seek to make those goals explicit may facilitate the quality of the learning experience. Of particular relevance to this principle is Knowles' andragogy model, which holds that adults should be viewed as mutual stakeholders in the learning process. Therefore, there should be opportunities for mutual planning in the adult learning environment.

Research. A few studies support this principle. For example, Comings, Parrella, and Soricone (1999) conducted a study on persistence among pre-GED students using qualitative (interview) and quantitative (correlational) data. Their findings suggest that helping students to establish realistic expectations before entering a program increases the likelihood that they will persist in their learning. This study indicates that working with students to identify and problem-solve in response to potential barriers to participation and persistence enables students to establish realistic expectations about their progress. Similarly, Meader (2000) conducted a quasi-experimental study with two groups of math students in which the treatment group examined their goals and barriers to math learning and developed an action plan. Although the study did not control for other influences on student persistence, the findings did suggest that adults who articulate clear goals persist longer than those who do not.

Verification. Researchers could verify this principle by asking program leadership to describe their intake process. According to guidelines outlined in TESOL (2000), some sample materials and documents that researchers could review include needs-assessment forms, registration forms, and reports of placement results. Other documents might include copies of student learning plans, student questionnaires, and interview protocols.

18. __Orientation__: A program should provide students with an orientation that:

- Provides a clear picture of program services
- Makes clear what is expected of participants in the program

Definition. Orientation represents the mechanism by which the staff familiarizes students with the program. Orienting students to the range of instructional and support services is a primary component of this process. However, the orientation should also seek to familiarize students with other facets of the program, including its physical space (e.g., the location and the layout of the classrooms), the names and roles of the program staff, and the range of available resources (e.g., computer lab, library, tutoring center, and bulletin boards). Orientation also serves as a time to explain the program's mission and goals in detail, information that is typically communicated in a general way during the recruitment and intake processes.

Professional Wisdom. This principle is strongly supported by professional wisdom documents (MILG, 1990; Rosenberg, 2003; TESOL, 2000). These documents indicate that programs should provide a clear picture of program services and expectations for participants. This process should provide sufficient information to learners so that they can determine whether a program is appropriate for their needs (Cook, 1996). The documents cited here also note that programs with limited resources may find it difficult to provide an extensive orientation. Given limited time and resources, program staff may

struggle to determine how individualized their orientation processes should be in order to provide information to students in a cost-efficient way.

Theory. Adult learning theory, particularly with respect to the self-directedness of adult learning, provides some support for this principle. Knowles (1980) firmly holds that adults who take initiative in their own learning are more successful than are those who passively wait for guidance from their instructors. Brookfield (1994) also addresses the essential characteristics of self-direction. He suggests that self-direction refers to:

- The student's ability to access and choose from a range of resources in their learning.
- The process by which the student exercises control over the many decisions involved in the learning environment.

In this light, an orientation that provides the student with an opportunity to set goals and establish realistic expectations is an essential mechanism by which a program enables students to demonstrate individual initiative.

Research. Few studies have been conducted on orientation. Giese (2000) describes a small-scale action research project in which she and her colleagues provided students with a three-hour, six-session orientation workshop. The workshop provided the students with an opportunity to discuss their educational goals. The workshop also asked students to work in groups on a mini-research project to explore their educational options. In this workshop students examined brochures, studied program Web sites in a computer lab, and made phone calls to programs. Giese (2000) writes that in addition to helping the students feel informed about their educational choices, the workshop sparked enthusiasm for learning as they began "to rely on themselves and others to gather information. They also learned to extend their reach for more information through the use of technology" (no page number, on-line version).

Verification. Researchers could verify this principle by asking program staff about orientation procedures and asking to review written documents that outline orientation procedures. TESOL (2000) offers some sample documents and measures that researchers may evaluate: dissemination of program information in various languages in and outside the classroom, the provision of an organized orientation session, and the creation of orientation videotapes in English and other languages.

19. __Wait List Management__: Programs should have procedures to accommodate students who are placed on wait lists. These procedures may include providing some limited service, opportunities for self-study, or referral to other services.

Definition. Wait lists are an inevitable reality in adult education programs where the demand for services often surpasses the availability of classes. Adult education programs should not be complacent about wait list management (the way a program creates and

monitors their wait lists). This principle describes an organized system for monitoring who is on a wait list, and for moving people off the list by, for example, enrolling them in limited study, providing them with educational alternatives to classroom enrollment (e.g., tutors or self-study opportunities), or referring them to other programs. This principle ensures that all types of students have an opportunity to participate.

Professional Wisdom. TESOL (2000) and ProLiteracy Worldwide (2004) underscore the need for programs to have procedures in place to accommodate students whose enrollment is delayed. Mayer (1987) suggests that a "literacy program should actively recruit potential students only if it is capable of responding to the recruits. Keeping a lengthy wait list is demoralizing to those who have to wait a long time to begin. Those in charge of recruiting, other public relations activities, and awareness campaigns should be mindful of the program's capacity to respond" (p. 2-1). Experts in the field also suggest that programs with a history of long wait lists need to take a critical look at the factors contributing to the persistent lack of class availability and develop an action plan—beyond wait list management—to address these factors.

Theory. Wait list management is often viewed as a critical advocacy issue since it speaks to an underlying problem of access. In the medical field, where wait lists for treatment can be long and can therefore delay health care, experts have examined not only the clinical outcomes of delayed health care but also the dynamics of the wait list problem, including the factors that contribute to delays, the implications for patients, and the various practices that can address the problem in the short- and long-term (e.g., Lewis et al., 2000; Ontario Hospital e-Health Council, Wait List Working Group, 2003). Analyses of the wait list dynamic in health care can provide the adult education field with a guiding framework for identifying practical, short-term solutions, as well as addressing systemic issues (e.g., underfunding and inefficient management) that may contribute to the problem.

For example, the Ontario Hospital e-Health Council (2003), based on a review of the literature and best practices in health care, generated guidelines for managing wait lists. Most relevant to the adult education context are those guidelines that prompt health care organizations to articulate the purpose of their wait lists and to characterize the demand of the service. These two areas cover a range of issues that an organization must consider in developing an effective wait list management plan. For example, organizations need to articulate to potential students what the wait list problem is. Programs may also need to solve problems with their placement and referral processes, communications with students who are on wait lists, need for additional teachers, and system for seeking input from stakeholders in the community.

Lewis and colleagues (2000) argue that wait lists in health care cannot be resolved in isolation as they are "part of the fabric of the health care system" (p. 1298). The same

mindset in adult education would help us take a broader perspective on the underlying causes and durable routes to stemming the wait list dilemma.

Research. No research was found that supports or undermines this principle.

Verification. This principle could be verified by interviewing program staff about their wait list management procedures and requesting documents that outline wait list policies, as well as any informational flyers that are distributed to students explaining the wait list process. Mayer (1987) calls attention to an important link between recruitment efforts and wait list management: staff in charge of recruitment should be aware of the program's capacity to address adult students' needs, so a program "should actively recruit potential students only if it is capable of responding to the recruits" (p. 2-1). For this reason, researchers may also wish to consider the program's wait list management strategies in light of the program's recruitment policy.

CHAPTER FIVE: PARTICIPATING IN A PROGRAM

The **Participating in a Program** component covers the range of decisions that program administrators and instructors make about instructional and support services. These decisions reflects the program's ability to provide adult students with instruction and support that meets their needs, conforms to state curriculum standards, and leads to learning outcomes that satisfy accountability systems. Given the diversity of program goals and settings, it would not be feasible to address all aspects of instructional and support services in one monograph. This component, therefore, aims to describe the foundation for effective instructional and support services programs need to address in order to achieve the objectives set by their students, state agencies, and accountability systems. The principles in this component are organized into three areas:

- Classroom management

- Instructional process

- Supports to participation

Classroom Management

The principles discussed in this section describe several conditions that influence the quality of the learning environment but are not under the direct control of the instructor. The primary responsibility to oversee staff-to-student ratios, intensity and duration of instruction, enrollment policies, and the organization of instructional levels typically lies with program administrators. However, wherever collaboration between administrators and instructors would lead to positive change in these areas, it is highlighted in the principles.

20. _Staff-to-Student Ratio_: _Programs should strive to maintain appropriate staff-to-student ratios, which should be informed by the instructional goals and characteristics of the student population._

Definition. The staff-to-student ratio is a measure of the number of students in a program in relation to the staff available to provide them with instructional and support services. The goals of this principle are two-fold. First, this principle ensures that class size is small enough to allow for individual attention to each student, whether students participate in a classroom setting or in a one-on-one individualized instructional setting. Second, this principle ensures that program staff can provide each student with the support services they need. If the ratio is too high, teachers may have too many students in their class to be able to employ a specific intervention, teachers may have administrative duties that take away from their preparation time, and students may not receive the support services they need.

Professional Wisdom. Several professional wisdom documents call for programs to make decisions about staff-to-student ratios based on the type of instruction they offer. Cook (1996), MILG (1990), Stein (1993), and TESOL (2000) recommend that programs maintain a student-to-staff ratio conducive to meeting learning needs and goals within the constraints of program guidelines. In *Guidelines for Effective Adult Basic Education*, Massachusetts mandates classes of between 5 and 20 students per teacher (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2004). The *Guidelines* further suggest the following: a range of 5 to 12 students for beginning literacy classes, 7 to 15 students for beginning ABE (GLE 2–3.9), 7 to 20 for beginning ESOL (SPL 0–3), 10 to 20 for intermediate- or advanced-level classes, and 5 to 20 for rural or low-density-of-need communities. In their work on adult education policies in Canada, White and Hoddinott (1991) recommend a student-to-teacher ratio of 5:1 for literacy classes. They point out that the ratio may vary depending on the average level of literacy skills within a group of students, so that a ratio of 8:1, for example, might be "appropriate if all eight students can read and write independently" (p. 27). In groups where students have special needs, such as physical or mental disabilities, the authors suggest that a ratio of 3:1 may be suitable.

These professional wisdom documents provide some initial guidelines for making decisions about staff-to-student ratios. However, none of these documents offer distinctions in ratios for whole-class instruction and individualized group instruction (IGI), when in fact decisions about student-to-teacher ratios need to be made with a clear idea of what constitutes effective teaching conditions. IGI, often used in ABE and GED classrooms, means that "learners work independently on assigned workbooks or worksheets with a teacher available to them as needed. 'Group' is used in the term because the learners often are assigned a particular class and teacher and meet at a specific time" (Robinson-Geller, 2005, p. 24). If the program feels students would benefit from IGI (e.g., if the students are able to independently read GED test preparation materials and are comfortable asking for the teacher's help on their own [see Robinson-Geller, 2005]) then low student-to-teacher ratios are ideal. If students require frequent interaction (as is the case in ESOL classes where students are learning a new language), then slightly higher student-to-teacher ratios may be appropriate. As these examples illustrate, effective application of this principle depends on clear understanding of how instructional services are delivered.

Theory. Careful attention to adult students' individual needs and goals is a key tenet of adult learning theory (Knowles, 1980; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). Appropriate staff-to-student ratios in conjunction with appropriate classroom arrangements (e.g., whole class, IGI, combination of both) increase the likelihood that adult students will receive the individual attention they need.

Research. Although there is no research that sets an optimal size for classes, research in the K–12 system has confirmed that smaller classes lead to greater student achievement (Folger & Breda, 1989), though Grissmer (1999) and Slavin (1989) suggest that teacher

competence is more important. Students, therefore, may do better in a large class with a well-trained teacher than in a small class with a poorly trained teacher. In a review of the research on class size reduction, Buckingham (2003) concludes that, while there are several studies that report a strong relationship between learning and class size, many of these studies reveal methodological weaknesses (e.g., insufficient randomization, lack of independent evaluations) that make their findings less than conclusive. Moreover, Buckingham (2003) argues that, in the absence of consistent and convincing findings, the reduction of class sizes from 25 to 20 students may not be worth the cost to public schools. She points out, "Research tells us that effective teaching is much more important than the number of children in the classroom. It is therefore much wiser to invest in the quality of teachers, rather than quantity" (p. 15).

Verification. Researchers can verify this principle by interviewing program staff about the guidelines used to determine student-to-teacher ratios. Researchers can also request any documents that address student-to-teacher ratios with respect to the mode of delivery of instructional services.

*21. **Intensity and Duration of Instruction**: Intensity and duration of instruction should be sufficient for the particular learning needs of adult students and the learning task they are attempting.*

Definition. *Intensity* refers to the number of hours a student attends a program each week, while *duration* refers to the total number of weeks a student is enrolled in a program. Insufficient intensity or duration can lead to a lack of learning gains, or gains too low to measure. To be successful, research should take place in programs that have sufficient intensity and duration of instruction to ensure measurable learning gains.

Professional Wisdom. Balmuth (1987) observes that intensity and duration issues have long plagued the adult education field, but she also notes that a consistent lesson learned is that there are no "quick-fix" approaches to adult education. She cites the work of Greenleigh Associates who found that "a short exposure to education is not of long-term educational value" (as cited in Balmuth, 1987, p. 33). TESOL (2000) recommends that programs provide "courses of sufficient intensity and duration with flexible schedules to meet varied student and community needs in convenient locations within the constraints of program resources" (p. 20). Kruidenier's (2002) analysis of reading research indicates that adult literacy programs of longer duration are needed if students are to master critical reading skills.

The Massachusetts *Guidelines for Effective Adult Basic Education* mandate a minimum of 5 hours up to a maximum of 20 hours per week (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2004). The *Guidelines* further suggest an optimum range of 6–8 hours per week for employed adults and 15–20 hours per week for unemployed adults. Balmuth (1987) asserts that effective adult education programs follow a realistic time frame, one

that provides enough time-on-task to enable their students to learn. In their work on adult education policies in Canada, White & Hoddinott (1991) recommend that all programs provide access to a minimum of 6 hours of instruction per week, though a minimum of 15 hours of instruction per week is preferable. They also advocate a minimum of 40 weeks of instruction per year.

Theory. Balmuth (1987) highlights a tenet from educational psychology that indicates that learning in a concentrated, relatively short period of time (termed *massed practice*) is less productive than learning in a series of separate instances over a period of time (*distributed practice*). The notion that distributed practice is more effective than massed practice is a well-established tenet in psychological theory and is supported by research (Ausubel & Youssef, 1965; Dore & Hilgard, 1937; Suydam, 1985). However, Balmuth (1987) points out that the superiority of the distributed approach has yet to be demonstrated in the adult education context. From this theoretical perspective, longer programs that are able to provide students with instruction at regular intervals would likely yield better outcomes than shorter programs that provide high-intensity learning.

Research. Balmuth (1987) reviewed several studies from the 1960s through the 1980s (e.g., Adult Basic Education of New York State, 1967; Greenleigh Associates, 1968; Stauffer, 1973) that support the conclusion that long-term programs are more effective than short-term efforts. A British review of research on adult education (Brooks et al., 2001) concluded that gains in reading and writing are greatest in approximately the first 70 to 100 hours of tuition, after which gains can be sustained by further study. In another study cited by Brooks and colleagues (2001), students who had 51 to 60 hours of instruction within a 20-week period[10] had the largest average improvement in literacy skills.

In a study of family literacy programs, Philliber, Spillman, and King (1996) noted gains in vocabulary achievement based on length of stay in the program. Students who stayed less than 50 hours made few gains, those staying 51 to 100 hours gained an average of 1.1 grade level equivalents (GLE), and those staying more than 150 hours gained an average of 1.4 GLE. Nickse (1988) found no gain for students getting 25 to 30 hours of instruction, but a gain of 0.8 GLE for students attending 41 to 50 hours. Kruidenier (2002) compared the vocabulary growth of students who received instruction for different lengths of time. He found mixed results: two studies found that vocabulary achievement increases with more instruction, while one study did not.

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[10]   This time of instruction would amount to an average of 2.5 to 3 hours of instruction per week. The authors do not suggest that this should be a standard for instructional intensity; they merely note that, among the groups comprising the study population, those who attended most regularly, and thus had more hours of instruction, experienced the largest improvement in skills.

Analyses of statewide evaluation data of Pennsylvania's family literacy programs (Kassab, Askov, Weirauch, Grinder, & Van Horn, 2004) indicate that students who accumulate between 50 and 99 hours of adult education within a 1-year period perform better on the reading section of the TABE, while better performance on the math section of the TABE occurred after 75 hours. Researchers found that "programs must be designed and funded with consideration for factors that influence intensity of participation, not merely persistence of participation" (p. 28).

Verification. This principle could be verified by calculating average rates of intensity and duration. However, no specific number of hours of intensity or weeks of duration has been tested for efficacy. For the purposes of this document, the authors have chosen 100 hours of instruction, which must be delivered at a minimum of 4 hours per week.

*22. **Enrollment Policy:*** *Programs should employ managed enrollment, rather than open enrollment (which frequently brings new students into a class).*

Definition. Enrollment policy refers to the ways that programs allow students to enter a class and remain in the class. Thus, enrollment policy refers to the various decisions a program makes about enrollment periods, as well as absenteeism. Managed enrollment sets specific times when students can enroll in a class while open-entry enrollment permits students to enroll in the class as long as space is available. Teachers find it difficult to implement an intervention lasting longer than one class period when new students are frequently entering and exiting the class. In addition, an examination of the effects of an intervention suffer if students start the intervention at different times. Research should take place in programs that have a policy of managed enrollment, with established dates for the beginning and end of class cycles, and specific time when students can enroll in a cycle. Research should also take place in programs that intervene when there are problems with student absenteeism.

Professional Wisdom. The professional wisdom literature presents two perspectives on enrollment. On the one hand, open enrollment is endorsed because it provides students with flexible scheduling so they are able to attend classes while working or caring for families. On the other hand, open enrollment is a source of instability in the classroom. It may prevent teachers from sustaining the sequence of a curriculum for a group of students because the teacher is required to frequently repeat or adjust the instructional sequence and individualize instruction to accommodate newly enrolled students. Erratic attendance patterns also make it difficult for a teacher to plan lessons and monitor students' progress. Students may identify the frequent turnover and departure of students as a source of their own slowed progress (see Ramirez, n.d.). Venezky, Sabatini, Brooks, and Carino (1996) view the adult education field's adherence to open enrollment as a potential "lack of directiveness" in programs. Open enrollment, they suggest, may have taken the focus on student-centered instruction to an extreme, allowing the students "[to select] what goals they will strive for and what work they will do each class

period.…[This may be] a democratic approach to adult education, but it is not an effective way to use limited instructional resources" (p. 15).

Theory. Any decision about enrollment policy—whether open or managed—should be based on a clear understanding of the program's mission and target student population. This principle is informed by literature in the postsecondary field on *enrollment management,* which is defined as "the process of defining enrollment goals and establishing procedures to reach these goals, thereby providing an institution with the mechanisms to control its size, shape, and character" (Mabry, 1987, no page number, on-line version). From this perspective, enrollment policies are a vehicle for adult education programs to fulfill their mission and exercise control over the classroom environment. For research purposes, the ability to exercise control over the classroom environment is critical. Thus, programs that follow a managed enrollment policy enable the researcher to minimize the number of factors that might disrupt the integrity of an intervention or research design.

According to Kreutner and Godfrey (1980–81), enrollment management should be regarded as both a process and an outcome, not merely a set of practices. The desired outcome is stable enrollment, which is reached by: building a consensus within a particular institution about enrollment goals, involving major stakeholders in enrollment policymaking decisions, coordinating within institutional departments, and developing effective operating guidelines (Borus, 1995; Penn, 1999). These ideas prompt the adult education field to think about the various factors that influence the composition of its student population, and the need for staff collaboration in shaping effective enrollment policies.

Research. According to the U.S. Department of Education's *Report to Congress on State Performance* (2003), state adult education programs are increasingly opting to institute managed enrollment policies in an effort to satisfy federal funding guidelines about sufficient intensity and duration of instruction. However, no systematic evaluation of the effects of this policy shift has been published.

Two evaluation studies—one based in a junior college vocational program (Ferguson, 1979) and the other in a vocational program designed for secondary and adult students (Greenwood & Pestle, 1977)—support the use of open enrollment because the flexibility allowed a greater number of students to use program services. One small-scale, quasi-experimental study examined the effects of the two enrollment approaches in adult education (McCrossan, McDowell, & Cooper, 1998) by following 51 students enrolled in a program, 8 of whom were randomly assigned to a managed enrollment class that required students to attend an intensive orientation at which they signed an attendance contract. Two consecutive absences resulted in immediate follow-up with the student by the teacher. Students in the managed enrollment classes accumulated between 42 and 49 hours of instruction, while students in the open-enrollment classes only accumulated

between 15 and 29. Although McCrossan and colleagues (1998) could not determine whether the attendance contracts in the managed enrollment classes boosted the students' attendance, they found that, in both the managed and open-enrollment settings, students who attended class at least 75% of the time were able to improve their skills in math, vocabulary, reading, and writing. This study highlights the teacher variable in accounting for differences across the two settings. One of the teachers (who taught both types of classes) had higher attendance than the other teacher, suggesting that the teacher may be more influential on a student's persistence than the enrollment policy (McCrossan et al., 1998).

