



Implementing Standards-based Instruction in Virginia:

A Technical Assistance Roadmap

Last update: March 2020 – Our journey is a work in progress!

Instructional standards provide clear expectations for educators and learners and help ensure all adult learners have access to rigorous instruction that supports them in developing the skills to succeed in postsecondary training, work, and citizenship. Virginia’s publicly-funded adult education programs are expected to demonstrate full implementation of standards-based instruction (SBI) in all classes. **What is Virginia’s definition of full implementation?**

Full implementation of standards-based instruction means that all adult education programs are prepared to deliver instruction aligned to and addressing all levels of state-adopted instructional standards. Standards-based instruction demonstrates College and Career Readiness [key advances](#) and meets the expectations set by the [core actions](#) of the Standards-in-Action observation tools. Organizational leadership, policies, and practices support the conditions necessary for the effective and sustainable implementation of standards-based instruction to maximize student learning in adult education classrooms across the Commonwealth.

Q: What are Virginia’s state-adopted instructional standards?

A: The [College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education \(CCRS\)](#) are Virginia’s state-adopted standards for adult education instruction. For ESOL instruction and other classes that include English language learners, teachers are encouraged to consult and use the [English Language Proficiency Standards \(ELPS\)](#), which provide standards and guidance for supporting language learners in reaching college and career readiness goals.

Q: What are the Standards-in-Action observation tools?

A: For ABE/ASE instruction, they are the CCR Observation Tools for [English Language Arts/Literacy](#) and [Mathematics](#). In classrooms where teachers use the ELPS for instruction on English language acquisition, the use of the [CCRS+ELPS Observation Tool for English Language Acquisition](#) is encouraged. These tools, in conjunction with the [Aggregation and Summary of Observation Data Tool](#), are designed to support instructors and programs in implementing standards and are not designed for evaluation.

This roadmap collects resources related to three crucial elements of standards-based instruction implementation: *program design, instruction, and professional development.*

Program Design

Standards-based instruction is not just something that happens in the classroom. Program managers equip both students and teachers for success when they acknowledge SBI as the foundation for adult education programming and include supports for successful SBI implementation in their program design.

Organizational leaders who take a positive, can-do approach to standards implementation spread the vision that leads to higher expectations and stronger outcomes for students.

Q: How can program leaders learn more about SBI and supporting full implementation?

A: Information about standards and standards-based instruction will continue to be made available through statewide program management technical assistance events.

Technical assistance continues to be available from the state Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education as well as the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center (VALRC).

Q: How will implementation of standards-based instruction be evaluated and assessed?

A: Program managers can expect to see standards-based instruction included in statewide monitoring and technical assistance efforts. The *Adult Education and Literacy Program Self-Assessment* asks programs to consider whether SBI is delivered, whether the Standards-in-Action observation tools are being used, and how the program is leveraging collaborative planning and professional development to continuously improve SBI implementation. Evidence of standards-based instruction is evaluated during Virginia Department of Education site visits, including through focus groups and classroom observations conducted by state staff.

Within programs, classroom observation using the Standards-in-Action observation tools is the most significant means of assessing SBI implementation. The following sections provide information on the observation tools, training supporting their use, and other relevant professional development.

Q: How can a program manager take on oversight of SBI implementation in addition to other program responsibilities?

A: SBI implementation should be seen as a fundamental part of, not an addition to, core program offerings. However, SBI implementation represents a significant cultural change for adult education, and no single administrator, working independently, can successfully accomplish this goal. Managers are encouraged to recruit and leverage leadership teams to help focus on SBI implementation. VALRC has encouraged programs to identify instructional leaders to participate in training that includes resource evaluation and professional learning community facilitation to support SBI.

Q: What evidence-based resources provide suggestions for program design that supports SBI?

A: There is a dearth of research specifically on college and career readiness SBI in adult education settings. However, we can draw lessons learned and promising practices from research more generally focused (e.g., on teacher change), taking place in other settings (e.g., K-20), or focused on different but related initiatives. The STAR report [*Bridging Research and Practice: The Role of Instructional Leadership in Evidence-based Reading Instruction* by Sandy Strunk](#) provides a concise but cogent set of guidelines for local managers that is highly applicable to SBI (Strunk, 2007, p.4):

- Cluster adult education classes and programs geographically to maximize infrastructure and support systems and to allow for homogeneous grouping by skill level.
- Schedule paid staff meetings that include time for collegial sharing.
- Provide paid prep time for instructors.
- Convene program improvement teams that work collaboratively to analyze program data and plan second order changes.
- Manage enrollment to minimize classroom turbulence. Observe and evaluate teachers regularly to provide them with ongoing feedback on their reading instruction.
- Work with teacher leaders to clearly define and document the scope and sequence of all instruction that takes place within the agency.
- Review and provide feedback on class syllabi and individual lesson plans.
- Provide instructors with ongoing support for diagnostic [and formative] assessment.
- Develop progress monitoring systems that include periodic student feedback.