In a small-scale pilot study based at Mira Costa College, Ramirez (n.d.) reports the effects of a managed enrollment policy in the college's ESOL program. The policy offered the students five 8-week sessions with specific registration dates. Students who were not able to enroll on those dates were placed on a waiting list. The attendance policy held that any student who missed more than five classes would be dropped. Although the enrollment numbers were not provided, some positive outcomes included: 80% retention rate, only a 2% dropout rate after 12 weeks of instruction, and an average 35% rate of program graduation or advancement to the next level.

In *Passports to Paradise: The Struggle to Teach and to Learn on the Margins of Adult Education,* Sticht, McDonald, and Erickson (1998) present a case study of an ESOL teacher's experiences in an open-enrollment class. The authors characterize the negative impact of the problems associated with the enrollment approach as the "effects of turbulence," observing that "erratic attendance reduced any given student's chances for learning much from the curriculum" (p. 80).

Verification. This principle could be verified by interviewing program administrators about their enrollment policy and also by reviewing registration documents and course schedules to see if students are required to enroll at specific times. Researchers could also interview instructors to find out how the enrollment policies are implemented in practice. Finally, researchers could also request student orientation materials and program handbooks for descriptions of enrollment and attendance policies.

*23. **Class Levels**: Programs should organize class levels (e.g., beginning, intermediate, advanced) based on a clear understanding of their students' abilities and needs, avoiding, as much as possible, multilevel classes in which there are profound differences in skills.*

Definition. Class levels refer to the range of skills among the students in a class. Some range of skills is unavoidable, but that range should be kept to a minimum for research purposes. Many adult education classes are multilevel, which Shank and Terrill (1997) define as a group of students who differ in ethnicity, native language, age, gender, educational background, learning style, or social class. While this is an accurate

description of the diverse student population, it is not the definition used here. Difference based on skill level (e.g., literacy, English proficiency, math) is the primary focus of concern in research.

A program's ability to organize its students into appropriate levels is important for researchers who wish to examine instructional effects. Findings from a comparison study are only useful if the students truly represent the groups to which they have been assigned. If the differences in skill level of the students in a single classroom are substantial, students would probably be unable to participate in and benefit from an instructional intervention in the same way.

Professional Wisdom. Many adult educators would readily admit that every adult education class is multilevel because students do not enroll with the same skill sets, nor do they progress at the same rate. In addition, not all adult educators view multilevel classes as a burden but, rather, as an impetus to develop materials and activities that are adapted to a multilevel student population. As discussed earlier (Principle #20 on staff-to-student ratios), instructors may follow an individualized group instruction (IGI) model as a way to manage a classroom with students at diverse levels. There is a danger, Zimmerman (as cited in Balmuth, 1987) contends, of asking students enrolled in a class comprised of many different skill levels "to work on a level of performance which is either so assumptive or difficult (meaningless)" (as cited in Balmuth, 1987, p. 12). In addition, Balliro (1997) notes two problems with this approach: (1) the teacher's impulse to address every individual need and goal often leads to unrealistic expectations that produce frustration for the teacher and disappointment for the student; (2) the conventional response to multilevel classrooms is to provide teachers with strategies for working with a group of students with diverse skill sets (see Shank & Terrill, 1997, for a list of strategies), rather than addressing the factors that contribute to the creation of multilevel classes in the first place. However, the multileveling challenge may be a policy issue rather than an instructional issue. For example, Zimmerman (as cited in Balmuth, 1987) and Balliro (1997) raise the possibility that open-enrollment policies lead to multilevel classes when departing students are replaced with new students, even if the class is not the most appropriate fit in terms of instructional level. Zimmerman (as cited in Balmuth, 1987) calls attention to the problem of assigning students to classes without adequate skill assessment, which also leads to the creation of multilevel classes.

Theory. Educational theory on grouping techniques developed in the K–12 context offer important insights into the issue of multilevel classes in adult education. Ellis and Worthington (1994) assert that "… students achieve more in classes in which they spend much of their time being directly taught or supervised by their teacher" (p. 27), but in multilevel classes, teachers find it difficult to teach to the whole class or give feedback to the students about their progress. Adult education teachers who teach multilevel classes are often advised to organize students into small groups in an attempt to keep students engaged and on-task. Small-group work, however, provides no simple solutions.

Campbell (1993) observes that, in Canadian K–12 French-language classrooms, students in multilevel classrooms often spend time reading and writing, working alone or in small groups, but the students often lack the skills needed to be able to work independently. McCaslin and Good (1992) similarly warn that students working in small groups may be able to carry out task assignments (i.e., the students can follow task instructions) without increasing their understanding of the content material. In other words, students may appear to be on-task but they may not be developing the skills the task is designed to address. Motivational theorists, however, counter that small-group arrangements promote student learning because students are encouraged to help one another learn rather than compete with one another (e.g., Slavin, 1983).

There is no clear consensus about the link between grouping arrangements and student achievement, and the conditions under which individual, small group, or large group configurations work best. Slavin (2003) asserts that decisions about grouping structures cannot be made independent of instructional decisions. In other words, any arrangement is unlikely to promote student learning if the curriculum is weak or if the learning task is too easy or too difficult for the students.

Research. To date, the effects of multilevel classes on student outcomes have yet to be fully investigated in adult education. In one descriptive study on the classroom dynamics in 20 adult literacy classrooms, Beder and Medina (2001) found, based on their observations, that mixed levels and continuous enrollment are two of the most significant problems plaguing the adult education field. Teachers of mixed-level classes find it difficult to gear their instruction because teaching at a high level overwhelms the students at the lower levels and teaching at a lower level bores and frustrates students at the higher levels.

As noted in the theoretical section, studies in K–12 indicate that small-group arrangements do not guarantee that students will master new skills, nor do these arrangements enable the teacher to adequately monitor the student's uptake of material (e.g., Polloway, Cronin, & Patton, 1986). Studies in the K–12 and higher education sectors have shown, however, that small-group arrangements, when well structured, increase students' time-on-task and contribute to enhanced learning (Glidden & Gainen Kurfiss, 1990; Johnson & Johnson, 1989; McKeachie, Pictrich, Li, & Smith, 1986). However, there is some evidence indicating that when students are grouped by skill level within a class, which is often the case in multilevel settings in adult education, it becomes difficult for the instructor to manage several groups within the same classroom. The classroom setting may decrease opportunities for students to receive direct instruction, and increase the frequency with which students are given unsupervised busywork (Anderson, Evertson, & Brophy, 1979). Asking students with learning disabilities to complete tasks on their own with little guidance or attention from the teacher may be particularly detrimental to their learning (Madden & Slavin, 1983).

Verification. Researchers could ask to observe intake procedures to see what information is gathered to place a student. Researchers could also request documents related to intake. Researchers would also test student levels or depend on test scores provided by the program. Though a small range of skills within a class would be best, classes that effectively employ small-group work may be the only ones available.

Instructional Process

Instructional process describes teaching and learning methods, or how adults learn in adult education programs. Unlike the principles described in the previous section on classroom management, the principles in this section are under the direct control of teachers. This section describes principles related to: (1) learning environment, (2) active learning, (3) curriculum design, (4) instructional approaches, (5) contextualized learning, and (6) assessment.

24. <u>Learning Environment</u>: Instructors should foster a safe learning environment that reduces the anxiety of adult students and encourages them to take risks in their learning.

Definition. This principle focuses on the features that enable learning to take place in a psychologically safe environment, one that lessens the anxieties that adults may bring to the learning context but also challenges students to acquire new skills and knowledge. In this principle, learning environment is not restricted to the classroom context but refers to any setting in which the student is engaged in learning. Adult students may have anxieties about returning to formal instruction, wondering whether they will make any progress; they must also manage life demands along with school responsibilities. This principle can be helpful to researchers because it identifies programs that take steps to minimize the level of student anxiety, thereby increasing the likelihood that students will positively respond to any instructional or support treatment.

Professional Wisdom. In the same way that loud noises outside the classroom or uncomfortable chairs can make it difficult for a student to concentrate, anxieties—such as fear of making a mistake—can also make it difficult for a student to concentrate. TESOL (2000) recommends that adult ESOL programs provide "a non-threatening environment in which learners feel comfortable and self-confident and are encouraged to take risks to use the target language" (p. 22). Imel (1994) describes the need to strike a healthy balance between helping students to feel safe and encouraging them to take risks: "Any anxieties students might have about appearing foolish or exposing themselves to failure should be eased, but they should not feel so safe that they do not question their current assumptions or are not challenged in other ways" (no page number, on-line version).

Balmuth (1987) suggests that teachers should provide a "display of respect and confidence" (p. 23) toward adult students, referring to teachers' belief that their students

can learn new skills and make significant progress. Several professional wisdom sources focus on the nature of the student-teacher relationship as central to the creation of a safe and trusting learning environment (Brookfield, 1991; Chevalier, 1994; Wrigley and Guth, 1992). Kotinsky (as cited in Balmuth, 1987) describes the kind of sensitivity and compassion that should characterize this relationship: "Kindliness there must certainly be, but kindliness is not sufficient. What is required is keen sensitivity to the particular feel of a way of life to an individual or to a group … and their resistance as the educational process impinges upon their on-going experience at home, at work, and in their wider socio-economic relationships" (as cited in Balmuth, 1987, pp. 23–24).

Theory. Jane Vella's publication, *Learning to Listen, Learning to Teach* (1997), provides a clear framework for understanding the link between the creation of a safe learning environment and effective learning. Safety, according to Vella, is imbued in the way learning tasks are designed, the classroom atmosphere, the organization of groups, and the learning materials. These elements "convey to the adult students that this experience will work for them. The context is safe" (p. 8).

Recent work on the effects of trauma on women's learning experiences has underscored the need for a range of support services and resources to respond effectively to individual needs (Horsman, 1997; Isserlis, 2001). Literature on trauma in adult learning identifies a range of steps that adult education programs can take to ensure a psychologically and emotionally safe learning environment, such as working with students to set ground rules for group interaction and discussion, giving students the option to not participate in a classroom activity, and encouraging students to take ownership of the learning environment (see Kerka, 2002, for review).

Sisco (1991) uses the idea of "climate setting" as a metaphor for effective teaching with adults. This perspective assumes that adult educators should strive to foster a climate—an ambience or atmosphere in the learning context—that recognizes the adult student as a mature individual with rich life experiences and individual learning goals. Sisco (1991) aligns his views on climate-setting with Knowles' (1980) expectations for "educative environments," referring to those conditions that support adult learning and growth. Some key conditions include showing respect for individual differences in personality and enabling students to participate in decision-making. Also, according to Knowles (1980), an instructor's ability to listen attentively to adult students is crucial to the creation of a caring and safe learning environment. Knox (1986) emphasizes how instructors can ensure that a supportive learning environment is fostered from the very first meeting with students. For example, instructors can choose icebreaker activities that recognize students' individual needs and life experiences, can share their own personal background and experiences with the students, or can ensure that participants have an opportunity to get to know one another.

Research. A few studies have helped clarify our understanding of the connection between the creation of psychologically safe learning environments and students' participation and persistence in programs. Some studies have shown that adult students specifically recall their prior school experiences as uncaring, which has a negative impact on their learning and willingness to stay in school (Belzer, 2004; Luttrell, 1997; Quigley, 1990; Taylor, Wade, Jackson, Blum, & Goold, as cited in Balmuth, 1987). This evidence is often used to justify attempts to make adult education programs less like school in an effort to attract and retain students. However, other studies have shown that adult students' perceptions of their prior schooling is not strongly related to their willingness to stay in programs (Comings et al., 1999; Reder & Strawn, 2001).

Access to a classroom community, or cohort, has been found to be an important source of emotional support (i.e., motivation to learn and persist) as well as challenge (i.e., exposure to different perspectives) (Kegan et al., 2001). Kegan and colleagues' (2001) adult development study highlighted the diverse ways adult students make sense of what constitutes adequate emotional support in the classroom. The students' views varied depending on their way of knowing, defined as their internal system for making sense of their experiences (Kegan, 1982). Some students valued the cohort for instrumental reasons. Working in groups, for example, helped students learn new concepts and complete assignments together. Other students valued the cohort for psychological and social reasons. They drew a sense of motivation and encouragement from working regularly with a group of fellow students. Some students valued the cohort collaboration because it exposed them to different points of view and different learning styles.

Verification. Researchers could ask to examine a program's mission or purpose statement to see if these documents describe the program's commitment to the creation of a supportive and safe learning environment. Researchers could interview teaching staff about their ideas in regard to the management of a safe learning environment. Researchers could also observe classrooms to identify ways that teachers demonstrate their ability to listen attentively to students' questions and concerns, as well as their ability to encourage students to practice new skills and consider new ways of thinking.

25. <u>Active Learning</u>: Teachers should use instructional activities that promote active learning; that is, activities that involve students in "doing things and thinking about the things they are doing" (Bonwell & Eison, 1991, p. 2).

Definition. This principle incorporates the definition of "active learning" put forth by Bonwell and Eison (1991) in *Active Learning: Creating Excitement in the Classroom:*

> *[S]tudents must do more than just listen: They must read, write, discuss, or be engaged in solving problems. Most important, to be actively involved, students must engage in such higher-order thinking tasks as analysis, synthesis, and*

evaluation. Within this context, it is proposed that strategies promoting active learning be defined as instructional activities involving students in doing things and thinking about what they are doing. (p. 1)

Bonwell and Eison's description of active learning suggests two important questions to ask when evaluating the quality of adult education instructional activities:

- Does the activity require students to read, write, and discuss, as well as problem-solve?

- Does the activity require students to analyze, synthesize, or evaluate?

This principle ensures that adult education teachers understand the purpose of active learning and are able to design instructional activities that facilitate this kind of student engagement.

This principle can be used to help researchers identify programs in which adult students are less likely to be passive receptors of learning. This is significant for researchers because students learn best when they are engaged with the learning material and actively participate in the learning process. This principle also ensures that the researcher looks carefully at the way teachers balance the use of individualized group instruction (IGI), whole-group instruction, and small-group work to see whether these structures effectively promote active learning. If programs sufficiently demonstrate this principle, researchers gain some confidence that students will be actively engaged in an instructional treatment.

Professional Wisdom. Cook (1996) notes that instruction should "foster students' independent learning and ability to formulate critical questions and seek answers" (p. 28). TESOL (2000) recommends, "instructional activities engage students in taking an active role in the learning process" (p. 22). Wrigley and Guth (1992) also address the orientation to active learning in adult ESOL literacy by stressing that adults should not be viewed as mere receivers of knowledge. Students should be given opportunities to reflect on their own knowledge and experiences. The literacy-development process should also be viewed as a process by which students are actively reworking their social and personal contexts as they learn to apply new literacy skills. In the state of Pennsylvania, the Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education's *Indicators of Program Quality* views the focus on active learning as part of a program's efforts to meet the needs of a diverse student population, pointing out that "active learning requires the use of a wide range of techniques, materials, and experiences to engage student interests" (Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education, 1999, p. 46).

In practice, active learning is often associated with collaborative, or small-group, activities because these kinds of activities allow students to engage in discussion or problem-solving, as well as take on various roles (e.g., note-taker, leader) (Dirkx &

Prenger, 1997). One of the critiques of individualized group instruction is that students have minimal opportunity to engage in this kind of collaborative work with other students (Robinson-Geller, 2004). Cross (2003) points out, however, that there are other, noncollaborative forms of active learning; a student's individual reflection and self-monitoring of the learning experience are also hallmarks of active learning.

Theory. Hendrikson (1984) traces the theoretical legacy of active learning to the work of John Dewey and Jean Piaget who both believed that active engagement is required if learning is to be successful. While Dewey and Piaget focused on the value of active learning for children, Malcolm Knowles (1980) championed the same emphasis for adult students because he believed that adult students were characteristically autonomous and self-directed. Knowles viewed the teacher as a facilitator in the learning process, as someone who should guide adult students through a process of discovery, rather than supplying adults with knowledge. Knowles also emphasized the importance of endowing adult students with responsibility and control over the learning process, allowing their goals and perspectives to influence the scope and direction of the learning experience. Similarly, adult learning theorist David Kolb (1984), in his book *Experiential Learning,* views a student's active participation—which involves the student's personal observation and reflection on his or her own learning—as essential to the process of gaining new knowledge and skills. Finally, Paolo Freire (2000) affirms the value of dialogue between teachers and students in enabling students to become active learners, meaning students who learn to problem-solve, reflect on their own experiences and the world around them, and discover the power of their own voices.

In a comprehensive literature review of the applications of cognitive psychology to adult learning, Jennifer Cromley (2000) presents a clear justification for active learning, outlining four tenets about the nature of active learning that should be applied to the adult education context:

1. "Students who are more actively involved in learning remember better, get a deeper understanding, and are better at solving problems.

2. Teachers play a very important role in supporting students during active learning by demonstrating good thinking, asking questions, clarifying ideas, providing more information, and giving feedback.

3. Pure discovery learning without guidance from a teacher does not work well, especially where students have poor background knowledge about the topic.

4. Lecture only works well when students have had some experience actively working with the topic to prepare them for the lecture." (p. 152)

In a review of principles of adult learning, Susan Imel (1998) suggests that active learning skills are not intuitive, as adults demonstrate varying degrees of self-direction

and learning initiative. Active learning, observes Imel, involves skills that must be developed in students, particularly if their prior schooling experiences largely exposed them to teacher-directed instruction.

With respect to low-level adult ESOL students, Holt (1995) observes that, "when approaches, techniques, and materials are suitable for adults, are related to their real needs, and promote involvement in their own learning, there is a greater chance of success" (n.p.). Holt's statement suggests two criteria for evaluating the merits of any instructional activity: the degree to which the activity relates to the students' real needs, and the degree to which the activity promotes the student's involvement in the learning process.

Research. This principle is informed by studies of school-age children (Brown & Kane, 1988; Wittrock, 1990) that indicate students learn from texts more effectively when they are allowed to generate their own interpretations about events in the text than when they are told the correct answers. Langer's (2001) 5-year study of 25 middle and high schools has provided solid evidence that cognitive collaboration boosts students' ability to comprehend texts and produce their own written texts.

Cromley (2000) reviewed several studies that examined the effects of active versus passive learning in adult education classrooms. These studies examined active learning in various forms, including group learning, cooperative or collaborative learning, and nonlecture classes. Cromley's review provides substantial evidence that active learning yields better learning outcomes than passive learning. For example, a study by Jensen and Finley (as cited in Cromley, 2000) found that college students demonstrated better understanding of biology material when they were able to work in small groups after hearing a lecture than students who were taught through lecture alone. Another study by Dee-Lucas and DiVesta (1980) found that college students retained material longer when they were asked to write their own summaries of the material compared to students who did not write their own summaries. In a study of college-age students, Ruhl and Suritsky (1995) found that pausing for about two minutes at regular intervals during a lecture improved students' immediate recall of lecture ideas and the thoroughness of their note-taking. The implication of this study for this principle is significant, as it indicates that adult education teachers need not think of active learning solely in terms of the collaborative or problem-solving activities. Rather, teachers also need to be cognizant of the opportunities that students have to actively process the information they are given in class.

Research on self-directed learning also suggests that teachers should not think of active learning as something students do only when they are in formal instructional settings. The work of Canadian researcher Allen Tough (1971) suggests that 90% of adults frequently engage in intentional, informal learning over the course of a lifetime. Tough describes intentional learning as a multistep process in which adults (1) identify

what they want to learn and what skills or knowledge they think they need in order to be able to learn, (2) develop a plan or list of resources, (3) engage in proactive learning, and then (4) evaluate whether goals were met or whether another attempt should be made. Tough's research (1971) also reveals that adults recruit about 10 people, on average, to carry out an intentional learning project, suggesting that adult intentional learning is frequently a collaborative enterprise. It is important to bear in mind that Tough's research is based on a sample comprising college-educated, middle-class adults, as well as adults who had never attended college and either held blue-collar (e.g., factory work) or relatively low-paying white-collar jobs (e.g., administrative assistants). His research did not sample adults who were at the lower ends of the socioeconomic scale, could not read, were unemployed, or were elderly, characteristics that are widely associated with the population served by the adult education system.

Recent work by Stephen Reder with his colleagues at Portland State University (in press) on the self-study practices of adult learning suggests that Tough's findings may also apply to adults in literacy and basic-skills programs. Reder (in press) has found that intentional learning—whether it occurs in a classroom or via self-study—has a positive impact on adults' reading practices and in turn, on their literacy proficiency level. Reder and Strawn (2001) report that about 34% of adults who had never taken a basic skills course chose to study on their own to try and improve their skills, and 46% of adults who had taken a basic skills course have also engaged in self-study to improve their skills or study for the GED. Reder (in press) concludes that adult education programs should regard their target population as "active learner[s] deploying resources such as programs, tutors and self-study in sustained efforts to improve basic skills, rather than … passive consumer[s] of program services" (p. 17).

Adult learners may not enter classrooms knowing what it means to learn actively. Kegan and colleagues (2001) suggest that students may experience opportunities to engage in active learning differently, depending on the ways they make sense of the teacher-student relationship and the qualities of an effective teacher. For example, some students in the study focused on the need to respect a teacher's decisions and expertise. For these students, an active learning task that asks them to evaluate or critique the teacher's ideas may feel unsettling and unfamiliar. In contrast, other students in the study described the teacher as one important source of guidance but focused more on themselves as "generators of knowledge" (Kegan et al., 2001, p. 554). Students with this perspective may thrive when asked to discuss and evaluate multiple perspectives as part of an active learning task.