Q: Other than relying on publishers' own claims of standards alignment, how can program staff who select and order textbooks and other program materials assess standards alignment?

A: The following rubrics can be used to assess the alignment of published resources and, even for well-aligned resources, identify any gaps that teachers may need to address through instruction.

- [CCRS English Language Arts/Literacy Resource Alignment Tool](#)
- [CCRS Mathematics Resource Alignment Tool](#)

Q: What happens after standards-based instruction is fully implemented?

A: SBI will remain a core part of programs' continuous improvement processes. Programs should move from a focus on standards awareness and initial SBI integration to a focus on enhancing assessed areas of weakness in SBI implementation (see professional development section below) and leveraging SBI as part of the solution to program challenges such as retention, measurable skill gain, transition to postsecondary education and training, and partnerships.

Instruction

With the CCRS and ELPS, academic skills work in tandem with critical thinking, teamwork, and other workforce preparation skills. Teachers must not only be familiar with and teach the language, literacy, and numeracy content of the standards, but should also plan instruction that engages learners in high-quality interactions and takes into account the standards' key advances. Delivering standards-based instruction is not about checking skills off a list but about facilitating challenging and rewarding learning experiences for students. With five core actions (and illustrative benchmarks), the observation tools illustrate this type of skilled instruction.

English Language Arts/Literacy and English Language Acquisition Key Advances

- **Complexity:** practicing regularly with complex text (and its academic language)
- **Evidence:** reading, writing, and speaking grounded in evidence from text
- **Knowledge:** building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction

Mathematics Key Advances

- **Focus:** focusing strongly where the standards focus
- **Coherence:** designing learning around coherent progressions from level to level
- **Rigor:** pursuing conceptual understanding, procedural skill and fluency, and application—all with equal intensity

CCR and CCR + ELPS Observation Tool Five Core Actions

1. Curriculum content of the lesson matches the demands of the standards.
2. Learning activities (questions and tasks) are cognitively demanding, text-specific (for literacy instruction), and maximize opportunities for students to master the lesson content.
3. Standards are translated into lessons that productively engage adult learners.
4. The lesson is intentionally sequenced to build on and develop students' skills and knowledge.
5. Students' level of understanding is assessed throughout the lesson, and instruction is adjusted accordingly.

Q: How can teachers and other educators get an overview of college and career readiness standards?

A: Three self-paced, online modules (approximately .5 hours each) are available through the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center to orient adult educators to the foundations of the CCRS. They cover how the standards were developed and how to navigate them and introduce key advances and classroom implications in the areas of English language arts/literacy and math.

- [Introduction to College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education](#)
 - [Module 1: Introduction](#)
 - [Module 2: The English Language Arts/Literacy \(ELA\) Standards](#)
 - [Module 3: The Mathematics Standards](#)

The national LINCS resource collection includes three self-paced online modules that introduce the ELPS (Module One) as well as use them to analyze the content, thinking skills, and language use of student tasks (Modules Two and Three).

- [Module One: Introduction to the English Language Proficiency Standards for Adult Education-Module One](#)
- [Module Two: Analyzing Student Tasks in Relation to Content Demands, Thinking Skills, and Language Use-Module Two](#)
- [Module Three: Digging Deeper Into the English Language Proficiency Standards for Adult Education-Module Three](#)

Q: What training and resources are available to support teachers in applying standards-based instruction to their own learning settings?

A: VALRC assists instructors in SBI implementation by offering content-specific trainings, supporting professional learning communities, and providing resources to encourage further learning.

Content-specific VALRC Trainings

VALRC's training catalogue offers a variety of professional development aimed to help instructors become more familiar with standards and adept at providing standards-based instruction in specific, relevant content areas. Offerings range from three-hour, on-site workshops to multi-week, facilitated online courses.