Verification. Researchers could observe a few classrooms in a program and look for ways that the instructional practice upholds the criteria put forth by Bonwell and Eison (1991). Researchers could also ask to review curriculum documents or teacher lesson plans to identify the range of activities and approaches used to engage students in active learning.

26. <u>Curriculum Design</u>: *For each type of instruction (for example, beginning ESOL or GED), the program should feature an organized curriculum that addresses the needs and goals of the adult students.*

Definition. This monograph employs a definition of curriculum put forth by Armstrong (1989) as "a master plan for selecting content and organizing learning experiences" (p. 4). This section seeks to describe principles that lead to a quality master plan, but does not seek to endorse a particular curriculum approach or to prescribe the specific content and skills adult students should be expected to gain. Rather, this discussion about curriculum revolves around whether a program has a clear process for making curriculum decisions, regardless of the particular instructional focus or goal.

An organized curriculum lies at the core of the adult learning and teaching enterprise. With the wide diversity of student needs and goals in adult basic education, it is not surprising to encounter great variation in the curriculum focus and organization from program to program. This reflects the diversity of goals of the various service providers (e.g., community-based organizations, community colleges, libraries, private job training organizations) that offer adult education services. These providers typically have their own funding sources and often are administered with little interaction with other programs. As a result, there is no mechanism to monitor the quality and scope of the curriculum delivered in these various programs.

This principle ensures that program staff understands what a curriculum is, why a curriculum is important, how to align the curriculum with students' needs and goals, and how to implement a curriculum in their teaching. This principle also ensures that the program possesses the necessary resources and capability to deliver a curriculum. Researchers need programs that are able to carry out instructional guidelines competently and consistently. This monograph presumes that a program that upholds this principle demonstrates the capacity to create and sustain an organized curriculum and, thus, would likely be a desirable site to explore or test an intervention.

Professional Wisdom. Federal and state policy documents describe the elements of an organized curriculum for adult education programs (e.g., Cook, 1996; OVAE, 1988; Rosenberg, 2003). With the publication of a guide to effective ESOL programming, *Program Standards for Adult Education ESOL Programs*, the professional development organization, Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL, 2000) spearheaded an important effort to identify characteristics of an organized ESOL curriculum. These guidelines identify several common attributes, such as appropriate sequencing of curriculum components, explicit integration of adult students' individual needs into the curriculum, stated learning objectives, and a clear focus shared with students. Similar to TESOL (2000), Johnson (1989) emphasizes that learning objectives should be stated in terms of progress within the class or program, and aligned with measurable performance outcomes.

Many adult educators agree that curriculum decisions need to take into account the individual student's goals, prior experiences, and knowledge (Cook, 1996; Crandall & Peyton, 1993; Hayes, n.d.; McKay & Weinstein-Shr, 1993; OVAE, 1992; TESOL, 2000). Mayer (1987) stresses that programs should endeavor to make their curriculum relate to the adult students' world. Currently, however, there is no consensus on the way or the extent to which student input is integrated into the curriculum development process. Venezky and colleagues (1996), in fact, are critical of the reliance on participant input, pointing out that "it is doubtful that very many programs will meet the expectations of their sponsors when critical educational decisions are primarily made by the participants rather than the instructors and administrators" (p. 4).

According to professional wisdom documents, program administrators and teaching staff should engage in regular reflection on, and revision of, their curriculum (TESOL, 2000). Mayer (1987) articulates two important reasons for engaging in curriculum renewal; a review enables program staff to (1) determine whether instructional approaches and materials are meeting students' educational goals; and (2) evaluate whether students are receiving sufficient instructional time, how time is spent, how well teachers organize and present lessons, and how well students progress. In other words, curriculum renewal is critical because it serves as a clear mechanism by which a program can improve its responsiveness to adult students' needs and goals. Mayer (1987) also suggests that programs can review their curriculum in various ways, such as by observing other programs, participating in in-service training and professional development, and staying abreast of relevant trends in the adult literacy field.

Theory. The theoretical assumptions guiding the design of an adult education curriculum are not always consciously held, nor made explicit. However, it is not pedagogically responsible for programs to make decisions and arrive at a curriculum framework without a clear understanding of their goals as a program, as well as their assumptions about learning, and about teaching adult students. It is also not pedagogically responsible to build a curriculum without a firm grasp on the educational content that the framework is designed to address.

While there are many practical challenges to involving students in curriculum design, the need for student involvement in the development process is a well-supported tenet of adult learning theory (Knowles, 1980; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). According to Knowles (1980), adult students have a need for self-directedness and must be able to decide for themselves what they want to learn. Also, Merriam and Caffarella (1999) emphasize that learning in adulthood is qualitatively different from learning in childhood, in terms of the student, the context, and the learning process. In light of this perspective, the purpose and organization of the adult education curriculum should not be viewed in the same way as the K–12 school curriculum. Children's education, Merriam and Caffarella (1999) point out, is preparatory in nature. In the K–12 system, adults decide which skills and knowledge children need to know for their future lives. However, adult

education is meant to be relevant to adults in their *current* lives, so the curriculum necessarily introduces issues of student agency and responsibility. This is particularly true because adult learning is usually a voluntary enterprise. In other words, adults do not stay engaged in learning if the curriculum is meaningless to them.

Research. A few studies provide important insights into the ways adult education curriculum should build on students' needs, learning goals, and prior learning experiences. A small-scale study of prior literacy experiences was carried out with African American women enrolled in a community-based GED program (Belzer, 2002). The study found that some of the students' prior schooling experiences are a valuable resource in classroom learning because they involved reading activities that they did not do outside of school. However, Belzer (2002) also found that students seemed to cling to narrow school-based perceptions of reading that hindered their ability to improve their reading as adults. The women seemed to think of reading as something people do when they read Shakespeare or encyclopedias. Because they didn't feel able to read such texts, they described themselves as nonreaders. Belzer's study suggests that adult education curriculum should build on students' prior schooling experience, but pay particular attention to the messages about reading and writing that schools have passed on to adult students. The curriculum should also provide students with an opportunity to interrupt school-based assumptions about reading and writing, enabling them to explore new orientations and beliefs about literacy and literacy tasks.

Findings from an ongoing study of instructional and organizational practices in programs that serve low-level ABE learners indicate that teachers need to have a clear understanding of the curriculum (Alamprese, 2001). Observations of low-level ABE classrooms show that instructors need a thoughtful plan for how they will sequence the lessons, use materials, and design activities. Teachers also need to know how to adjust the curricular sequence in response to observed changes in the learners' pace, needs, or progress (Alamprese, 2001).

A study by Purcell-Gates, Degener, and Jacobson (1998) provides some support to the purposeful integration of authentic materials into the adult education curriculum. Purcell-Gates and colleagues (1998) found that students who participated in classes that integrated authentic materials were more likely to report positive changes in their reading and writing habits outside of school than students enrolled in classes without this emphasis. This study also sheds light on the impact of student involvement in curriculum development, as the researchers explored the impact of student-teacher collaboration— i.e., shared responsibility and power in decision-making in the learning context—on students' literacy practices outside the classroom. No significant relationship was found. The researchers concluded that the finding of no effect does not mean "that dialogic relationships between students and teachers are not worthy of striving for. Rather that one of the outcomes is not literacy practice change" (p. 58).

Verification. To verify this principle, researchers could request program curriculum documents, such as a sample syllabus or curriculum frameworks. Researchers can also interview instructors to see if—and how—they are able to allocate time and resources to gather information on students' individual goals and interests and integrate this information into their curriculum planning. Researchers could also interview program administrators about their curriculum decisions, using questions proposed by Wrigley and Guth (1992), to learn about the theoretical orientations underlying a particular curriculum:

- What are the goals of the educational program?

- What is the process by which the learning experiences are designed to achieve these goals?

- How do teachers make decisions about what and how to teach in each class offering?

- How are the students' learning experiences organized?

- How are the students' learning experiences evaluated?

*27. **Instructional Approaches**. Teachers should make use of a range of instructional approaches appropriate to the students' skill levels, goals, and learning preferences.*

Definition. Instructional approach is the way in which a teacher helps students learn. These approaches can include oral and visual presentations, demonstrations, media- and technology-based instruction, project-based learning, and many other approaches. The approach used should be based on an understanding of a student's learning needs and preferences, and on the goal that the student is trying to achieve. A variety of approaches is more likely to work with a wide range of students and provides all students with a more interesting learning experience.

Application of this principle in a program provides researchers with an instructional environment that is supportive of learning. It also identifies programs in which the teachers are informed about a range of instructional approaches and skilled in matching these approaches with student needs, goals, and preferences. Programs that employ a range of instructional approaches increase a researcher's confidence that the teachers in these programs would be capable of implementing an instructional treatment.

Professional Wisdom. Several professional wisdom documents support the use of a range of instructional approaches to meet the diverse needs of adult students (Cook, 1996; MILG, 1990; Rosenberg, 2003; TESOL, 2000). Zemke and Zemke (1995) suggest that adult students "need a mix of known and unknown, active and passive, serious and whimsical to keep them involved at an optimum level" (p. 37). Zemke and Zemke's observation underscores the need for adult educators to make use of a number of

instructional strategies and methodological approaches, and to know how to make instructional adjustments based on the learning needs and preferences of their students.

There are numerous approaches and methods to teaching adults. In the ESOL literacy field, some approaches include computer-assisted language learning (CALL) (Wrigley & Guth, 1992), competency-based instruction (CBI) (Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System, 1982), content-based or theme-based instruction (Crandall & Peyton, 1993; Wrigley & Guth, 1992), language experience approach (LEA) (Bell & Burnaby, 1988), and task-based or project-based learning (Moss & Van Duzer, 1998). In the adult literacy field, the popular approaches to teaching reading to adults reflect those commonly used in the K–12 arena, such as phonics-based approaches (Hager, 2001), whole-language approaches (Taylor, 2000), content-based instruction (McDonald, 1997), and community-based approaches to literacy development (Association for Community Based Education, 1988). In addition, TESOL (2000) points out that instruction should provide students with ample opportunities to develop an awareness of and competence in the use of technology as a reading and writing tool.

Peyton and Crandall (1995) note that there is much overlap among these instructional approaches and that programs often make use of multiple approaches to teach their students. With respect to reading instruction, Balmuth (1987) notes that the chosen method should include the following features: "structured, clearly spelled-out methods"; "inclusion of both decoding and comprehension"; appropriate "sequence of instruction"; "sufficient practice"; appropriate use of "supplementary materials"; and appropriate "grouping techniques" (pp. 19–21). Math learning is believed to be facilitated by instructional methods that: promote group problem-solving; encourage students to look for patterns rather than focus on finding the right answer; include a focus on skill development as well as practical applications of math skills; and integrate numeracy with literacy instruction, even for beginning-level students (Kallenbach, 1994; Lucas, Dondertman, & Ciancone, 1991).

A diverse repertoire of instructional techniques and approaches is undoubtedly invaluable for a teacher to be effective in the adult education classroom. At the same time, teachers need to have a clear understanding of the reasons a particular technique or approach is used, as well as an overall understanding of how these diverse approaches form a logical learning sequence for students. Smith and colleagues (2003) underscore the link between the "why's" and the "how to's":

> *Teachers, especially new teachers, often say that they need new techniques and practical ideas; however, a larger "bag of tricks," while helpful to those "acting" teachers in our study, did not lead to sustained, integrated change. We found that reflecting critically on one's practice in order to build continually one's theories of teaching and learning was not a skill that some teachers simply acquired by dint of being teachers. Teachers need to understand why to use a particular*

technique, not just how to use it; they need the underlying foundational theory of teaching and learning that will allow them to integrate new thinking with new actions. (p. 33)

Theory. Theory from the K–12 field on the concept of differentiated instruction provides an important basis for making decisions about best practices for adult education instruction. Carol Tomlinson (2000)—considered one of the leading experts on this topic—describes differentiated instruction as "at its most basic level, [consisting of] the efforts of teachers to respond to variance among students in the classroom. Whenever a teacher reaches out to an individual or small group to vary his or her teaching in order to create the best learning experience possible, that teacher is differentiating instruction" (no page number, on-line version). Tomlinson (2000) views differentiated instruction as "shaking up" the curriculum to provide students with a range of options for accessing content, deepening their understanding of material, and demonstrating their learning. In short, a differentiated classroom is one that provides multiple routes to learning. This view stands in contrast to "one-size-fits-all" orientations to curriculum design and classroom teaching.

The concept of differentiated instruction may not seem novel to many adult educators who are accustomed to adapting their instruction and materials to accommodate students of different skill levels within the same classroom. Adapting lessons and materials does not necessarily constitute differentiation, as Tomlinson (1995a) explains:

A class is not differentiated when assignments are the same for all students and the adjustments consist of varying the level of difficulty of questions for certain students, grading some students harder than others, or letting students who finish early play games for enrichment. It is not appropriate to have more advanced students do extra math problems, extra book reports, or after completing their "regular" work be given extension assignments. Asking students to do more of what they already know is hollow ... [and] inevitably seems punitive to them. (no page number, on-line version)

Tomlinson (1995b, 2000) observed that differentiation can be applied to four different areas in response to students' interests, needs, and readiness (ability): (1) the content of the instruction; (2) the process, or the activities by which the students learn the content; (3) the products, or the projects that the students are asked to do to demonstrate their learning; and (4) the learning environment. With differentiation potentially occurring in any one or all of these four areas, Tomlinson (1999) also argues that instructors cannot expect to differentiate successfully if they have an uncertain grip on what they want their students to learn.

The theoretical roots of differentiated instruction are often linked to the work of Lev Vygotsky, who advanced the idea that learners are more engaged and more successful if instruction is aligned with their readiness levels (Vygotsky, 1986). Vygotsky's principle of readiness does not describe a passive approach to learning in which the teacher waits for the learner to be ready to learn certain material. Rather the concept is meant to reinforce the idea that the teacher should be aware of what students can do on their own without help and what they can do with help from the teacher, a point in the students' learning referred to as the "zone of proximal development" (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978).

Support for this principle is also derived from Howard Gardner's (1983, 1993, 2000) theory on multiple intelligences (MI), which proposes that there is no single intelligence; rather, people possess different cognitive capacities that enable them to learn, think, and perform in different ways. Gardner identified several "intelligences," including linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, naturalist, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. Gardner's MI theory, and the various applications of the theory to education (Armstrong, 1994; Kallenbach & Viens, 2004; Kornhaber, Fierros, & Veenema, 2004), provides a strong rationale for the development of multiple routes to instruction that engage students' individual strengths.

While the necessity of being responsive to individual student needs is well-grounded in theory, it is also clear that without appropriate staff development in this area, instructors will, in practice, tend to teach to the middle, which provides little support or stimulation to students below and above this skill level (Corley, 2005). Learning how to differentiate is a skill that requires cultivation in new and inexperienced teachers. Differentiated instruction is viewed as the hallmark of expert teaching, revealing an instructor's ability to competently respond to diverse students' needs (Corley, 2005; Danielson, 1996; Holloway, 2000).

Research. Hall (n.d.) observes that the support for differentiated instruction in the K–12 field is largely based on theory and practice, not empirical evidence. However, she also notes that practices that are closely aligned to differentiation, such as grouping techniques and strategies for promoting student engagement, are strongly substantiated by nearly 20 years of empirical evidence (see Ellis & Worthington, 1994).

Balmuth (1987) observes that most studies on adult education instructional methods suffer from insufficient description of the methods employed, frequently making it difficult to evaluate whether a method was carried out according to appropriate guidelines, as well as which methods are effective and thus worth replicating. In an extensive review of research on adult reading instruction, Kruidenier (2002) found that little research has been conducted on approaches used to teach reading in ABE. His review of existing studies in K–12 and adult education, however, suggests that effective reading instructional methods should address multiple aspects of the reading process,

including alphabetics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Kruidenier (2002) also cites several studies (e.g., Gretes & Green, 1994; McKane & Greene, 1996; Rachal, 1995) on the use of technology in adult reading instruction and concludes that computer-assisted instruction appears to support gains in comprehension as strongly as non-computer-assisted instruction.

One large-scale study, however, is helping to clarify which instructional improvements boost student outcomes in ESOL programs. This large-scale observational inquiry, called the "What Works for Adult ESL Literacy Students" study (a project led by American Institutes for Research and Aguirre International) (Condelli, 2005; Wrigley, 2003), provides evidence that adult ESOL students make greater gains in reading when "life outside the classroom" (Wrigley, 2003, p. 15) is integrated into the classroom instruction than students in classes that do not. Another finding from the "What Works" study indicates that students make greater gains if they are given adequate time to learn a new skill, and a variety of opportunities to practice what they are learning compared to students who did not engage in this kind of instruction (Condelli, 2005; Wrigley, 2003). This latter finding is significant for all adult education programs, not just ESOL programs, because it suggests that teachers should be concerned with the ways instruction purposefully promotes in-depth learning of new skills and content, not just whether it covers a range of skills and content.

Research that applies the theory of multiple intelligences (MI) to adult education also provides further evidence that instructional differentiation supports student engagement and success. In the Adult Multiple Intelligences (AMI) study, Kallenbach and Viens (2001, 2004) examined the application of MI theory in adult literacy classrooms. The researchers identified two broad ways that the teachers interpreted the theory in their classroom instruction: MI-inspired instruction and MI reflections. MI-inspired instruction refers to the range of practices and materials that teachers used to tap into students' various intelligences, while MI reflections refers to the ways that students were able to examine their own learning strengths and preferences. Kallenbach and Viens (2004) reported that the "MI-inspired teaching approaches helped to do the following: Reduce teacher directiveness and increase student control and initiative; Increase the authenticity of the learning experience; [and] Make learning meaningful or relevant to students" (p. 60). With respect to MI reflections, the researchers found that students were willing to try nontraditional learning activities as part of learning about MI theory; the students felt more assured about themselves as learners because they were given opportunities to think about their own learning strategies, preferences, and abilities. The AMI study provides the field with a powerful framework for accounting for individual difference and planning instructional activities accordingly. At the same time, Kallenbach and Viens (2004) recognize that teachers need adequate program support—such as paid preparation time, opportunities to receive training and staff development, ability to purchase classroom supplies, or the freedom to change the classroom environment to suit particular activities—in order to effectively integrate MI theory into their instructional approaches.

Verification. Researchers could verify this principle by interviewing program instructors and directors about the range of instructional methods used in the classroom, and the rationale for decisions about instructional approach. Researchers could also observe classrooms to see the range of instructional approaches and strategies used to support student engagement and progress.

28. <u>Contextualized Learning</u>: Adult education teachers should design instructional tasks that are relevant and meaningful to students' life contexts.

Definition. Contextualized learning is "learning that students find meaningful, relevant and significant to their situations and life experiences.…Contextual learning emphasizes the construction of personal meaning within the act of learning" (Dirkx and Prenger, 1997, p. 19). This orientation to adult learning is often discussed in terms of the "applied" or "authentic" nature of instructional tasks. This principle ensures that instructors understand the rationale for building on students' life contexts in designing instructional activities, and are able to put this understanding into practice.

As will be discussed in the research section below, contextualization of instruction promotes student persistence and motivation to learn (Auerbach, 1989; Condelli, Wrigley, Yoon, Seburn, & Cronen, 2003; Rogoff & Lave, 1984). This principle can be used to identify those programs in which teachers understand how to design instruction that integrates skill development with content based on students' life contexts. This principle would indicate that teachers are able to create a learning environment that motivates students to persist in their learning. The identification of such programs increases a researcher's confidence that students would persist in their learning for the duration of an instructional treatment, a necessary condition for an effective comparison to be made.

Professional Wisdom. John Dirkx and Suzanne Prenger (1997), in *A Guide for Planning and Implementing Instruction for Adults: A Theme-based Approach,* describe contextual learning as "[standing] in sharp contrast to the subject matter focused and workbook-based approach that dominates more traditional instructional strategies" (p. xii). Dirkx and Prenger repudiate teachers' claims that students' life situations only invite personal baggage (p. xiv) into the classroom setting, instead calling on adult education teachers to see the integration of students' life challenges as "necessary to a personally significant and meaningful kind of learning" (p. xiv). Hannah Fingeret (1990) suggests that contextualization is a hallmark of effective adult learning, as students are able to see the immediate relevance of the skills being learned. This, in effect, boosts students' engagement and persistence. Contextualized instruction requires adult educators to view their students as individuals and members of social networks outside the classroom, a definite shift in traditional student-teacher dynamics (Sissel, 1996).

There is no single method to contextualizing instruction, with variation in the degree to which the students' life situations are integrated into the teaching and learning process. Dirkx and Prenger (1997) are critical of academic skill-based approaches to contextualization, referring to approaches that focus on a particular academic subject area (e.g., math, writing) and draw upon students' life contexts only as a peripheral resource for materials or examples. These approaches, they observe, often diminish the role of students' life contexts in the adult education curriculum because they tend to "reduce [life] experiences to a series of particular skills" rather than recognizing "the holistic and multilayered nature of the experiences being represented by the life skill" (p. 10). Dirkx and Prenger (1997) argue for new focus on practices, not tasks; they propose a theme-based approach in which learning is organized around a topic, such as raising a family, that addresses students' interests and concerns, and provides the context in which students can improve their reading, writing, math, and problem-solving skills. (See Freeman, Freeman, and Mercuri, 2002, for similar guidelines on theme-based instruction in K–12 settings.) Contextualization, Dirkx and Prenger (1997) suggest, runs counter to the use of individualized, workbook-based instructional approaches that are pervasive in many adult education classrooms.

One way to promote contextualized learning is through project-based learning, which Wrigley (1998b) defines as "[involving] a group of students taking on an issue close to their hearts, developing a response, and presenting the results to a wider audience" (no page number, on-line version). Wrigley (1998b) also notes that in practice, project-based learning is closely aligned with participatory practices—"when the content of the curriculum is drawn from the social context of the students, and literacy (the word) is used to make sense of the circumstances of one's life (the world)" (no page number, on-line version)—and community action research—"a process through which adult students develop their language, literacy, and problem solving skills while researching a problem and then moving to effect change in a community" (no page number, on-line version).

In practice, contextualization may also be aligned with content-based instructional approaches, which Sticht (1997) defines as "instruction that focuses upon the substance or meaning of the content that is being taught" (no page number, on-line version), commonly implemented in workplace, health-, and family-literacy programs. It is important to note that not all content-based instruction meets the criteria for contextualization, as described by Dirkx and Prenger (1997) above. That is, content-based instruction may not necessarily promote "the construction of personal meaning within the act of learning" (Dirkx & Prenger, 1997, p. 19).

Susan Imel (2000) suggests four guidelines for applying contextual learning in adult education:

- "Find an approach that reflects the complex contexts of students' lives.

- Examine materials for bias.

- Avoid imposing the perspective of others.

- Use the group as a resource." (p. 2)

Theory. The theoretical roots of contextualized learning in adult education are found in constructivism as well as situated cognition (Imel, 1998). Constructivist theories, as advanced by Lev Vygotsky, hold that people learn by constructing personal meaning through interaction with others and interpretation of their environment. In other words, "learning is anchored in the context of real-life situations and problems" (Imel, 2000, no page number, on-line version). Situated cognition theories (e.g., Lave, 1988; Rogoff, 1990) provide support for contextual learning as they affirm the inherently social nature of the learning process. From this perspective, "the nature of the interactions among students, the tools they use within these interactions, the activity itself, and the social context in which the activity takes place shape learning" (Hansman, 2001, p. 45).

Contextualized learning is also supported by theories on thinking and learning, particularly with respect to the concept of task value. Jennifer Cromley in *Learning to Think, Learning to Learn* (2000) summarizes this theoretical perspective, noting, "students learn better when they believe that the assignments they do are interesting and important (can be useful to them someday), rather than school-type worksheets or 'busywork.'" (p. 187). The concept of authentic problems in learning, as described by Cromley (2000), is also relevant to the theoretical justification of contextual learning. Asking students to solve problems in class that are "like the ones they are asked to solve outside of the classroom" (p. 171) provides students with a genuine reason to explore solutions. Cromley notes that this approach provides a powerful alternative to working from a textbook-based lesson that provides students with the problems. Finally, Cromley also notes that the process of authentic problem-solving also increases students' awareness of their own thinking habits.

Research. As Hansman (2001) observes, "the ideas of learning in context and situated cognition have yet to be fully explored and developed in adult education" (p. 49). While a handful of studies that have examined the benefits of contextual learning exist, the superiority of this orientation over traditional skill-based or process-oriented approaches that focus on a particular academic subject area (e.g., math) or competency (e.g., reading) (see Sticht, 1997) has not been tested. Wrigley (2003) discusses the benefits of contextual learning over decontextualized approaches. For example, findings from the "What Works for Adult ESL Literacy Students" study mentioned previously indicate that students made greater gains in reading when instructors drew links between classroom learning and real-world applications than students whose instructors less frequently drew these links. Wrigley (2003) describes the findings in this way:

> *[For] example, if teachers led field trips where students had to use English; or brought in grocery fliers or catalogues to read and discuss; or used as literacy materials cereal boxes or soup cans to figure out calories, all of which are materials and information that reflected the literacy that students deal with in their everyday lives, the impact was stronger. We called this "bringing in the outside." Bringing in the outside made a significant difference in reading gains on standardized tests. (no page number, on-line version)*

Purcell-Gates, Degener, and Jacobson (1998) found that students who had contextualized learning opportunities in their classes increased the frequency with which they read and wrote in their everyday lives compared to students who had few or no opportunities to engage in contextualized learning.

Cromley's (2000) review of studies on the effects of problem-based instruction (largely conducted with children) suggests that students in problem-based instructional settings, compared to students in regular instructional settings:

- Did equally as well, or better, on fact-based tests
- Demonstrated more sophisticated critical-thinking skills
- Retained more instructional content
- Demonstrated better problem-solving and research skills
- Felt more motivated and positive about their learning
- Increased their awareness of their own thinking habits
- Were able to generate more possible solutions to problems

Verification. Researchers could verify this principle by interviewing program directors and staff, reviewing teaching materials, and observing classes to identify the ways that the curriculum and instruction recognize the students' life contexts. The work of Purcell-Gates, Degener, and Jacobson (1998) and Jacobson, Degener, & Purcell-Gates (2003) indicates that researchers could also review intake protocols and curriculum materials to look for ways that the staff aims to learn more about their students as individuals and community members. Researchers could also interview program managers or review professional development plans to verify that teachers are supported (e.g., given paid preparation time) in their attempt to contextualize instruction.

29. __Assessment:__ Programs should have a comprehensive assessment policy for diagnosing and placing students, evaluating their progress, and determining their achievement, with this information clearly explained and shared with the students and teachers to the extent possible.

Definition. Assessment includes the diagnosis of students' goals and learning needs when they enter the program, and the measurement of progress in reaching those goals. This principle ensures that a program features a well-designed and well-documented assessment policy that is aligned with instructional goals and students' needs. This principle also ensures that the program possesses the necessary resources and capability to implement its assessment policy.

This principle is valuable to researchers who wish to examine the effects of an instructional service in an adult education program. Programs that demonstrate the ability to gather assessment data would likely be able to support a researcher's efforts to collect data on their students as part of a comparison study design. This principle also ensures that the program is linking instruction to the needs and goals of students and those students are aware of their progress, which helps provide students with motivation to persist in their learning.

This principle is meant to highlight the decisions that teachers need to make with respect to assessment as part of the instructional process, but it is important to bear in mind that assessment decisions in the classroom are inextricably linked to the decisions at the programmatic level regarding accountability and evaluation. Often, federal mandates require programs to collect data on their students using tools that are not consistent with best practices in assessment, as Wrigley (1998a) observes:

> *While an approach that combines rich profiles and individual portfolios will produce important information on individual students and provide insights into the relative success of certain learner groups, it does not, in and of itself, yield the kind of data needed for accountability. After all, we cannot ship boxes of profile folders to funders to have them realize what a great job we are doing. (p. 52)*

Teachers are inevitably placed in a difficult position, simultaneously charged with the responsibility of articulating the curricular and assessment goals so that one process informs the other, but at the same time transforming this information into something meaningful to external audiences. Simmons (1996) challenges teachers to look for different ways to document and report their students' progress to different audiences—a skill that will likely become increasingly important if programs are to remain accountable to their funding sources. Simmons (1996) argues that the adult education field must "validate and encourage teachers to continue to develop systems that inform instruction and show students where they are making gains, and how far they have come in achieving their goals" (p. 5).

Professional Wisdom. Several professional wisdom documents support the idea that programs need to maintain a comprehensive assessment system for diagnosing student needs, monitoring their progress, and determining achievement (Cook, 1996; MILG, 1990; OVAE, 1992; Rosenberg, 2003; TESOL 2000). Balmuth (1987) notes that

effective adult education instruction provides students with clear information about their progress in the program. In the absence of this feedback, Balmuth observes that "it is easy to understand how … effort may lessen and sacrifices (in time, diversions denied, cost of transportation and meals, and the like) may no longer seem worthwhile" (p. 26).

With the development of state standards and frameworks, programs are in a position to develop assessment protocols that reflect what students are expected to learn. The alignment between assessment and instruction requires that teachers have a clear understanding of their subject area and their students' skills. Donovan (1996) addresses this point with respect to adult education math assessment, although her comments are relevant to teachers in other subject areas as well:

> *A teacher must know what mathematics each student understands in order to serve well that student. To figure out what is known and what is not, how a person learns and what blocks his or her learning, requires assessment of a sort far different from that which has traditionally been practiced; it requires an "assessment mindset" that, yes, utilizes new tools, but more importantly is exercised diligently/insightfully, regardless of the problem, test or task used. The evolution in assessment asks teachers to think deeply about mathematics and about students all the time. (no page number, on-line version)*

Donovan later recommends that "teachers are advised to ask: What skills, knowledge, and academic behaviors do I want my students to express, and what tasks will provide evidence of these?" (no page number, on-line version).

With respect to ESOL assessment, Van Duzer and Berdan (2000) point out "it is generally acknowledged that tests developed for native English speakers are not appropriate for use with English-language students. Second, certain segments of the field have recognized that assessment is but one component in a larger instructional system that includes standards for content, program design, staff development, and assessment" (pp. 201–202).

Theory. Support for this principle can be drawn from current perspectives on balanced assessment systems, which, according to the National Education Association (NEA) (2003), seek to "balance high quality periodic standardized tests with accurate day-to-day classroom assessments" (p. 2). Though the concept of balanced assessment was developed in the K–12 context, the key tenets and assumptions about the purposes of assessment are relevant to adult education. The NEA (2003) addresses the marginalized role of a teacher's classroom assessment practices, an issue that should strike a chord with many adult education teachers whose assessments of students' programs are not always recognized as "valid" measures of student learning and progress:

> *Assessment systems in this country have simply ignored the critically important day-to-day information needs of teachers and students. And because assessment systems have failed to recognize the importance of classroom assessment, policymakers have failed to invest in the professional preparation needed to help teachers master the principles of sound classroom assessment practice. As a result, these day-to-day assessments cannot be counted on to provide the accurate information needed for ongoing instructional decisions. (pp. 2–3)*

The NEA (2003) also holds that, within a balanced assessment system, classroom and standardized assessments achieve the following:

- "Serve a mission of maximum student success

- Address diverse information needs

- Reflect clear and appropriate achievement standards

- Rely on accurate assessments

- Build the confidence of students and teachers

- Rely on effective communication

- Build and serve supportive communities" (p. 5)

The NEA guidelines suggest that adult education teachers should not replicate the standardized tests in their day-to-day assessment, but instead "identify, teach, and assess classroom-level achievement targets that underpin student success" (NEA, 2003, p. 7). Hassett (1998) describes how she employed a framework proposed by Herbert Kohl to systematically evaluate her student's progress and recognize their "genuine achievements" (p. 9), even if they had to leave the class before actually passing the exam.

Hassett (1998) looked for progress across six different skill areas: (1) ability to use language appropriately and thoughtfully, (2) ability to problem-solve, (3) ability to make sense of scientific and technological ideas and use tools, (4) ability to use one's imagination, (5) awareness of what it means to work in a group, and (6) the ability to demonstrate initiative and commitment to lifelong learning. Hassett's (1998) application of Kohl's framework illustrates how teachers can develop assessment plans that yield immediate and meaningful information to them and to the students (also see Gonzalez, 1998).

Alternative assessment frameworks, as reviewed by Van Duzer and Berdan (2000), enable teachers to assess the learning process and the outcomes; that is, to put together "a more complete picture of what students know and can do" (p. 222). However, the authors also note that alternative assessments do not yield the kind of reliable, quantifiable information required by funding agencies.

Many adult education experts would agree that there is no single assessment tool that can appropriately meet the needs of all students. Instead, the adult education field needs to strive toward the creation of:

> *[A] serviceable "suite" of assessments, that is, ... a variety or array of tests, including multiple-choice tests and various kinds of performance assessment tasks, available for use by adult educators. These tests could be used for particular purposes including instruction, local benchmarking, within-state program evaluation, and national reporting. They could be adapted to the needs of the various groups served by adult basic education programs, including GED students, adults with literacy problems related to learning disabilities, adult ESL students with and without educational experience and literacy skills in their first languages, and so on. (Mislevy & Knowles, 2004, p. 94)*

Research. In the most widely known meta-analysis of the research literature on best practices in classroom assessment, Black and William examined more than 580 documents (including 250 studies) and found "a half to a full standard deviation gain in student achievement when classroom assessment is managed effectively" (as cited in NEA, 2003, p. 11). This positive impact on student achievement, the NEA observes, is noteworthy because such effects are rarely found in studies of classroom reform. Black and William's findings support earlier findings by Bloom (as cited in NEA, 2003) who found a gain of one to two standard deviations in achievement when instruction devoted extensive attention to formative classroom assessment. Black and William (as cited in NEA, 2003) conclude that teachers should make use of assessment feedback on an ongoing basis to effectively meet students' diverse needs. The authors also determined that students must play an active role in the assessment process, making use of the assessment feedback to understand their own progress and next steps. Finally, Black and William assert that effective assessment practices are not preoccupied with wide coverage of subject matter but strive to deepen students' understanding of the material.

The findings from Black and William's (as cited in NEA, 2003) study should be used to support initiatives in adult education that develop high-quality classroom assessment tools. As Van Duzer and Berdan (2000) point out, adult education teachers do not yet have the appropriate measures to carry out basic assessment tasks, such as student placement or determining exit criteria. Findings from Black and William (as cited in NEA, 2003) should also prompt federal and state policymakers to direct funds to the professional development and training of adult education teachers in assessment processes, as the role of a qualified teacher figures large in a balanced assessment system.

Verification. TESOL (2000) provides a useful list of sample measures that could be used to understand the nature and goals of a program's assessment plan. A researcher could request any number of these documents in order to determine the assessment protocol of a particular program. TESOL (2000) suggests that individual student folders or a

database should show placement, progress, and exit from the program by any of the following types of assessment:

- Standardized tests

- Textbook progress/completion tests

- Pre- and posttests developed by the program to match student's curriculum

- Weekly unit tests

- Writing samples

- Portfolio of student's work

- Performance-based tests

- Checklist of documented outcomes

- Checklist of completed competencies correlated to student's needs

- Student's log or journal

- Oral interview with student (p. A-1).

Supports to Participation

Adult students must stay in programs long enough to meet their learning goals. Many adults who enter ABE, ESOL, or GED programs require hundreds, if not thousands, of hours of study and practice to make dramatic changes in their reading, writing, math, and English skills (Comings et al., 1999). Yet adult students often leave their programs well before this occurs. Young, Fleischman, Fitzgerald, and Morgan (1994) found that most adults spend fewer than 50 hours engaged in organized instruction in a 1-year period. Recent national statistics suggest that this figure may have increased to more than 70 hours. Though the average time that an adult spends in a program is reported by the U.S. Department of Education as 113 hours[11] in a 12-month period (U. S. Department of Education, 2003), this figure does not include adults who drop out before they complete 12 hours of instruction, which would lower the average significantly. In addition, this data was influenced by one state (Florida) that reported an average persistence rate of 258 hours and enrollment at over 400,000 students, which is more than 15% of the national total. Only three other states report more than 100 hours: California (138 hours), Massachusetts (121 hours), and North Carolina (102 hours). Since the 113 hours is an average, more than half of the students who stay at least 12 hours do not persist in their studies for 100 hours. Seven states reported an average persistence rate of less than 50 hours, and 36 states reported less than 80 hours.

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[11]   134 hours for adults learning English, 103 hours for adults improving their literacy and math skills, and 87 hours for adults pursuing a high school equivalency.

The issue of participation and persistence in adult education has been explored by a number of researchers and educators alike (Adult Basic Education of New York State, 1967; Beder, 1990, 1991; Comings et al., 1999; Greenleigh Associates, 1968; Hayes, 1988; Quigley, 1997; Stauffer, 1973; Tracy-Mumford, 1994; Wikelund, Reder, & Hart-Landsberg, 1992). This work suggests that participation and persistence in learning is related to a range of factors—both barriers and supports—that have been categorized as dispositional (internal), situational (external), and institutional (Cross, 1982; Darkenwald & Merriam, 1982; Johnstone & Rivera, 1965; Quigley, 1998). Such factors may include motivation, prior schooling experiences, personal and family circumstances, the timing and availability of instructional services, as well as perceived need for services.

While many of these factors may appear beyond the direct control of adult educators, there are a number of steps that programs can take to promote adults' participation and persistence in learning activities that specifically address students' internal states and external circumstances. The principles outlined in this section first address monitoring persistence, and then describe three approaches to supporting student participation: building self-efficacy, counseling, and support services. These principles represent an important element of adult learning that reflects a realistic view of the complexity of adult students' lives and the challenges to their capacity to pursue learning and life goals.

30. <u>Monitoring Persistence</u>: *Programs should have in place a system for monitoring student persistence.*

Definition. This principle describes the collection and use of data on student persistence, including the length of time that students attend a program (duration) and how regularly (intensity). In addition to such quantitative measures, this monitoring process should gather information on reasons for student departure and particular factors that support or impede student persistence. Programs can use these data to identify trends in persistence and to guide improvements in services, in order to better meet student needs.

Professional Wisdom. Professional wisdom points toward monitoring persistence and departure from programs with the aim of understanding and reducing factors leading to dropout, as well as informing programs on their effectiveness in meeting student needs (LVA, 1998, 2000; Mayer, 1987; MILG, 1990; OVAE, 1992; Rosenberg, 2003). Cook (1996) suggests establishing goals for, and monitoring of, a range of retention outcomes including *persistence* (the extent of participation beyond initial sessions), *consistency of attendance* (number of sessions or hours students attend, compared with total number of instructional hours/sessions offered), *completion* (advancement across levels or completion of program), and *student achievement* (extent to which student goals are met). Mayer (1987) also suggests monitoring the number of students who stay in a program for 50 hours, as well as the number of terminations and the reasons for leaving.

These data can be reviewed for a variety of persistence patterns, including: characteristics of instructional practices that promote or inhibit student persistence; characteristics of participants attending regularly, achieving goals, or completing the program; characteristics of participants attending erratically or withdrawing; commonly identified obstacles to participation, such as unavailability of child care or transportation; points in the instructional process when participants are most likely to withdraw, such as immediately after entry or over a vacation; points in the learning process when students are most likely to reach a learning plateau; program factors, such as class schedules identified by students as conducive to withdrawal or completion; and the effect of support service interventions (Cook, 1996). In its recommendations in this area, OVAE (1988, 1992) suggests gathering data on program leavers on why they left and whether they use their newly acquired skills and knowledge, as well as monitoring the percent of students returning to a program within a specified time.

Theory. No theory was found that supports or contradicts this principle.

Research. Beder (1999) carried out a qualitative assessment of the outcomes and impacts research conducted in adult education since the 1960s, and noted inaccurate or incomplete data as one of several flaws inherent in the numerous studies he reviewed. He also concluded that if valid and reliable data are to be collected from programs, three conditions must be met: (1) data collectors need to be thoroughly trained and adequately compensated; (2) data collection activities must be monitored carefully; and (3) data collection protocols need to be followed rigorously. Moreover, according to Beder, this process should include "collecting data from absent students and those who have terminated the program" (p. 127). Beder's conclusions support the importance of establishing systematic ways of collecting data on student departure.

Verification. Researchers could find evidence of this principle in a number of forms. They could look for documentation of organizational policies establishing acceptable or target levels of persistence (e.g., 65%), processes, and procedures to measure persistence (LVA, 1998, 2000), as well as gather data on dropouts (ProLiteracy Worldwide, 2004). In addition, researchers might seek out samples of forms and procedures (e.g., phone logs, letters or postcards, and exit interviews) used by the organization when persistence levels are not met (LVA, 1998, 2000), including evidence that contact with students actually takes place (ProLiteracy Worldwide, 2004). Programs should also be able to provide documentation of students' enrollment in and attendance at other educational and training programs, and evidence that the program conducts follow-up interviews with students attending postsecondary education and training programs (TESOL, 2000).

31. __Building Self-efficacy__: Instructional and counseling services should promote the development of students' self-efficacy about learning.

Definition. This principle ensures that programs recognize the importance of students' self-efficacy, or their perceived capacity to "organize and execute the courses of action required" to achieve their learning goal (Bandura, 1997, p. 3). Self-efficacy can play a critical role in adults' decision to participate and continue in adult education. As Bandura points out, beliefs in one's capacity to be successful in pursuit of a particular goal

> *influence the courses of action people choose to pursue, how much effort they put forth in given endeavors, how long they will persevere in the face of obstacles and failures, their resilience to adversity, whether their thought patterns are self-hindering or self-aiding, how much stress and depression they experience in coping with taxing environmental demands, and the level of accomplishments they realize. (Bandura, 1997, p. 3)*

Building self-efficacy supports persistence, and research needs students to persist long enough to make learning gains.