- [Standards Alignment for VALRC Trainings](#)

Professional Learning Communities

An important way instructors improve their practice is by working with each other. Professional learning communities (PLCs) bring teachers together to collaborate on instructional problem-solving grounded in evidence-based practice. PLCs can use a protocol to provide a structured way to revise actual assignments based on standards alignment and evidence of student mastery:

- [Feedback Checklist for PLC Team Members](#)
- [Student Work Protocol for CCRS English Language Arts/Literacy and English Language Acquisition](#)
- [Redesigned Assignment for CCRS English Language Arts/Literacy and English Language Acquisition](#)
- [Student Work Protocol for CCRS Mathematics](#)
- [Redesigned Assignment for CCRS Mathematics](#)

Additional Learning Opportunities

Educators seeking additional resources and self-study options are encouraged to begin by exploring the Standards-based Instruction section of the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center website.

- [Professional Learning – Standards-based Instruction](#)
- [SBI Curricula and Lessons](#)

Educators seeking additional ESOL resources and learning opportunities are encouraged to visit the [Professional Learning – ESOL](#) and [Events](#) sections of the VALRC website.

Q: How can instructors at all levels support English language learners in mastering college and career readiness skills?

A: The *English Language Proficiency Standards for Adult Education* can help guide the instruction of English language learners as they build English language skills along with college and career readiness. The ELPS can be used in ABE/ASE as well as ESOL contexts.

Q: How can instructional leaders and other staff gain deeper, more expert knowledge about college and career readiness standards?

A: Three of VALRC’s facilitated online courses are especially designed to support teachers in understanding the standards and key advances and better incorporating them into their own instruction. The [ELPS and Adult Educators](#) online course is designed to provide a deep dive on the ELPS for teachers who work with English language learners. The [Numeracy Practices for Adult Instruction](#) course takes an integrated approach to the four main CCRS mathematics domains, exploring numeracy development for adult learners across all skill levels (beginning to advanced) with a focus on algebraic thinking. In 2020, a new online course focused on the English language arts/literacy key advances will be piloted.

Customizable, on-site professional development related to the CCRS, ELPS, and standards-based instruction is available from VALRC and can be requested by program managers.

Intensive teacher-leader training institutes were held in conjunction with Virginia’s initial rollout of College and Career Readiness Standards. Translating Standards into College and Career Readiness-aligned Instruction (SBI 1) was offered with strands for ABE/ASE English language arts/literacy and ABE/ASE mathematics instruction, while Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) Focusing on Assignments and Student Work was offered with strands for ABE/ASE English language arts/literacy, ABE/ASE mathematics, and English language acquisition. Training materials from these institutes are [available on the VALRC website](#). Instructional leaders who did not attend one of the teacher-leader institutes are encouraged to take one of the standards-focused facilitated online courses as well as speak to a VALRC specialist about their professional development and instructional leadership plans.

All instructional leaders are encouraged to discuss their experiences with adult education colleagues within Virginia by joining the teacher-leader virtual series hosted by VALRC and across the country by participating in the [LINCS College and Career Standards Discussion Group](#).

Q: Where can teachers see examples of what standards-based instruction looks like in an adult education setting?

A: LINCS has shared helpful videos of CCRS-aligned instruction filmed in real adult education classrooms:

- [CCR Standards-in-Action ELA/Literacy Videos](#)
- [CCR Standards-in-Action Mathematics Videos](#)

These videos are most helpfully viewed along with the CCR Observation Tools. See the professional development section for more on observation training.

For teachers of English language learners at all levels, see the [Minnesota Literacy Council's CCRS in the ABE Classroom videos](#). Note that Minnesota uses the CCR standards for instruction on English language acquisition.

Q: What additional supports for standards-based instruction are planned?

A: The Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center will continue to develop and support professional development focused on SBI, taking into account Virginia Department of Education priorities, needs expressed by the field, and needs identified through quantitative and qualitative data review. In spring 2020, the [Virginia CCRS Curriculum Frameworks](#) website will launch. A product of collaborative effort by a statewide working group of practitioners, these frameworks include notes for teachers on specific CCRS content and sample standards-aligned activities with a focus on ABE/ASE literacy and numeracy instruction.

Professional Development

College and career ready standards-based instruction represents a significant cultural change for adult education. Professional development is essential in familiarizing staff with new expectations and in refining practice to better incorporate SBI and meet student needs. To accomplish SBI implementation, educators need to work together, and professional development is one way of connecting instructors who may feel isolated from colleagues. One-time workshops or webinars will not suffice; instead, professional development must be purposeful, practical, and ongoing.

Q: What makes professional development effective?