Professional Wisdom. Although the term "self-efficacy" is not common in adult education, the concept of supporting students' belief in their capacity to be successful is well supported by the professional wisdom literature (Balmuth, 1987; Cook, 1996; Cross, 1978; Knowles, 1980; Mayer, 1987). As Cross (1978) and others point out, the need to attend to students' perceptions of their abilities begins at the point of recruitment, when it may be necessary for programs to overcome students' negative self-efficacy in order to encourage their entry into the program. Cross (1978) notes that:

> *Those with low educational attainment have probably had many bleak experiences with education. If they learned one thing in school it may have been that they were not good at learning ... and that their feelings of self-worth will not be enhanced by exposing themselves to further failure. (p. 34, p. 8)*

Consequently, Cross calls on programs to do more than make information available to undereducated adults; she recommends that they "change the image of education and learning—for individuals and for whole groups" as a way to attract students who had negative schooling experiences in the past (1978, p. 34). Once adults make the decision to enter a program, self-efficacy can be supported in the intake and orientation process, which, as Cook (1996) contends, should "acknowledge students' doubts, hesitations, or anxieties about learning" and encourage "prospective students' belief in their ability to learn" (p. 37). In addition, Cook recommends that programs design support services to enhance students' self-esteem by encouraging them to be involved in planning for their lives and education, and in advocating for themselves, their families, and communities.

Within the classroom, professionals suggest a number of ways that educators can work toward building self-efficacy. Bock (1988) points out the importance of creating a "positive experience" in the first class session. Balmuth (1987) suggests a number of steps to ensure such experiences in the early days of attending a program. From the very

beginning, she contends, learning assignments should be clearly based on the findings of a skills analysis at intake and thus address students' identified needs. She further recommends ample time and consultation to allow students to successfully complete these assignments, and, citing Mikulecky (1982), points out the importance of providing students with immediate feedback on their performance.

An additional way to support student self-efficacy in the classroom is by recognizing student successes. Mayer (1987) suggests that instructors "create an opportunity in every lesson and every progress check to acknowledge the student's positive accomplishments" (p. 4-2). In its publication, *Best Practices in Managing the Classroom to Improve Student Commitment*, MWB Education Consultants puts forth the idea of building "a shared power relationship in the classroom that contributes to self-esteem and self-confidence" (2003, p. 7). To achieve this, the authors recommend taking steps to help individual students understand "how learning takes place most effectively" for him or her (p. 8). Teachers should thus use activities that help students to identify their learning styles, and then make use of this information to guide instruction.

Theory. The primary theoretical support for this principle comes from the work of psychologist Albert Bandura, who describes four key activities that build self-efficacy, providing a useful framework for programs to consider in developing ways to support student self-efficacy.

The first activity is what Bandura terms, "enactive mastery experiences," which provide an indication of individual capability. As Bandura (1997) notes, "successes build a robust belief in one's personal efficacy.…After people become convinced that they have what it takes to succeed, they persevere in the face of adversity and quickly rebound from setbacks" (p. 80). Yet, as he points out, success at easy tasks will not build self-efficacy; instead, gradual mastery of difficult tasks is necessary to raise belief in one's capabilities. According to Bandura (1997), teachers can support cognitive development by "breaking down complex skills into easily mastered subskills, and organizing them hierarchically" (p. 81).

Instructors can thus take steps to recognize students' performance of increasingly difficult tasks as a way to promote students' belief in their capabilities. The approach of recognizing successes can be applied to both cognitive skill development and management of the personal and environmental forces that impede student persistence. Teachers can help students set persistence goals that might start off small but become longer as the student experiences success.

A second activity that builds self-efficacy is what Bandura terms "vicarious experiences." As he points out, "seeing or visualizing people similar to oneself perform successfully typically raises efficacy beliefs in observers that they themselves possess the

capabilities to master comparable activities" (Bandura, 1997, p. 87); thus, as students see others like them who have succeeded in their learning, they gain a greater sense of their own capacity to be successful. This point suggests the benefit of using successful students as models for potential students at recruitment, intake, and orientation, as well as at other points in a program. Bandura's vicarious experiences can be facilitated through organized peer counseling or mentoring, as well as by setting up panel discussions with current or former students who can share their experiences with prospective or novice students. As Bandura suggests, "modeling that conveys effective coping strategies can boost the self-efficacy of individuals who have undergone countless experiences confirming their personal inefficacy" (as cited in Bandura 1997, p. 87). Thus, modeling may be especially helpful in the context of adult basic education where many students have known difficulties and failures in their prior schooling experiences (Quigley, 1998).

Bandura's third activity that builds self-efficacy is verbal, or social, "persuasion," which refers to the messages that individuals receive from others about their capabilities. As Bandura notes, "it is easier to sustain a sense of efficacy, especially when struggling with difficulties, if significant others express faith in one's capabilities than if they convey doubts" (1997, p. 101). Verbal persuasion can come from teachers and staff, as well as family and friends. In the context of learning, this persuasion often takes the form of feedback on performance, which can have an especially significant impact on the development of one's sense of personal efficacy in the early stages of skill development (Schunk, as cited in Bandura, 1997). Knowles, too, points to the need for "early success experiences that will help (students) to build positive self-concepts as students" (1980, p. 46). Moreover, feedback on performance is most useful when it stresses positive comments, rather than negative ones. As Bandura (1997) suggests, "social evaluations that focus on achieved progress underscore personal capabilities, whereas evaluations that focus on shortfalls from the distant goal highlight existing deficiencies in capabilities" (p. 103). Consequently, teachers should focus feedback on how well students are doing and how far they have come, rather than how far they have to go. For Bandura (1997), "social persuasion" is most useful as part of a "multifaceted strategy of self development":

> *Efficacy beliefs are best instilled by presenting the pursuit as relying on acquirable skills, raising performers' beliefs in their ability to acquire the skills, modeling the requisite skills, structuring activities in masterable steps that ensure a high level of initial success, and providing explicit feedback of continued progress. (p. 105)*

The final means of promoting self-efficacy, as proposed by Bandura, is addressing the "physiological and affective states from which people partly judge their capableness, strength and vulnerability to dysfunction" (1997, p. 79). By focusing negatively on their "ineptitude and stress reactions, people can rouse themselves to elevated levels of distress that produce the very dysfunction they fear" (Bandura, 1997, p. 106). As a result, physical and emotional states can impede the learning process itself, as well as

persistence in attending a program. While it does not seem reasonable to expect adult educators to directly address physical and psychological difficulties among their students, beyond offering some guidance in time or stress management, programs can play an essential role in connecting students to outside services, which can help to alleviate difficulties in such areas. The role of support services in sustaining student participation is discussed below.

Research. Research exploring the factors that promote or impede persistence suggests that students' sense of their capacity to succeed does play a role in determining whether or not they participate and persist in adult learning. For instance, in an analysis of deterrents to participation among a group of 160 low-literate adults, Hayes (1988) found that multiple factors were involved in determining whether or not adults were able to attend their programs. Among these factors, a prominent one was low self-confidence—in general and in relation to academic ability. In a study of 150 pre-GED adult students, Comings and colleagues (1999) asked students who or what helped them to stay in their programs. The authors found that 44% of subjects identified "positive self" as a support to their persistence. This support was revealed in responses such as "it's me," "myself," or "my determination." Such responses suggested the importance of self-efficacy as a means of supporting student persistence, as Bandura's work suggests. In addition, 63% of subjects identified relationships as one of the top three supports to their persistence in learning. These relationships refer to the support derived from families, friends, or colleagues; God or a church community; support groups; community workers, mentors, or bosses; and children. In the same study, one half of students identified teachers and fellow students as supports to persistence. The prominence of relationships—in and out of the classroom—in fostering participation supports Bandura's emphasis on the important role of social persuasion in building individual self-efficacy, which in turn promotes student persistence. While the factors identified by students did not prove to be statistically significant predictors of persistence, their frequency in student responses to open-ended questions about factors related to their persistence suggests that they are worth some attention. Among the four supports to persistence suggested by the study results, Comings and colleagues (1999) recommend building individual self-efficacy around learning goals and providing evidence to students of their progress in working toward their goals.

Quigley (1998) and others (Darkenwald & Merriam, 1982; Johnstone & Rivera, 1965) have pointed to the importance of dispositional barriers as deterrents to participation. These barriers include "unique attitudes, personal values and unstated perceptions" (Quigley, 1998, p. 7) and are frequently influenced by prior negative school experiences. In a study, Quigley explored possible models for supporting "at-risk" students (those who indicated dispositional barriers) during the first few weeks of participation in a program. Quigley identified a group of 20 potentially "at-risk" students and then randomly assigned them to four kinds of classroom settings: a typical class of 15 to 20 students, a class with additional counseling support, a class of 5 or 6 students, and

one-on-one volunteer tutors. He found that in small classes of 5 or 6 students, which provided increased peer support, as well as in classes in which students had increased teacher and counselor support, retention was higher than in more traditional classes. Results suggest that programs should provide more support for students, through peer groups, teachers, and intake or counseling staff, particularly for students at greatest risk of dropping out due to dispositional barriers. Quigley's (1998) work supports the notion that individual attitudes can have an effect on student persistence and that building supportive relationships may be one way of fostering attitudes that promote participation and persistence, as the work of Bandura suggests.

Verification. Researchers could look for evidence of this principle in program actions corresponding to the framework set forth by Bandura (1997) and supported by the work of Comings and colleagues (1999). Programs should be able to demonstrate that they provide students with opportunities for:

- Mastery experiences (e.g., sequencing in instruction that allows students to carry out increasingly difficult tasks, and structured efforts to recognize student successes)

- Vicarious experiences through interaction with successful students as models (e.g., mentoring or counseling with peers or successful program graduates)

- Social persuasion (e.g., regular positive feedback from program staff, opportunities for family and friends to attend program events as a way to show support for students)

- Addressing psychological and emotional states (e.g., through counseling and referral to support services)

*32. **Counseling:** A program should offer educational and personal counseling that is intended to help adult students persist in their learning and attain their educational goals.*

Definition. This principle ensures that adult students have access to counseling to address their academic and social needs. Counseling can serve as an opportunity to assess how well a student's current instructional activities are meeting her or his needs. In addition, counseling serves the important purpose of helping students to assess their states of mind and personal circumstances that might negatively affect their participation, and to design ways to manage these factors in a manner that supports continued learning. Counseling can provide an opportunity for reflection, clarification, and redirection, all of which are important in allowing students to revisit their original motivation for coming to a program, to help sustain that motivation over time, and to create motivation for new goals.

Professional Wisdom. The value of counseling and the necessity for integrating it into adult education services is widely accepted among professionals in the field (Balmuth,

1987; Cook, 1996; Darling & Paull, 1985; MILG, 1990; OVAE, 1988, 1992; Rosenberg, 2003; Stein, 1993; White & Hoddinott, 1991). Among those who acknowledge the importance of counseling, several note specifically that it should be geared toward helping students to persist until they achieve their goals (Jones & Petry, 1980; MILG, 1990). Cook (1996) suggests that counseling be comprehensive and include personal, educational, career, family, and peer counseling. She and others (Verner & Booth, as cited in Balmuth, 1987) note the need for counselors to be well trained, so that they can uncover individual needs and be able to make informed referrals to outside agencies.

Theory. As Knowles (1980) notes, in the education of children and youth, the sequence of learning is guided by grade levels and "patterns of curricular organization." In the case of adult education, however,

> *there are no grade levels, and the curriculum is a random mosaic of unrelated resources scattered among scores of institutions. There is no inherent pattern that provides sequence and integration; individuals have to mould their own patterns, and the only source of help in this complicated undertaking is educational counseling. (p. 171)*

In Knowles' view, educational counseling is much like a program planning process applied to an individual. First, counseling must encourage self-analysis and self-direction. Next, the student's needs and interests for further learning must be assessed in view of his or her vision of the future. Next, counseling should assist students in identifying the resources available and mapping out a sequence of learning activities. Finally, counseling should help students to continuously evaluate their progress toward their objectives and to repeat this cycle.

In addition to helping direct students to appropriate learning opportunities, educational theorists point out that counseling serves the purpose of supporting learning participation and persistence. As Bock (1988) suggests, in deciding to engage in a new activity, adults typically go through five stages. During the first stage, *awareness*, adults will obtain initial information from several sources, such as other people, newspapers, radio, and so on. In the second stage, *interest,* adults seek additional information about a program. In the third stage, *evaluation,* adults weigh the advantages and disadvantages of participation. In the fourth stage, *trial,* adults try out their idea somewhat tentatively, and on a small scale. It is at this point that many adult learners drop out and thus the stage at which counseling can support continued participation so that learners might reach the final stage of *adoption*, in which adults decide to continue in the learning experience.

As Bock (1988) notes, adults have a number of positive and negative influences acting on them as they decide whether or not to participate in adult learning. One way of increasing learner persistence, suggests Bock, is to provide counseling for issues that interfere with learning. As she notes, participants need someone to whom they can turn

when problems or concerns arise. Effective counseling can encourage persistence by attending to both reasons for dropping out of a program, and the ways in which a program can overcome, or help a participant overcome, those reasons. The functions of counseling include giving information about educational and career opportunities, assessing student aptitudes and interests, assisting with educational and career planning, helping students to cope with related problems, advocating for student rights, and referring students to other agencies for services that the program is unable to provide. Bock (1988) notes that counseling adults requires special training, although many counselors are inadequately prepared for their duties. She acknowledges the important potential role of personal contact in encouraging participation and persistence and stresses that "the essence of counseling is the relationship between counselor and client, which enables the client to deal with planning, problems, feelings, and decisions" (p. 141).

Research. There is relatively little research to document the importance of counseling in adult education. Grabowski (1976) notes the 1966–67 Acadia Parish Pilot Study of adult learners in Louisiana, which found "more progression among the counseled groups than the noncounseled groups in the area of educational, occupational, and social categories" (p. 225). In a study of the Jefferson County (Kentucky) Adult Reading Program (JCARP), Darling and Paull (1985) note the value of effective counseling for adult learners. In the JCARP program, counseling is integrated into recruitment, staff training, instructional design, and evaluation components. The program showed success in both retention and reading skill development. The JCARP attrition rate was 22%, while the attrition rates of 10 comparable programs ranged from 80% to 52%. With respect to reading achievement, for 173 matched subjects, JCARP students showed a mean reading test gain of 1.58, while the controls showed a mean gain of .88, significant at the .001 level. Darling and Paul (1985) attribute the success of the program to the emphasis "throughout all program components, on meeting the individual needs of the students" and the importance of using counseling to "identify and revise student sub-goals" (p. 56). As the authors state, "a caring, trusting relationship is essential to the process of identifying individual goals and building motivation to attain them" (p. 57).

Two studies, which do not specifically test the link between counseling and student outcomes, nevertheless point to the importance of counseling as a support to learner persistence. Perin and Greenberg (1993) studied a group of 125 adult learners attending a program to help prepare them for college. The study found that students who stayed longer in the program made greater literacy gains. These findings highlighted the importance of counseling as a way to help students maintain the motivation necessary to attend classes and, specifically, to overcome the discouragement that may accompany negative feedback on their literacy achievement.

In their study of 150 adult learners in New England, Comings and colleagues (1999) examined the factors that promote and hinder learner persistence in pre-GED

programs. Based on their findings, the authors identified four potential supports to persistence, three of which underline the important role of counseling services. As the first support to persistence, the authors suggest that learners need to establish a goal. Counselors can help students clarify and articulate that goal during intake procedures and regular counseling sessions. Second, the authors note the importance of building self-efficacy, the feeling of self-confidence around a particular task. Counselors can help in this area by providing encouragement, as well as directing students to resources and services that can help to address physiological and emotional states that might interfere with learning. Third, Comings and colleagues recommend efforts to manage the positive and negative forces that help and hinder persistence. Counselors can help in this process by working with students to analyze their situations, and help them devise ways to strengthen supports and minimize barriers to persistence. Finally, the authors note the importance of students' seeing progress toward their goal. While teachers can develop assessments that permit students to see their progress, counselors can review the evidence of progress with students to see how it fits with their learning goals and plans.

Verification. Researchers looking for evidence of this principle in action could speak with the program's counselor or question program staff about their counseling activities, since this is usually an informal responsibility of all staff. In addition, researchers should obtain information on the training and preparation of counselors, and look for evidence of counseling activities (e.g., learning plans, counseling meeting notes, mention of workshops put on by counselors).

*33. **Support Services.** A program should feature a clear and purposeful system for identifying students' needs for support services. This system should provide the necessary services or make sure that they are available through referral to other agencies.*

Definition. Given the many factors in adult students' lives that may interfere with attendance in adult basic education classes, programs should provide referral to services to help students manage the demands and difficulties that they may confront, with the aim of allowing them to participate in learning activities until they achieve their goals. The range of services to which programs might connect students is broad. Depending on the students served, these services might include child care, transportation, health care, employment counseling, education counseling, legal advice, personal and family counseling, assessment of learning disabilities, and native language translators and interpreters (TESOL, 2000). Support services might also address additional issues of immigration, substance abuse, domestic violence, public assistance, or job preparation and placement (Cook, 1996; MILG, 1990).

Because programs are often underresourced, they must reach out to other agencies to identify services that can benefit their students and help sustain their participation in learning. Rather than simply providing lists to their students, programs should establish contacts with service agencies to create a mutual understanding of needs and resources;

this allows students to benefit more fully from these services and be able to successfully pursue their learning goals.

Professional Wisdom. The need for programs to provide support services to facilitate student participation in adult education programs is widely accepted by professionals in the field (Cook, 1996; LVA, 1998, 2000; Mayer, 1987; MILG, 1990; OVAE, 1988, 1992; ProLiteracy Worldwide, 2004; Rosenberg, 2003; Stein, 1993; TESOL, 2000; White & Hoddinott, 1991). According to Cook (1996), a "quality literacy program recognizes the diversity and complexity of student needs, and creates a caring environment in which support services are provided" in order to facilitate students' "full participation in the educational process" (p. 32). In discussing the nature of support services, she also calls for services to encourage students to be actively involved in planning their lives and education, and to advocate for themselves, their families, communities, and programs.

The first step in providing support services is the identification of student needs (Cook, 1996; OVAE, 1992; ProLiteracy Worldwide, 2004), which can be accomplished through counseling sessions, conducted at intake and continued on an ongoing, as-needed basis. As Cook (1996) suggests, the support-service process should address students' personal, education, and career concerns and goals, and build on students' individual strengths and experiences. She also adds that support services should enhance students' self-esteem and encourage students to return for continued support as necessary. Stein (1993) recommends that support services be available to both students and their families, in order to address the multiple factors that can influence student participation. She points out that one way of providing support to students is by assigning a mentor or peer counselor to every student.

Once student needs have been established, the program's support-service structure should link the student to appropriate services, which can be provided either directly, or through referral to appropriate providers within the local community (MILG, 1990; OVAE, 1992; Stein, 1993). As Mayer (1987) points out, "simply telling an adult student about a resource may not be enough. Often, the adult student appreciates support or help in using that resource" (p. 2-4). Staff can offer such assistance by making appointments for students, phoning in advance of a student visit to a resource, or accompanying the student to a support service agency (Mayer, 1987).

In order to make suitable, informed referrals, staff require relevant knowledge and skills, which may be obtained through ongoing professional development activities (Cook, 1996). Programs must maintain informal or formal linkages with relevant agencies (OVAE, 1992) and may even maintain updated, annotated lists of agencies that provide quality services (Cook, 1996).

Theory. A number of adult educators have offered theories to support the inclusion of support services as an element of ABE programming. According to some theorists, the necessity of offering support services stems from the barriers to participation faced by many learners. Cross (1982) identified three categories of such barriers: (1) situational barriers, which include child care, transportation, or finances; (2) institutional barriers, which include inconvenient timing or location of classes; and (3) dispositional barriers, which include fear of failure and dislike of school. For some learners, situational barriers prevent their participation in adult education programs, while for others, such barriers increase the risk of dropping out. As Tracy-Mumford (1994) suggests, effective support for adult education students relates directly to student persistence and success and should therefore be an integral part of adult education program design. Further, she states, "students need to know that program personnel care about them and that a support network is available to them" (p. 15). Such a support network, she contends, should include counseling support, classroom support, and other support services, especially child care and transportation.

Theorists acknowledge that, while programs may offer support services directly, program staff will often need to refer students to services outside of the program. Bock (1988) notes that among the individual factors that may contribute to adult learner drop-out is the fact that some "students encounter problems in their personal lives that prevent continued attendance" (p. 138). He suggests that programs can address these challenges through counseling to direct learners to appropriate services. As Quigley (1997) states, "every practitioner and administrator has a professional if not moral responsibility to try to connect learners with the community agencies that can help them" (p. 172).

Research. The need for programs to provide support services has been well documented in adult learning research. The fact that adult students face a range of barriers to their persistence has been discussed by a number of researchers (Beder, 1990; Bos, Comings, Cuban, & Porter, 2003; Darkenwald & Merriam, 1982; Hayes, 1988; Malicky & Norman, 1994; Quigley, 1998; Wikelund et al., 1992). While some, such as Quigley (1998), have noted the influence of institutional barriers (e.g., timing of classes, location, and fees), as well as "dispositional" barriers (e.g., attitudes, personal values, and unstated perceptions), the role of the barriers to participation that arise from students' daily lives has been well documented.

In her review of research, Cross (1982) points out that situational barriers "lead the list, ranging from roughly 10 percent citing situational factors such as lack of child care or transportation to about 50 percent mentioning cost or lack of time" (p. 101). Beder (1990) found situational barriers (e.g., lack of time, family responsibilities, work conflicts) to be among the five factors related to nonparticipation in adult education identified through a study of 129 adults, 18 or older, lacking a high school credential, and with no experience in adult education. Malicky and Norman (1994) found that social, family, and personal problems were the second most frequent category of reason for

dropping out of programs, based on a 3-year study of 94 adult education participants.[12] In a study of 150 adult students, in which students were asked to identify barriers to their participation, Comings and colleagues (1999) found that nearly half (49%) of respondents indicated that "life demands" posed obstacles to their attendance in pre-GED classes. These demands included unfavorable conditions at home, special child-care needs, work demands, transportation, own/family's health, welfare and other official rules, moving, and lack of income. The same study concluded that one of four key supports to persistence is the management of individual factors that promote and impede persistence.

Two studies examine individual factors related to persistence and suggest areas on which to focus in supporting learner persistence. Holmes (1995) explored the importance of family relationships as supports to adult learning. Using a proportional random sample, she surveyed 88 African American ABE students in Louisiana and found family members to be the greatest supporters of students. Students who persisted in adult education, "more strongly perceived that their family's support included the areas of asking how they were doing in school, giving them money when they needed it, and allowing time for them to study" (p. 163). Holmes concluded that programs should recognize the important supportive role that families can play in sustaining learner persistence and explore ways of "using the family as a support system for teaching and learning" (p. 164).

The importance of relationships in sustaining participation in adult learning is also evidenced in a case study of two women learners in Hawaii. Cuban (2003) explored the connections between women's roles as caregivers and their persistence in an adult learning program.[13] She found that these women's participation in adult learning was driven by their desire to fulfill the literacy demands of their respective care-giving roles and concluded that programs need to take into account the "histories," "relationships," and "deeper meanings" of learners' statements at intake if programs are to support learner persistence (p. 38). In addition to the provision of quality childcare, daycare, or eldercare services, Cuban calls for programs to offer a supportive environment to learners that provides opportunities such as peer support groups, home tutoring, frequent phone calls, counseling, and flexible scheduling as means of supporting learner participation as learner needs and situations change. Cuban (2003) highlights the importance of providing students with professional psychological and vocational guidance. Such "noninstructional formal support mechanisms" are important "for reinforcing the emotional aspects of persistence and for making available to women learners professional services they may not be able to receive elsewhere in their community" (p. 37).

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[12]   The most frequent category of reasons for drop-out were related to problems with programs, including classes moving too slowly, participants not doing what they wanted in classes, and perceived conflicts with teachers.

[13]   The two case studies were drawn from a sample of 10 women that Cuban studied in her doctoral research. Five of the women's stories pointed to care-giving as a theme related to persistence, which led Cuban to focus on this issue with the two women included in these case studies.

Verification. Researchers interested in finding evidence of this principle in action will want to know if a program has a system in place for providing support services to adult students, which may be documented through a support-system plan, referral forms and procedures (LVA, 1998, 2000; ProLiteracy Worldwide, 2004), or data on the number and types of support services provided to students (OVAE, 1992). More specifically, researchers should look for indications that students' support needs are analyzed, the availability of services is communicated, and referrals to appropriate services are made (OVAE, 1992). These steps might be demonstrated through examples of completed referral forms or student referral plans (LVA, 1998, 2000; ProLiteracy Worldwide, 2004), as well as data on the number and type of support services to which students are referred. In addition, a program should be able to provide some evidence that students actually make use of the services available, which can be shown in data such as the percent of students who obtain specific needed services through the program or through referral (OVAE, 1992). Finally, a program must be able to demonstrate that it maintains connections to outside agencies that provide relevant services that are available to students. Proof of this element of the support-services principle can be shown through lists of agencies that offer relevant support services (ProLiteracy Worldwide, 2004) or documentation of agreements or linkages between the program and service providers (OVAE, 1992).

CHAPTER SIX: RE-ENGAGEMENT

Traditionally, adult education programs have focused their efforts on serving the needs of those adults who attend classes through instruction and support services. Limited program resources are concentrated on maximizing the time that students spend within a program and, to some extent, helping students to avoid dropping out. Programs generally lack any systematic way of dealing with students who leave programs, either as dropouts or because they have achieved their goal or are ready to move on (Porter, Cuban, & Comings, 2005).

Very few students see a program as an end in itself; rather, the program represents a move in a particular direction. Programs should be designed in such a way as to facilitate students' continuing on their learning paths, whether by immediately returning to a program or pursuing independent learning until it is feasible for them to return. Adult education programs can also play an important role in fostering student transitions to additional programs and services to help students achieve their ultimate goals. Thus, the notion of "re-engagement" as it is used in this document refers not just to returning to a program after dropout; it involves fostering interim learning opportunities during periods of absence from programs, encouraging participation until current learning goals are met, and continuing participation in new venues (such as training programs or postsecondary programs) as current goals are achieved and new goals are developed.

34. <u>Monitoring Student Departure from Programs</u>: *Programs should have a system for monitoring student departure from a program (due to dropout and program completion).*

Definition. This principle is focused on the collection and use of data on student departure, for instances in which a student drops out of a program prior to completion, as well as when a student completes a program and moves on to a subsequent opportunity. In order to implement this principle, programs must establish clear definitions of dropout (e.g., after three consecutive absences or after one week of absence), as well as completion (e.g., attainment of a credential or skill level, or attendance for a given number of hours). In addition to numerical data on the length of time that students attend classes before leaving a program, this data should comprise qualitative information, including reasons for students' departure, feedback on the program services, and information on student transitions to new opportunities, such as employment, postsecondary education, and training.

These data can be of use to programs in several ways. Quantitative data can indicate trends in student dropout and allow programs to gain new insights, such as periods when students appear to be at greatest risk of dropping out, or the length of time different groups of students take to complete a program. Qualitative data on student departure can offer programs information on students' perceived quality or usefulness of programs, and any external factors beyond the control of program staff that contribute to

dropout. Such data can allow a program to make adjustments in program services as suggested by student feedback. In addition, monitoring student departure from programs can offer programs valuable information on the types of transitions that students make beyond participation in a program. Follow-up data collection in this area can help programs understand how adults make use of skills they gain in the program.

Professional Wisdom. The professional wisdom literature points toward monitoring departure from programs with the aim of understanding and reducing factors leading to dropout, as well as informing programs about their effectiveness in meeting student needs (LVA, 1998, 2000; MILG, 1990; OVAE, 1992; Rosenberg, 2003). Data on student departure can provide a number of useful insights, such as characteristics of participants attending erratically or withdrawing; commonly identified obstacles to participation; points in the instructional process when participants are most likely to withdraw, such as immediately after entry or over a vacation; points in the learning process when students are most likely to reach a learning plateau; program factors identified by students as conducive to withdrawal; and the effectiveness of support services (Cook, 1996). In its recommendations in this area, OVAE suggests gathering data from program leavers about why they left and whether they use their newly acquired skills and knowledge (1988), as well as monitoring the percent of students returning to a program within a specified time (1992).

Theory. No theory was found that supports or contradicts this principle.

Research. In his assessment of research that focused on outcomes and impacts of adult education, Beder (1999) identifies high attrition and a lack of capacity to collect accurate and timely data as obstacles to conducting research in adult education (p. 126). Moreover, as Beder points out, little is known about the long-term cumulative effects of adult education:

> *It may well be that the power of adult literacy education lies not in its function as an end that produces immediate gains but in its function as an enabling means to a wide range of other benefits that, when obtained, yield still more benefits. (p. 122)*

Adult education students may well go on to further education, higher levels of employment, and substantial increases in income. And, as Beder (1999) points out, such gains "would not even begin to accrue until five years after completion of adult literacy education" (p. 122). Programs cannot likely monitor such outcomes without cooperation from other agencies (e.g., departments of revenue/employment, institutions of higher education), yet without mechanisms for monitoring student departure as an initial step in following up on program leavers, outcomes of adult basic education cannot be monitored.

Verification. Researchers can find evidence of this principle in action in a number of forms. Researchers might seek out samples of programmatic forms and procedures (e.g., phone logs, letters or postcards, exit interviews) used by the organization when students cease to attend programs (LVA, 1998, 2000), including evidence that contact with students actually takes place (ProLiteracy Worldwide, 2004). Programs should also be able to provide documentation of students' enrollment in and attendance at other educational and training programs, and evidence that the program conducts follow-up interviews with students attending postsecondary education and training programs (TESOL, 2000).

35. _Addressing Student Departure_: *In the event that students stop attending classes, programs should take action to intervene in order to find suitable ways to re-engage students and allow them to continue pursuing their learning goals.*

Definition. Despite the fact that programs may provide a range of support services as a way to avert dropout, it is likely that, at some point, students may stop attending classes. It is thus important that programs take some action to bring students who drop out or stop out of a program back into learning, to keep them "connected" to the program or to ongoing learning activities. While practitioners may be powerless to affect the life circumstances that affect their students' persistence, efforts as simple as "friendly follow-up calls and expressions of interest may help to keep students motivated and encourage them to return when circumstances change" (Thomas, 1990, no page number, on-line version). This principle ensures that programs develop systematic ways of dealing with students who stop attending classes and are at risk of completely disconnecting from their learning. These efforts should be aimed at leading students to continue their learning, even if participation in a program must be delayed for some time.

Professional Wisdom. The need to intervene in instances of student departure from a program is acknowledged by many professionals in the field of adult education (Balmuth, 1987; Hayes, n.d.; MILG, 1990; Rosenberg, 2003; Stein, 1993; TESOL, 2000). The Massachusetts Interagency Literacy Group (1990) refers to the need to "re-recruit" noncompleters, "making adjustments in the program where necessary to better meet student needs" (p. 10). Stein (1993) calls for programs to put processes and structures in place to "enable the program to assist students to stay in the program long enough to achieve their goals" (p. 23). To achieve this end, she suggests following up on unreported absences of more than two consecutive sessions as a way to intervene in possible dropout, and using peer follow-up counselors to contact students who leave a program before attaining their goals. Hayes (n.d.) recommends maintaining periodic contact with students and keeping "as much of an open invitation to return as reasonable" (p. 15).

Theory. No theory was found that supports or contradicts this principle.

Research. A number of research studies lend support to the idea of re-engaging students to help them continue pursuit of their goals. In a qualitative study, Belzer (1998b) explored the perceptions of adult students when they stopped going to their adult education programs. The study followed 10 students from entry into their program for up to 4 months, or until they dropped out. Belzer found that students who had left their programs did not consider themselves dropouts and planned to return to their programs in the future. Even though they had ceased to attend classes, students maintained their intention to participate. Based on her findings, Belzer (1998b) recommends that programs and teachers take actions such as encouraging daily reading and writing so that students use their literacy skills even when not attending classes. In addition, she suggests that teachers ensure that students have materials and know how to use them so that they can continue work outside of classes. As she concludes, teachers and programs should plan program structures, curricula, and assessment based on "the assumption that even under the best of circumstances, students will come and go, and hopefully, come again" (Belzer, 1998b, p. 17).

A recent study by the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy and MDRC (Porter et al., 2005) examined the persistence patterns of adult students in library literacy programs in New York, California, and North Carolina. The research team used one-time interviews with 100 learners, and in-depth interviews with a group of 30 learners over 2 years to understand factors affecting persistence. The study found that, in most cases, student persistence was affected by factors that related to the student ("personal factors") or the student's life ("environmental factors") and could not be easily addressed, given the resources available to most programs. Researchers identified five different pathways for program participation that are determined by personal and environmental factors. These pathways are: (1) *long-term* (students participate regularly over a long period), (2) *mandatory* (students attend because they are required to do so by public assistance or law-enforcement agencies), (3) *short-term* (students attend for a short period in order to accomplish a specific goal), (4) *try-out* (students attend only briefly because their barriers to participation are currently insurmountable), and (5) *intermittent* (students move in and out of programs over time). Regarding "intermittent" students, Porter and colleagues (2005) found that while not attending programs, these students often see themselves as still connected to their programs and may even stay in contact with their programs. This group may have broad goals that require a long period of participation for achievement, but personal and environmental factors limit students' ability to attend regularly. The study authors concluded that the intermittent path may be the only one available to most students and that programs should thus recognize this situation and find ways to work with students during their periods of nonparticipation, and to encourage them to return to programs when the personal and environmental factors allow them to do so.

While practitioners often think of re-engagement as involving a return to classes, Porter and colleagues (2005) suggest that there may be opportunities to support student

persistence outside the structure of programs. Reder (in press) describes the findings of the Longitudinal Study of Adult Learning (LSAL), which reveal the prevalence of self-directed learning among adults, a process through which adults work on their own to improve their literacy proficiencies. In a long-term study of around 900 high school dropouts, Reder found that self-study emerged as an important means for adults to work on their own to prepare for the GED or improve reading, writing, or math skills. Among study respondents who had participated in formal adult education classes at some point, 46% had also engaged in self-study to improve their literacy or math skills or to prepare for the GED. Among respondents who had never participated in adult education classes, 34% had engaged in self-study to improve their basic skills. As Reder notes, for some adults, self-study precedes instruction, while for others it follows, or occurs simultaneously with instruction. Generally, self-study appears to be a bridge between periods of program participation, and facilitates persistence in learning.

The apparent prevalence of self-study suggests a broadening of the conception and design of adult literacy programs to support self-study in addition to providing classes. According to Reder (in press), doing so would allow adult literacy programs to serve more students, attract new students to classes, and increase the overall persistence of adult literacy learning. The LSAL findings also suggest the need for a broader conception of the adult literacy student to one who chooses from among a range of literacy development strategies and resources, including self-study, attending classes, and working with a tutor or mentor. Differing modes of learning, life circumstances, and accessibility of learning resources all shape student choices. Reder (in press) concludes that self-study should thus be seen as a continuum rather than a "polarized alternative" to attending classes and that programs need to expand services to support learning among adults engaged in self-study as well as classes.

Verification. Researchers can find evidence of this principle in action in a number of forms. They can look for documentation of organizational policies regarding the steps to be taken in cases where students miss classes. In addition, researchers might seek out evidence that action is actually taken to re-engage students (ProLiteracy Worldwide, 2004), as might be documented in phone logs, letters, or postcards sent to students. In addition, researchers might look for documentation of learning plans that accommodate periods of absence from a program and offer students alternatives for continuing their learning through self-study or some alternative means until return to a program is feasible. Though such a strategy might be difficult to implement, given the often limited resources of adult education programs, such an approach should be considered ideal and would, therefore, be an indication that a program takes seriously its role in trying to re-engage those students who find that circumstances prevent them from attending classes.

*36. **Support for Transitions:** Programs should be part of a network of appropriate support services for student transition to postsecondary education or training. This includes counseling strategies for boosting students' capacity to make informed choices*

about opportunities to continue their education via job training or a postsecondary program, or in a new setting (e.g., another program or employment).

Definition. Participation in an adult education program is generally viewed as a step in a longer process of achieving some kind of student goal. Often, achievement of such a goal requires movement within a program, or on to another type of service or learning opportunity. From the outset, students should view participation in a program as one such element along the path to attaining their goals. This principle ensures that an adult's learning path need not end once she or he has reached the highest level available in an adult education program, or obtained a GED or other credential. Supporting transitions for adult students requires that, as students progress toward achievement of their long-range goals, they have available the information necessary to select and move on to new opportunities, including training, education, and employment, and that they are prepared to be successful in these new environments. Thus, this principle comprises providing information to students to aid them in making choices about moves beyond a current program, as well as follow-up processes, which include maintaining records to track student outcomes beyond a program, and maintaining contact with students to provide additional support and counseling beyond the current program. In addition, support of student transitions requires that programs maintain linkages with outside agencies, including other adult education programs, postsecondary and training institutions, and employers.

Professional Wisdom. The need to support student transitions is supported by the professional wisdom literature (Hayes, n.d.; MILG, 1990; ProLiteracy Worldwide, 2004; Rance-Roney, 1995; Rosenberg, 2003; Stein, 1993; TESOL, 2000; Wiley, 1993). The Massachusetts Interagency Literacy Group (1990) recommends that "follow-up proactively connect adults to the next steps in their educational plans" (p. 10). This follow-up involves tracking the progress of students after they leave programs (for whatever reason), as well as supporting students "who have successfully moved on to a new setting, whether it be training, advanced education or employment" (p. 10). Stein (1993) recommends that there be processes and structures in place to "strengthen students' capacity to make choices about and to access continued education, training, employment opportunities when they leave the program" (p. 26). For instance, she suggests that programs provide "career counseling workshops and sessions to enable students to develop short and long term education and career plans based on problem-solving" (p. 26). To aid in this process, Stein supports the approach of giving students opportunities for first-hand experience of a range of different postprogram options, including higher education, technical training, and job placement. Such experiences might include, as Hayes (n.d.) suggests, job-shadowing in local businesses or volunteer opportunities in schools. As a means to monitor long-term outcomes of program participation once students have moved on, Stein (1993) suggests the use of monthly graduate support groups, as well as peer follow-up counselors to contact students at 6 and 12 months after leaving programs.

As noted above, support for student transitions requires that programs connect with other local institutions. White and Hoddinott (1991) point out the importance of programs being located near other adult education programs in order to foster transitions and stress the need for programs to "establish linkages with other adult education programs whether or not they are located in the same place" (p. 23). As Hayes (n.d.) points out, connections with local employers and postsecondary institutions can serve to keep opportunities apparent to students and to facilitate their "next steps" toward placement (p. 14).

While professional wisdom suggests the need for follow-up activities to both monitor and support student transitions, relatively little is written on precisely how this should be done. Alamprese (2004) reports that the approaches used by adult education programs to transition students to postsecondary education can be categorized into three types: (1) awareness and orientation activities, (2) counseling and referral, and (3) a comprehensive program model. *Awareness and orientation activities* generally involve dissemination of information regarding the college admissions and registration processes, financial aid, and college placement examinations. These activities are aimed at helping students to understand the requirements for admission, providing them with practice in completing forms, and assisting students to obtain financial and other types of support. A second approach to transition services involves *counseling and referral activities*, which focus on offering students individualized assistance in understanding the requirements for postsecondary participation; determining whether participation is feasible, given the individual's circumstances; providing encouragement; and identifying skills areas to be strengthened in order to qualify for admission to postsecondary education. The third approach consists of a *comprehensive program model*, which provides multiple services to prepare students for entry into college, including orientation, advising, study skills and time management, and academic preparation (Alamprese, 2004, p. 27).

A notable resource in the area of transitions is offered by the New England Literacy Resource Center (NELRC), which has compiled a document entitled, *Exemplary Practices for College Transition Programs Facilitated by Adult Basic Education Providers* (NELRC, 2004), based on the experiences of 25 transition programs involved in the New England ABE-to-College Transition project. The practices described cover issues of program planning, including student recruitment, intake, initial assessment, and orientation, as well as a suggested program design of "6 hours a week of instruction and 10-15 of counseling and coordination in 12-15 week cycles followed by two weeks of non-instructional time for planning and evaluation" (p. 4). Practices also include educational counseling, which includes facilitating workshops on topics such as college admissions and financial aid, career exploration, and time and stress management; maintaining relationships with representatives of collaborating colleges; and establishing mentoring relationships for transitioning students. With respect to curriculum and instruction, practices include having a 60-hour College Academic Skills component that "covers the reading, writing, pre-algebra and elementary algebra skills necessary for

academic success at the college level" (p. 9); 12 hours of personal computing (PC) instruction; as well as instructors who have a sound understanding of colleges' academic expectations and employ teaching approaches that accommodate diverse learning styles and modes. (The document also presents suggested course outlines for College Academic Skills, PC Skills, and College Survival Skills.) Finally, the authors stress the importance of establishing collaborative relationships with colleges and point out a number of specific ways that colleges can support transition programs, such as by facilitating the admissions and financial aid processes for transition students, performing pre- and postcollege placement testing and sharing the results with transition programs, and meeting with transition program staff to discuss transitioning student needs on an ongoing basis (NELRC, 2004).

Theory. No theory was found that supports or contradicts this principle.

Research. There is currently little research that specifically addresses the impact of transition services in adult basic education; however, a recent evaluation (Gittleman, 2005) of the New England ABE-to-College Transition Project provides some evidence of the value of successful transition programs. The evaluation included 21 programs aimed at preparing adult learners for postsecondary education. Results showed that, of the "168 students who completed the program, 69% (116) were enrolled in or expected to attend college in the fall, 2004" (p. 25). As the authors note, this figure is substantially higher than the percentage reported in previous research (Kroll, as cited in Gittleman, 2005), which found that only 27% of GED recipients were enrolled in postsecondary education programs 3 years after obtaining a GED. In addition, participating students noted that they felt better prepared to enroll and succeed in a postsecondary institution, particularly in the areas of "overall academic readiness, math, reading, writing skills, computer skills and knowledge about what college is like" (Gittleman, 2005, p. 26). Moreover, students felt that they were less likely to face financial barriers to attending college because of knowledge gained through participation in the program. The evaluation identified characteristics of highly collaborative and successful college partnerships: "strong relationships with appropriate people in the college who could effectively advocate and deliver services to students; partnerships that formed over significant time and were characterized by a high level of coordination; and knowledgeable and resourceful program staff" (p. 3).