A: Organizations such as [LearningForward](#) and the [Association of Adult Literacy Professional Developers](#) have developed standards to describe high-quality professional development that is most likely to result in changes to practice. The U.S. Department of Education-sponsored [LINCS Professional Development Center](#) has also developed [a self-assessment](#) to help states and programs evaluate the quality of the professional development they offer, which includes these five helpful measures:

1. Activities are intensive, ongoing, and connected to practice (job-embedded).
2. Activities focus on specific academic and programmatic content.
3. Activities build knowledge and peer relationships through collaborative learning.
4. Activities are differentiated to address the varied needs of practitioners.
5. Teachers are provided clear feedback on their performance/and progress in serving students.

Q: How can programs know where to focus their professional development efforts?

A: The CCR and CCR + ELPS Observation Tools help focus on strengths and weaknesses of SBI instruction. Collecting data from multiple class observations across the program should give program leaders a sense of collective strengths and weaknesses and help them in determining professional development needs. The [Aggregation and Summary of Observation Data Tool](#) can facilitate this process.

Q: What training is available on the use of the CCR and CCR + ELPS Observation Tools and the aggregator?

A: Initial familiarization training on the CCR Observation Tools has been provided to regional managers at state meetings, to teacher-leader institute participants, through webinars open to all Virginia adult educators, and through local on-site training upon request. In 2020, the CCR + ELPS Observation Tool, a modification of the CCR Observation Tool for English language arts/literacy designed to be more inclusive of English language acquisition instruction, was disseminated. All three observation tools were adapted to allow observers to note a range of proficiency for each indicator. In April 2020, webinars introducing the modified tools will be offered. Additional training and technical assistance will be available from VALRC upon request.

Q: What are the benefits of professional learning communities (PLCs) in implementing SBI?

A: Professional learning communities incorporate many of the features of high-quality professional development, including an ongoing timeframe, work that is connected to practice, and collaborative learning with peers. As described in the instruction section, PLCs that use a student work protocol lead to the revision of actual assignments based on standards alignment and evidence of student mastery. In surveys of PLC participants conducted during 2016-17, more than 80% reported becoming more familiar with standards and receiving helpful input from their colleagues.

An ongoing focus on assignments and student work can be a valuable focus for PLCs, but some PLCs whose members are familiar with standards and have used the student work protocol may want to move on to more individualized inquiry projects that target local instructional challenges. Key to the PLC model is the combination of practical work and an evidence basis; VALRC can help support PLCs that are ready to take on inquiry-based projects at the local level.

Q: How can program staff become trained as PLC facilitators or SBI instructional leaders more generally?

A: The statewide teacher-leader institutes used a train-the-trainer format to provide training on facilitating standards-focused professional learning communities. New staff can become trained through participating in a local or regional PLC with a trained facilitator and consulting with that PLC's leader on facilitation practices. Alternately, to request in-house training for SBI instructional leaders or discuss needs on a case-by-case basis, please contact VALRC.

Q: What's next in terms of providing professional development that supports SBI?

A: Professional development and technical assistance support for SBI is an ongoing priority of the Virginia Department of Education and the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center. Educators can expect to see SBI as a focus in statewide conferences and to find SBI alignment addressed in VALRC's online and on-site trainings and technical assistance. Focus areas include supporting educators in becoming familiar with and using the English Language Proficiency Standards; supporting educators in better integrating standards and core actions into their instructional planning including through use of the Virginia CCRS Curriculum Frameworks; and assisting programs in using observation and other program data to inform professional development planning.

Standards-based Instruction Quick Links

- [College and Career Readiness Standards \(CCRS\)](https://lincs.ed.gov/publications/pdf/CCRStandardsAdultEd.pdf)
- [English Language Proficiency Standards \(ELPS\)](https://lincs.ed.gov/publications/pdf/elp-standards-adult-ed.pdf)
- [CCR Observation Tool for English Language Arts/Literacy](http://valrc.org/learning/sbi/docs/CCRS-ELA-ObservationTool_a.docx)
- [CCR + ELPS Observation Tool for English Language Arts/Literacy](http://valrc.org/learning/sbi/docs/CCRS-ELPS-ObservationTool_a.docx)
- [CCR Observation Tool for Mathematics](http://valrc.org/learning/sbi/docs/CCRS-Math-ObservationTool_a.docx)
- [Aggregation and Summary of Observation Data Tool](http://valrc.org/learning/sbi/docs/AggregationTool.xlsx)
- [Virginia College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education \(CCRS\) Curriculum Frameworks](http://vaccrsframeworks.org)
- [Standards-based Instruction Resources on VALRC Website](http://valrc.org/learning/sbi)

Please contact the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center or the Virginia Department of Education, Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education with your comments, questions, or requests for technical assistance.

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