Despite the paucity of research on the effect of transition programs, there is a body of research that suggests the value of obtaining postsecondary education, and thus provides support for the inclusion of transition services within adult education. A number of studies (Ferrer & Riddell, 2002; Gill & Leigh, 2003; Kane & Rouse, 1993, 1994; Leigh & Gill, 1997) have found a positive relationship between postsecondary education and earnings. In particular, Murnane, Willett, and Boudett (1997) found that among GED holders, each year of completed college was associated with a 10.8% higher hourly wage. Examining the effect of postsecondary education on high school graduates, Kane and

Rouse (1993) found that enrollment in 2- or 4-year colleges increases earnings by 5% to 8% per year of college credits, regardless of whether enrollees actually earn a degree. In a 1999 research review, Reder concluded that neither a high school diploma nor a GED is sufficient for success in the workforce. He points to the positive association between education and earnings and thus suggests that more emphasis be placed on efforts to support students in their transition from ABE programs to postsecondary education. He argues for stronger connections between adult education and remedial postsecondary educators since they are essentially serving the same pool of students, and recommends that educators from adult and postsecondary institutions work together to design transition programs that build skills for academic study, as well as for the adult roles of work, family, and citizenship.

Verification. In seeking demonstration of this principle, researchers should look for evidence related to the three key aspects of support for transitions: preparing students for transitions, establishing linkages with other institutions, and tracking student outcomes. First, researchers should look for evidence of opportunities for students to learn about other programs and learning or employment opportunities (TESOL, 2000). In addition, evaluators of a site should look for documentation of linkages with other agencies, such as lists of agencies that offer training or educational opportunities for students who are no longer suitable for the program (ProLiteracy Worldwide, 2004). Finally, researchers should look for evidence of tracking of students' activities beyond participation in a program, such as documentation of students' enrollment in and attendance at other educational and training programs, and documentation of follow-up interviews with students attending postsecondary education and training programs (TESOL, 2000).

CHAPTER SEVEN: RESEARCH AGENDA

The research agenda presented here builds on the foundation of the set of principles described in this monograph. The first step in a comprehensive research agenda based on this work would be:

1. To find programs that function under these principles, and then assess the educational outcomes and the positive impact on such aspects of participants' lives as employment, income, success of children in school, and community participation. This assessment could be done by an experiment that randomly assigns potential participants to program participation or to either denial of services or services in programs that do not function under these principles. If this is not possible, then a quasi-experimental assessment could employ a comparison group chosen because it is as close to the participant group as possible.

Once these programs are chosen, practitioners outside of these programs will be interested in how each program implements the principles. The second step in this agenda, therefore, would be:

2. Case studies that describe the many ways that each principle is successfully implemented.

This monograph does not set forth principles for curriculum that focuses on specific content. The third step in this agenda would be to test research-based curriculum for the major subgroups of adult education students. These tests would include:

3. Experimental or quasi-experimental studies that test specific curriculum for subgroups based on learning goals and learning needs. These subgroups might include: beginning ESOL students who are literate in their own language, GED students whose literacy and numeracy skills are above the 8th-grade level, pre-GED students whose literacy and numeracy skills are between the 5th- and 8th-grade level, beginning ESOL students who are not literate in their own language, and adults who speak English as their primary language but whose literacy and numeracy skills are below the 5th-grade level.

The limiting factor on most students' learning is persistence. The fourth step in this agenda would be:

4. The development and testing, with experimental or quasi-experimental studies, of support services and new approaches to the delivery of services that improve persistence rates.

All of the principles could benefit from research that leads to more precise definitions; however, some may be more important than others. The fifth step in this agenda, therefore, would be:

5. Tests, with experimental or quasi-experimental studies, of different specific definitions of some of the principles; for example, the principle on intensity and duration.

Since the resources available to programs are always going to be less than the population that needs services, and in many cases the population that seeks services, research should look at ways to lower the per-participant costs without compromising learning outcomes and positive impact. The sixth step in this agenda, therefore, would be:

6. The development and testing, with experimental or quasi-experimental studies, of approaches that lower per-participant cost without compromising learning outcomes and positive impact.

Some of the interventions that would be tested will require significant qualitative and quantitative research for their development and small-scale testing before they are ready for experimental or quasi-experimental studies. In addition, this simple outline needs more specificity, but it offers an approach to using the principles set out here as a framework for building a more effective adult education system that is based on rigorous research and the best available professional wisdom.

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APPENDIX: RESEARCH SITE IDENTIFICATION PROTOCOL (RSIP)

Overview

This appendix describes a tool, which we refer to as the *Research Site Identification Protocol (RSIP)*, that is based upon the principles presented in the main section of the monograph, *An Evidence-based Adult Education Program Model Appropriate for Research.* We designed the RSIP to help researchers identify adult education programs that might serve as effective sites for research. This overview provides a rationale for the development of the RSIP, goals for its use, a description of how to use the tool, and guidelines for interpreting the results based on an RSIP-based review.

Rationale for the Creation of the RSIP

The RSIP, in its design and conceptualization, builds on a framework developed by the National Center for Educational Accountability (NCEA) for use by K–12 schools in the United States that wish to examine their own practices and identify areas of needed school improvement. The NCEA framework is used to examine school-based practices at multiple levels, as is described here:

> The Framework *contains layers. The top layer of* The Framework *outlines the practices, the observable behaviors, of high-performing systems by school level— district, school, and classroom. Underlying layers of* The Framework *probe the attitudes, beliefs, climate, resource allocations and local influences that impact the way the practices are enacted at any particular high-performing school district.… [T]hese practices are not distinct from one another—they continually relate to, interact, and reinforce one another. But by beginning to adjust one practice in one theme or at one school level, you will automatically begin to create changes in other practices! (NCEA, n.d., no page number, on-line document)*

In adapting the NCEA framework, the RSIP seeks to emphasize that the success of adult education programs depends on the coordination of responsibilities across different domains; namely, program management, support services, and instructional services. Program managers, counselors, and instructors each have their areas of responsibility and expertise within a program, but increasingly, managers are called upon to act as instructional leaders, and teachers and counselors are called upon to serve as program leaders. The RSIP recognizes that the creation of high-quality adult education programs depends on staff collaboration as well as the effective distribution of responsibilities across program managers, counselors, and instructional staff (see Méndez-Morse, 1992).

Shown in Table 1, the RSIP provides an organizational framework that brings together two sets of criteria. One set, *Organizing Research Themes* (the left-hand column of Table 1)*,* addresses the criteria for evaluating good research designs; the second set, *Adult Education Program Themes* (the top row of Table 1), addresses the criteria evaluating effective adult education programs. By coordinating these two sets of criteria, the RSIP seeks to clarify how programs should think about their programming and practices, as well as provide guidance to researchers who wish to carry out a research project in the adult education context.

Each area of programming or practice is framed by a broadly stated question (see Table 1). In the pages that follow the RSIP table, each broad question is defined by a set of ten questions that researchers can use to gather and examine specific aspects of a program's design and services. The focus of these questions reflects the range of effective practices that have been gleaned from professional wisdom documents, theory, and research.

The NCEA framework does not presume that schools will be able to answer "yes" to all the questions posed in their self-audit tools, but developers assert that high-performing schools should be able to answer "yes" to a majority of the questions. The RSIP follows a similar line of thinking: Researchers may not find adult education programs that satisfy all the questions listed in the RSIP. However, in tabulating the number of affirmatives and negatives, researchers should be able to identify programs that satisfy a majority of the criteria and thus qualify the programs as potential sites for research.

Researchers may also use the profiles generated with the RSIP to match programs with research design. For example, a small program that institutes a managed-enrollment policy and has a strong record of student persistence rates may serve as a good site for an intervention study that relies on intact groups; a larger program that implements an open-enrollment policy and has several classes with diverse skill levels may serve as a good site for a cross-sectional design that examines individual differences in learning.

Goals of the RSIP

The RSIP is a tool for researchers, particularly those who are not familiar with the context of adult education programs and need to make informed decisions about their research designs and site selections. Currently, the adult education field does not have a tool that reflects a common set of criteria for characterizing program models. As a result, it is difficult to compare findings across studies because it is impossible to know how consistent the study data and results are across program sites. Inconsistent data may indicate that the findings are specific to the particular adult education program being studied. It is unrealistic to collect data on all adult education sites, just as it is

unproductive to rely on a few randomly chosen sites for research (see Light, Singer, & Willett, 1990). The RSIP makes it possible for researchers to select a manageable number of sites based on a meaningful set of criteria. Consumers of research, in turn, will be able to see that studies have been conducted in adult education programs that do not vary on criteria that make a profound difference in program quality. The RSIP may also increase the field's confidence in the generalizability of study findings because the tool will provide a vision of the kinds of programs in which the findings are applicable.

How to Use the RSIP

This section describes the parts of the RSIP in greater detail, and outlines how to use the tool to describe the programming and practices of an adult education program. This section covers the following topics:

- Explanation of terms and concepts referenced in the RSIP

- Guidelines for answering the list of questions that accompany each program component and using the verification lists

- Instructions for completing the RSIP worksheet

- Some options for adult education professionals who are interested in using the RSIP for program improvement purposes, rather than for research

Explanation of Terms and Concepts

As shown in Table 1, each row examines program planning, policies, and practices with respect to five aspects of research design. The first row in the table, *Supporting the Research Process* (abbreviated RP), helps the researcher understand whether an adult education program, as an organizational entity with inherent constraints on time, money, and attention, has the capacity to help answer the research questions. A good research design begins with a good research question (Light, Singer, & Willett, 1990). However, poor organizational management of a program will likely lead to unproductive allocation of time spent on research tasks, poor quality data collection, or ineffective distribution of responsibilities among staff who are recruited to help with the data collection. As indicated in the table, support for a research design can occur at the management level, at the support-services level, and the instructional-services level, which indicates that staff at all three levels contribute to the program's success as an organization. *Supporting the Research Process* appears in the first row to signal the foundational nature of this aspect of the RSIP protocol: Programs that will be optimally supportive of research processes will likely be those that know about best management practices, as well as good teaching/learning and support services.

A critical question of research design that motivates good sampling decisions is "To whom do we want to generalize?" Often, adult education research is interested in more than just the students involved in a particular study. Rather, research seeks to talk about how the findings are relevant to students not participating in the study and enrolled in other programs. A researcher's ability to generalize from findings of a study based in a program depends on a clear understanding of the population of students attending that program. In other words, the researcher has to know who she is generalizing *from* in order to know how to generalize *to* with confidence. To this end, the section *Sample Selection* (SS) (second row in Table 1) is designed to help the researcher understand more about the student population at a potential research site. Specifically, *Sample Selection* helps the researcher determine whether (1) the student population enrolled is the population the program is designed to serve, and (2) the support and instructional services are in line with the needs of the target population. The RSIP table indicates that the alignment of target population with program mission and services must occur at all three levels of program practice—management, support services, and instructional services.

Another challenge of research design, particularly for longitudinal studies, is sample attrition, referring to the loss of study participants before the data collection and analysis has been completed. Sample attrition can also be a problem for quasi-experimental designs that rely on a treatment/control comparison. If attrition patterns differ for the treatment and control groups, then the researcher cannot say with confidence that the groups are similar. The RSIP includes a section called *Sample Attrition* (SA) because the problem of sample attrition will be minimized in programs that effectively promote student participation and persistence. As part of the research process, a researcher needs to devote time, money, and personnel resources to maintain contact and develop rapport with study participants over time. A program that demonstrates a strong commitment to nurturing student participation and persistence will likely be a good research site as it will already be accustomed to those practices that are integral to maintaining a good sample (e.g., a student attendance monitoring system, frequent communication with students). As indicated in the RSIP table, these practices that support student participation and persistence are the responsibility of staff at different levels, including program managers, counselors, and instructional staff.

The fourth row, *Implementation of the Research Design* (IR), addresses general feasibility considerations regarding the actual implementation of the research design. While the section *Supporting the Research Process* (Table 1, first row) helps the researcher to determine whether a program has the capacity as an organization to function as a research site, the section *Implementation of the Research Design* (IR) helps the researcher determine whether a program has the resources to carry out the research design. Specifically, the questions listed in this section allow the researcher to understand whether a program is equipped to implement its mission, as well as its curriculum and support services. Programs with this capacity have staff that includes effective managers, counselors, and instructors. Staff must be able to make decisions based on student needs,

problem-solve, and adapt to particular contexts in order to effectively manage the program and provide support and instruction. However, qualified staff is unlikely to be successful in programs with weak organizational plans, an inadequate network of support services, or lax implementation of its curriculum.

Finally, the last row, labeled *Data Collection* (DC), addresses the use of measurement tools and the gathering of information needed to answer research questions. In the row labeled *Data Collection,* the RSIP protocol suggests that the capacity to gather information is required at the level of program management, the level of support services, and the level of instructional services. The questions that accompany the *Data Collection* sections should enable a researcher to determine what kind of data may be readily available as part of the program's current reporting system, what kind of data the researcher may need to collect as part of the research design, and what kind of data may be impossible to collect due to programmatic constraints and will thus require the researcher's analytic interpretation.

Guidelines for Answering the Questions and Using the Verification Lists

For each program component featured in the RSIP grid (Table 1), a list of 10 questions is provided. These questions serve as the means through which the researcher can analyze a program's practices in order to determine its suitability as a research site. For each question, the researcher is asked to indicate an answer of "yes" or "no." Responses to the protocol questions were designed to be answered in a dichotomous fashion, since for the purposes of research site identification, it is most important to understand whether a program demonstrates the quality in question. At the same time, we recognize that, for the purposes of program improvement, it may be more useful to allow answers that range from "strongly evident" to "not evident at all" (see below for related discussion on this point).

In order to answer the protocol questions, the researcher should use multiple sources of information. A list of possible sources for verification of information necessary to answer each set of questions is provided. As noted in these lists, many of the questions covered by the protocol can be addressed through interviews with program staff. However, the researcher is encouraged to supplement this information with additional sources, such as reports, forms, teaching materials, and other documents that offer insights into the program's policies and practices. Whenever feasible, it is helpful for the researcher to make observations of the physical setting of a program, as well as activities that take place therein.

Instructions for Completing the RSIP Worksheet

Researchers should attempt to answer all questions included in the protocol. If a question cannot be answered, for whatever reason, researchers should move on to the next question. Once all questions have been addressed, researchers should tally the number of "yes" responses for each program component and record the number in the box at the end of each series of questions. The totals for all the program components in the RSIP should then be transferred to the *RSIP Summary Sheet*, located at the end of the protocol. For each component in the RSIP grid, researchers should record the total number of "yes" answers in the appropriate shaded area. In the final column of the summary sheet, researchers should record a row total, out of a possible 30.

Optional Approach: Using the RSIP for Program Improvement Purposes

Although designed as a tool for identifying sites for research in adult education, the RSIP may also be used as an instrument for guiding program improvement. In using the protocol for this purpose, program staff may wish to answer the questions in terms of *degree* to which a programming quality or practice is evident, rather than whether or not it is present. For example, instead of "yes" or "no" answers, the staff may wish to substitute a scale of answers such as 1 to 5, with 1 being "weak" and 5 being "strong," or provide some other framework for answers to allow for a more nuanced analysis of program components and activities.

Guidelines for Interpreting the Results

Scores obtained through the RSIP are not intended as a definitive measure of a program's quality; rather, they are meant to provide a preliminary indication of whether or not a program is of sufficient quality to serve as a research site. Researchers will want to examine the summary grid and determine areas of program strength and weakness and their relevance to the research project. The weight of each area covered by the protocol will vary, based on the nature of the proposed research (i.e., the focus of the research question and the demands of the research design). For instance, if a program does not score well on curriculum indicators, it may still be a suitable site for research on some other aspect of adult education, such as persistence, where curriculum may be of less importance than other program qualities. The final determination of a program's suitability as a research site should be determined by the requirements of the research questions and design.

Finally, if a researcher chooses to base his research in a program that is marginally acceptable, the RSIP will provide the researcher with a sense of possible shortcomings in the program's practices and activities that may influence the quality of the research findings. The researcher will need to account for the possibility that those areas in need of improvement may influence study findings. As such, the researcher may

want to test for areas of potential influence in the study findings or acknowledge those areas needing improvement as possible limitations on the generalizability of the study results.

References

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Table 1: Research Site Identification Protocol (RSIP)

Organizing Research Themes	*Adult Education Program Themes*		
	Program Management (PM)	**Support Services (SS)**	**Instructional Services (IS)**
Supporting the Research Process (RP)	Does the program have a plan for effectively managing its staff, resources, and funds?	Does the program have a network of support services to help students succeed?	Is there an organized curriculum that addresses student needs?
Sample Selection (SS) (i.e., are the right people in this program?)	Is there a clear policy about the program's goals and the population it intends to serve?	Are support services appropriately designed to meet the support needs of the target population?	Are instructional services appropriately designed to meet the learning needs of the target population?
Sample Attrition (SA) (i.e., are the learners going to stay?)	Is there a clear policy aimed at supporting student participation and persistence?	Are support services designed to promote student participation and persistence?	Are instructional services designed to promote student participation and persistence?
Implementation of the Research Design (IR)	Is the program equipped with the staff and resources needed to successfully carry out its programmatic and curricular goals?	Is the program equipped with the staff and resources needed to successfully deliver support services?	Is the program equipped with the staff and resources needed to successfully implement the curriculum?
Data Collection (DC)	Is there a clear policy regarding the collection and use of program and student data?	Are support services aligned with the program's data-collection system?	Are instructional services aligned with assessment measures and other tools used to assess student progress and achievement?

Does the program have a plan for effectively managing its staff, resources, and funds?

Research Focus: *Supporting the Research Process*
Programmatic Focus: *Program Management*

	YES	NO
1. Does the program have a governing body that oversees program activities, meets regularly, and represents the local community?	☐	☐
2. Does the program engage in a regular planning process, through which it sets goals, measures attainment of goals, and revises goals accordingly?	☐	☐
3. Does the program maintain a budget plan, and is it able to manage its financial resources effectively?	☐	☐
4. Does the program have sustainable funding?	☐	☐
5. Does the program have a process for recruiting and hiring its instructional and support staff?	☐	☐
6. Does the program have a plan for acquiring and maintaining an appropriate selection of materials and resources for learning?	☐	☐
7. Does the program, as much as possible, strive to provide instructors with well-supported jobs, defined as "full-time, relatively well-paid, and stable jobs that include benefits, … paid preparation time, and paid professional development release time" (Smith et al., 2003, p. 2)?	☐	☐
8. Does the program have a professional development plan that provides staff with opportunities to receive training, practice new skills, and receive feedback on their teaching?	☐	☐
9. Does the program maintain a suitable physical environment that is safe and comfortable for students and staff?	☐	☐
10. Do the program administrators and staff demonstrate a strong commitment to the creation of a high-quality adult education program?	☐	☐

Suggested sources for verification:

- Interview program administrators about planning processes, financial management, hiring practices, professional development plans
- Review documents that pertain to planning processes, financial management, hiring practices, professional development plans
- Observe program facilities, including classroom spaces, resource center, teacher work spaces
- Review agendas of meetings held with other community organizations and agencies

Supporting the research process / program management   Total # Yes _____

Does the program have a network of support services to help students succeed?

Research Focus: *Supporting the Research Process*
Programmatic Focus: *Support Services*

	YES	NO
1. Does the program have a clear and purposeful system for identifying students' needs for support services?	☐	☐
2. Does the program provide an appropriate array of support services or, when necessary, make these services available through referral to other agencies?	☐	☐
3. Does the program have a process for hiring counselors and other support staff based on the support needs of the students?	☐	☐
4. Is there a professional development plan for counselors and other support staff to acquire and develop skills in counseling and other support services?	☐	☐
5. Do counselors and other support staff have regular opportunities to talk to instructors about students' support needs?	☐	☐
6. Is there a clear process in place for counselors and support staff to discuss changes in support services when necessary?	☐	☐
7. Does the program keep the students informed about the array of support services that are available to them through the program?	☐	☐
8. Do the counselors and other support staff demonstrate respect for the diversity of students' backgrounds and cultures?	☐	☐
9. Do the counselors and other support staff protect the confidentiality of students?	☐	☐
10. Do the counselors and other support staff demonstrate a strong commitment to the creation of high-quality support services?	☐	☐

Suggested sources for verification:

- Interview counselors and other support staff
- Review professional development plans for counselors and support staff
- Review forms and procedures used for counseling and other support services
- Review list of support services and related agencies

Supporting the research process / support services   Total # Yes _____

Is there an organized curriculum that addresses student needs?

Research Focus: *Supporting the Research Process*
Programmatic Focus: *Instructional Services*

	YES	*NO*
1. Does the program have, for each instructional offering, an organized curriculum plan that addresses the students' needs and goals?	☐	☐
2. Do these curriculum plans specify exactly what students are expected to know and be able to do at each instructional level?	☐	☐
3. Are these curriculum plans shared with the students and other stakeholders for feedback?	☐	☐
4. Have these curriculum plans been developed so that students are able to advance once they have mastered the instructional goals at a particular level?	☐	☐
5. Can instructors identify ways they implement curriculum plans in their classroom teaching?	☐	☐
6. Are the curriculum plans linked to the program's professional development plans?	☐	☐
7. Is there a process for continual review of the program's curriculum plans?	☐	☐
8. Are there teaching materials and resources available to be able to implement the curriculum plans?	☐	☐
9. Are the curriculum plans linked to assessment plans?	☐	☐
10. Do the instructors demonstrate a strong commitment to the creation of high-quality curriculum plans?	☐	☐

Suggested sources for verification:

- Interview program administrators and instructors about curriculum plans
- Review documents related to curriculum plans
- Interview instructors about how they implement the curriculum
- Ask to view course outlines
- Ask to view curriculum materials and resources

Supporting the research process / instructional services   Total # Yes _____

Is there a clear policy about the program's goals and the population it intends to serve?

Research Focus: *Sample Selection*
Programmatic Focus: *Program Management*

	YES	NO
1. Is there a mission statement and philosophy that specifies how the program seeks to address the needs of the target population?	☐	☐
2. Is the mission and philosophy informed by the input of multiple stakeholders (staff, students, and related institutions) and an awareness of local community needs?	☐	☐
3. Is the mission and philosophy written down and made available to students, instructors, and other stakeholders?	☐	☐
4. Can program staff (instructors, counselors, and administrators) identify ways that their work with the students is fulfilling the program's mission and philosophy?	☐	☐
5. Does informational material about the program—e.g., brochures, public service announcements, Web sites—convey the mission statement and philosophy of the program?	☐	☐
6. Does the program's mission and philosophy guide the program's recruitment decisions (i.e., whom to recruit)?	☐	☐
7. Does the program have an intake and orientation process that is designed to provide the target population with information about the program's mission and philosophy?	☐	☐
8. Are the program's support services aligned with the program's mission and philosophy?	☐	☐
9. Are the program's instructional services aligned with the program's mission and philosophy?	☐	☐
10. Is there a process for continual review of the program's mission and philosophy in response to the needs of the target population?	☐	☐

Suggested sources for verification:

- Review program brochures, program descriptions, grant proposals
- Interview instructors and administrators about the mission, philosophy, and goals of the program

Sample selection / program management   Total # Yes _____

Are support services appropriately designed to meet the support needs of the target population?

Research Focus: *Sample Selection*
Programmatic Focus: *Support Services*

	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>
1. Does the program have an array of counseling and support services that directly address the needs of the target population?	☐	☐
2. Do the program's intake processes help to identify the support needs of the target population?	☐	☐
3. Is the program able to conduct intake, counseling, and other support services in other languages if needed by the target population?	☐	☐
4. Does the program use a variety of approaches to deliver support services that meet the needs of the target population (e.g., face-to-face counseling, peer counseling, hotlines)?	☐	☐
5. Are counseling and other support staff able to articulate the particular support needs of the target population?	☐	☐
6. Do newly enrolled students work with counselors and other support staff to develop a plan that addresses their support needs?	☐	☐
7. Do counselors and other support staff share relevant information about students' support needs with the students' instructors?	☐	☐
8. Is there ongoing professional development for counseling and other support staff about how to identify and address students' need for support services?	☐	☐
9. Are counselors and other support staff prepared to respond to cases where there is no match between program services and student support needs?	☐	☐
10. Is there a process for periodic review of intake, counseling, and other support services to respond to changing needs of the target population?	☐	☐

Suggested sources for verification:
- Review support system plan and, if available, any data on number and types of support services provided to the students
- Review data about the number of students who obtain specific needed services, either through the program or referral
- Review student referral forms or referral plans (if possible, completed forms)
- Review lists of referral agencies connected to the program, or other documentation that indicates agreements or linkages between the program and other service providers
- Interview counselors, instructors, and other staff responsible for handling support services

Sample selection / support services   Total # Yes _____

Are instructional services appropriately designed to meet the learning needs of the target population?

Research Focus: *Sample Selection*
Programmatic Focus: *Instructional Services*

	YES	NO
1. Does the program offer an appropriate array of instructional levels and class types (e.g., ESOL, ABE, GED) to meet the needs of the target population?	☐	☐
2. Does the program offer an appropriate array of modes of engagement in learning (e.g., classroom instruction, tutoring, self-study) to meet the needs of the target population?	☐	☐
3. Are assessments used to diagnose and place students into instructional levels, classes, and learning modes (e.g., classroom instruction, tutoring, self-study) that best meet their needs?	☐	☐
4. Does the instructional staff have the skills and qualifications to teach the target population?	☐	☐
5. Is the program equipped with adequate resources and teaching materials to meet the learning needs of the target population?	☐	☐
6. Are the teaching materials and activities used with the students selected based on their proven effectiveness with similar populations?	☐	☐
7. Is there a clear process in place for instructors to discuss instructional improvements when the needs of the target population change?	☐	☐
8. Is there ongoing professional development and training for instructional staff about the learning needs of the target population?	☐	☐
9. Do instructors share relevant information about students' learning needs with the students' counselors and other support staff?	☐	☐
10. Are instructors prepared to respond to cases where there is no match between program services and students' learning needs?	☐	☐

Suggested sources for verification:
- Interview instructors and administrators about how they identify and address the instructional needs of a student when she first enrolls
- Review the program's assessment plans, in particular the various assessment tools used to diagnose and place students
- Observe various learning contexts (e.g., classrooms, tutoring contexts, self-study) to look for the use of evidence-based practices
- Review instructional materials to identify ways that the instruction is aligned with students' instructional needs
- Review professional development plans that train instructors to identify and address the instructional needs of their students

Sample selection / instructional services   Total # Yes _____

Is there a clear policy aimed at supporting student participation and persistence?

Research Focus: *Sample Attrition*
Programmatic Focus: *Program Management*

		YES	NO
1.	Does the program have a clear policy for monitoring the participation and persistence patterns of its students?	☐	☐
2.	Does the program have a plan to support student engagement, which includes participation in the classroom, as well as in self-study and other learning activities?	☐	☐
3.	Does the program have a process for identifying and responding to students' barriers to participation and persistence?	☐	☐
4.	Does the program have a clear policy for addressing the needs and interests of students on wait lists?	☐	☐
5.	Does the program have a clear policy for addressing the needs and concerns of students who have dropped out or stopped out?	☐	☐
6.	Does the program aim to ensure that all services that have led to increased participation and persistence are replicated from year to year?	☐	☐
7.	Is information about participation and persistence patterns shared with instructors, students, and other stakeholders?	☐	☐
8.	Are classrooms, for the most part, unaffected by attrition issues?	☐	☐
9.	Is there a clear process for the program staff to discuss and respond to participation and persistence issues if a problem arises?	☐	☐
10.	Does the program strive to use evidence-based practices that promote student participation and persistence (e.g., recognizing student achievement, involving students in curriculum decisions)?	☐	☐

Suggested sources for verification:

- Interview program administrators to determine what measures the program takes to monitor participation and persistence
- Review documentation of organizational policies establishing acceptable or target levels of retention of students (e.g., 65%), processes and procedures to measure retention, as well as actual data collected on dropout and retention
- Review samples of forms and procedures (e.g., phone logs, letters or postcards, exit interviews) used by the organization when retention levels are not met

Sample attrition / program management   Total # Yes _____

Are support services designed to promote student participation and persistence?

Research Focus: *Sample Attrition*
Programmatic Focus: *Support Services*

		<u>*YES*</u>	<u>*NO*</u>
1.	Do students have access to an array of support services that are designed to increase participation and persistence?	☐	☐
2.	Do students who are on wait lists have access to support services that are designed to sustain their interest in participating in the program?	☐	☐
3.	Do students who have left the program (i.e., have dropped out or stopped out) have access to support services that are designed to renew their interest in participating in the program?	☐	☐
4.	Do the counseling and other support staff have the skills to support student participation and persistence?	☐	☐
5.	Do counselors and instructional staff make use of evidence-based practices (e.g., goal-setting, time management, recognizing achievement) that promote student participation and persistence?	☐	☐
6.	Is there ongoing professional development and training for counseling and other support staff about participation patterns and persistence issues?	☐	☐
7.	Do counselors and other support staff have an opportunity to discuss and problem-solve in response to participation and persistence issues when the need arises?	☐	☐
8.	Are students aware that counselors and other support staff are available to discuss any problems they are encountering with getting to and from the program, or staying in the program?	☐	☐
9.	Do former or current students play a role in mentoring other students to help them persist in their learning?	☐	☐
10.	Is there a process for periodic review of support services in response to changing student needs?	☐	☐

Suggested source for verification:

- Interview counselors and other support staff to determine what measures the program takes to monitor participation and persistence

Sample attrition / support services   Total # Yes _____

Are instructional services designed to promote student participation and persistence?

Research Focus: *Sample Attrition*
Programmatic Focus: *Instructional Services*

	YES	*NO*
1. Are the instructional staff aware of evidence-based practices and strategies (e.g., active learning, differentiated instruction) that promote student participation and persistence?	☐	☐
2. Does the instructional staff make use of these practices and strategies with all students?	☐	☐
3. Is there ongoing professional development for instructional staff about the nature of student participation and persistence?	☐	☐
4. Does the pacing of instruction in the program allow students to acquire prerequisite skills needed for more advanced work, in effect promoting persistence in learning?	☐	☐
5. Is there a process for periodic review of instructional methods and approaches based on an understanding of students' evolving learning goals and needs?	☐	☐
6. Does the instructional staff take steps to recognize student progress and achievement, in effect promoting persistence in learning?	☐	☐
7. Does the instructional staff have opportunities to discuss and problem-solve in response to participation and persistence issues in the classroom when the need arises?	☐	☐
8. Is the instructional staff able to identify possible points in the learning process when students are most likely to reach a learning plateau?	☐	☐
9. Does the instructional staff have a system for keeping track of attendance and following up with those students with erratic attendance patterns?	☐	☐
10. Is there a process for instructional staff to review their teaching methods and materials when participation and persistence problems arise?	☐	☐

Suggested sources for verification:

- Interview instructional support staff to determine what methods, techniques, and materials they use to monitor participation and persistence in their teaching
- Observe various instructional contexts (e.g., classrooms, tutoring contexts, self-study) to look for the use of evidence-based practices that support persistence and participation

Sample attrition / instructional services   Total # Yes _____

Is the program equipped with the staff and resources needed to successfully carry out its programmatic and curricular goals?

Research Focus: *Implementation of the Research Design*
Programmatic Focus: *Program Management*

		<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>
1.	Do program directors and management staff demonstrate commitment to the program's mission and goals in their management practices?	☐	☐
2.	Do program directors and management staff demonstrate effective management of the organization's operations and resources?	☐	☐
3.	Do program directors and management staff understand and feel capable of responding to the larger socioeconomic, political, and cultural context in which the program exists?	☐	☐
4.	Do program directors and management staff work toward the creation of a program that is conducive to adult learning and staff professional growth?	☐	☐
5.	Do program directors and management staff develop and maintain collaborative relationships that support the program's mission and goals?	☐	☐
6.	Do program directors and management staff know how to make good staffing decisions?	☐	☐
7.	Do program directors and management staff provide opportunities for the instructors and counselors to improve their professional practices?	☐	☐
8.	Are program directors and management staff skilled in providing regular supervision and evaluation of the teaching staff?	☐	☐
9.	Do program directors and management staff demonstrate good communication skills with the instructional and support staff, the students, and other stakeholders?	☐	☐
10.	Do program directors and management staff demonstrate a commitment to continually improving their own professional practices in response to the needs of the program?	☐	☐

Suggested sources for verification:

- Interview program directors and management staff about vision for the program and management practices
- Observe staff meetings
- Review forms that are used to document occasions when the staff receives feedback from program directors
- Review copies of instructor supervision protocols

Implementation of the research design / program management   Total # Yes _____

Is the program equipped with the staff and resources needed to successfully deliver support services?

Research Focus: *Implementation of the Research Design*
Programmatic Focus: *Support Services*

		YES	*NO*
1.	Do program counselors and support staff demonstrate commitment to the program's mission and goals in their work with the students?	☐	☐
2.	Are the counselors and support staff familiar with the full array of the program's support services (including in-house services and those available by referral) to be able to provide accurate and useful information?	☐	☐
3.	Are the counselors and support staff familiar with the full array of educational options that a student could be advised to pursue, within and beyond the program?	☐	☐
4.	Do counselors and support staff know how to effectively organize and conduct intake and orientation sessions?	☐	☐
5.	Do counselors and support staff know a range of approaches for helping students identify long- and short-term goals, as well as for helping them to problem-solve?	☐	☐
6.	Do counselors and support staff demonstrate effective listening and communication skills with students?	☐	☐
7.	Do counselors and support staff know how and when to adjust their interactions with students in response to individual differences in communication styles?	☐	☐
8.	Do counselors and support staff maintain well-organized records of their interactions with the students?	☐	☐
9.	Do counselors and support staff demonstrate good communication skills with the management and instructional staff, the students, and other stakeholders?	☐	☐
10.	Do counselors and support staff demonstrate a commitment to continually improving their own professional practices in response to students' support needs?	☐	☐

Suggested sources for verification:
- Interview counselors and support staff about their practice (e.g., how they help students to problem-solve or identify goals)
- Observe intake and orientation sessions
- Review documents that outline the various approaches counselors and support staff are encouraged to use when working with students
- Review (blinded) records that document interactions between students and support staff

Implementation of the research design / support services   Total # Yes _____

Is the program equipped with the staff and resources needed to successfully implement the curriculum?

Research Focus: *Implementation of the Research Design*
Programmatic Focus: *Instructional Services*

		YES	*NO*
1.	Does the instructional staff demonstrate commitment to the program's mission and goals in their teaching?	☐	☐
2.	Are instructors skilled in a range of instructional approaches appropriate to their students' skill levels, goals, and learning styles?	☐	☐
3.	Do instructors take clear steps to foster a learning environment that is conducive to adult learning?	☐	☐
4.	Do instructors know how to design instructional tasks that are relevant and meaningful to students' life contexts?	☐	☐
5.	Do instructors know how to effectively develop and carry out a lesson plan?	☐	☐
6.	Do instructors know how and when to adapt their teaching style in response to individual differences in students' learning styles?	☐	☐
7.	Do instructors know how to select appropriate materials and resources for use with their students?	☐	☐
8.	Do instructors maintain well-organized records of their teaching and students' progress?	☐	☐
9.	Do instructors encourage students' active learning, i.e., defined as learning that involves students "doing things and thinking about the things they are doing" (Bonwell & Eison, 1991, p. 2)?	☐	☐
10.	Do instructors demonstrate a commitment to continually improving their own professional practices in response to students' instructional needs?	☐	☐

Suggested sources of verification:

- Interview instructors about their practice
- Observe various instructional contexts (e.g., whole classroom, tutoring, learning centers)
- Review sample lesson plans
- Review learning materials and resources to see if they support implementation of the curriculum

Implementation of the research design / instructional services   Total # Yes _____

Is there a clear policy regarding the collection and use of program and student data?

> Research Focus: *Data Collection*
> Programmatic Focus: *Program Management*

	YES	NO
1. Does the program have in place organized systems for collecting, managing, and reporting data?	☐	☐
2. Are resources allocated to support the collection, management, and reporting of data?	☐	☐
3. Does the program take steps to ensure that all staff are trained on data-collection procedures?	☐	☐
4. Do staff and students have an opportunity to contribute to the development and implementation of the data-collection process?	☐	☐
5. Are the data collected used to inform planning, evaluation, program improvement, and instructional offerings?	☐	☐
6. Does the program collect data on students (e.g., demographics, goals, attendance, test scores, and outcomes), personnel, program activities, program operations, and community information?	☐	☐
7. Are data collected on a regular and timely basis?	☐	☐
8. Does the program have explicit policies regarding confidentiality in the collection and use of data?	☐	☐
9. Are the appropriate data made available for staff and students on a regular and timely basis?	☐	☐
10. Are program data regularly reported to the program's governing body and other entities to which the program is accountable?	☐	☐

Suggested sources of verification:

- Interview staff to learn about the data-collection system and types of data gathered
- Review examples of reports that make use of data collected
- Review evidence of data-collection training (meeting minutes, workshop outlines, etc.)

Data collection / program management   Total # Yes _____

Are support services aligned with the program's data-collection system?

> Research Focus: *Data Collection*
> Programmatic Focus: *Support Services*

	YES	*NO*
1. Are counselors and other staff trained in the collection and reporting of data on support services?	☐	☐
2. Do counselors and support staff keep a well-organized file of data on support services?	☐	☐
3. Are data regularly collected on the students' use of support services, within and outside the program?	☐	☐
4. Are data regularly collected to determine the effectiveness of counseling and support services?	☐	☐
5. Is there a clear process in place for counselors and support staff to discuss changes in support services in response to data collected on support services?	☐	☐
6. Are data regularly collected on the duration and intensity of student persistence?	☐	☐
7. Is additional information gathered on reasons for student departure and factors that support or impede student persistence?	☐	☐
8. Are data collected on student transitions to other programs, employment, and/or postsecondary education?	☐	☐
9. Are data on persistence, transitions, and reasons for departure reported to staff and students on a regular and timely basis?	☐	☐
10. Are data on persistence, transitions, and reasons for departure used to guide modification and improvement of counseling and support services?		

Suggested sources of verification:

- Interview counselors and other support staff to learn about data-collection procedures
- Review reports containing data on student persistence and transitions
- Review reports containing data on support service use and effectiveness
- Review support service plans

Data collection / support services   Total # Yes _____

Are instructional services aligned with assessment measures and other tools used to assess student progress and achievement?

Research Focus: *Data Collection*	
Programmatic Focus: *Instructional Services*	

	YES	*NO*
1. Is teaching staff trained in the use of multiple forms of assessment and reporting of results?	☐	☐
2. Does the program have in place an assessment policy that is aligned with instructional goals and student needs?	☐	☐
3. Are assessments used to diagnose student needs and determine appropriate student placement?	☐	☐
4. Do assessment tools provide clear indicators of student progress and outcomes?	☐	☐
5. Are assessments used to determine appropriate student transitions across levels?	☐	☐
6. Are multiple forms of assessment employed for different purposes, including instruction, benchmarking, evaluation, and external reporting?	☐	☐
7. Are assessment results regularly used by instructors to determine how best to meet student needs?	☐	☐
8. Does the teaching staff keep a well-organized file of data on instructional services?	☐	☐
9. Are assessment results regularly shared with students so that they may understand their progress and help determine next steps?	☐	☐
10. Are assessment results regularly reported at the program level in order to guide planning and evaluation processes?	☐	☐

Suggested sources of verification:

- Review an assessment plan
- Review multiple forms of student assessment
- Review records that show that placement, progress, and exit from the program are based on a variety of appropriate assessments (e.g., standardized tests, program-designed pre- and posttests, checklist of completed competencies, writing samples, portfolio of student work)

Data collection / instructional services   Total # Yes _____

Table 2: Research Site Identification Protocol (RSIP)
Summary Sheet–*for use by the reviewer*

	Adult Education Program Themes			
Organizing Research Themes	**Program Management (PM)**	**Support Services (SS)**	**Instructional Services (IS)**	**Row Total**
Supporting the Research Process (RP)	Does the program have a plan for effectively managing its staff, resources, and funds?	Does the program have a network of support services to help students succeed?	Is there an organized curriculum that addresses student needs?	
Total Answered Yes:				
Sample Selection (SS) (i.e., are the right people in this program?)	Is there a clear policy about the program's goals and the population it intends to serve?	Are support services appropriately designed to meet the support needs of the target population?	Are instructional services appropriately designed to meet the learning needs of the target population?	
Total Answered Yes:				
Sample Attrition (SA) (i.e., are the learners going to stay?)	Is there a clear policy aimed at supporting student participation and persistence?	Are support services designed to promote student participation and persistence?	Are instructional services designed to promote student participation and persistence?	
Total Answered Yes:				
Implementation of the Research Design (IR)	Is the program equipped with the staff and resources needed to successfully carry out its programmatic and curricular goals?	Is the program equipped with the staff and resources needed to successfully deliver support services?	Is the program equipped with the staff and resources needed to successfully implement the curriculum?	
Total Answered Yes:				
Data Collection (DC)	Is there a clear policy regarding the collection and use of program and student data?	Are support services aligned with the program's data-collection system?	Are instructional services aligned with assessment measures and other tools used to assess student progress and achievement?	
Total Answered Yes:				

National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy

NCSALL's Mission

NCSALL's purpose is to improve practice in educational programs that serve adults with limited literacy and English language skills, and those without a high school diploma. NCSALL is meeting this purpose through basic and applied research, dissemination of research findings, and leadership within the field of adult learning and literacy.

NCSALL is a collaborative effort between the Harvard Graduate School of Education, World Education, The Center for Literacy Studies at The University of Tennessee, Rutgers University, and Portland State University. NCSALL is funded by the U.S. Department of Education through its Institute of Education Sciences (formerly Office of Educational Research and Improvement).

NCSALL's Research Projects

The goal of NCSALL's research is to provide information that is used to improve practice in programs that offer adult basic education, English for speakers of other languages, and adult secondary education services. In pursuit of this goal, NCSALL has undertaken research projects in four areas: (1) learner persistence, (2) instructional practice and the teaching/learning interaction, (3) professional development, and (4) assessment.

NCSALL's Dissemination Initiative

NCSALL's dissemination initiative focuses on ensuring that practitioners, administrators, policy makers, and scholars of adult education can access, understand, judge and use research findings. NCSALL publishes *Focus on Basics,* a quarterly magazine for practitioners; *Focus on Policy,* a twice-yearly magazine for policy makers; *Review of Adult Learning and Literacy,* an annual scholarly review of major issues, current research, and best practices; and *NCSALL Reports* and *Occasional Papers,* periodic publications of research reports and articles. In addition, NCSALL sponsors the Connecting Practice, Policy, and Research Initiative, designed to help practitioners and policy makers apply findings from research in their instructional settings and programs.

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