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July 17-20, 2018
Fort Magruder
Williamsburg, VA

Innovate • Motivate • Integrate

The 2018 Adult Education & Literacy Conference

by Tony Ryals

In less than a month, the first Virginia Adult Education & Literacy (AE&L) Conference will take place at Fort Magruder Hotel and Conference Center in Colonial Williamsburg. VALRC, with support from the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), has been hard at work to make sure this conference is impactful, informative, and unique. This conference is the first of its kind in the state of Virginia, combining individual adult education conferences, symposia, and meetings into one: **one purpose, one focus, one voice** to advance adult education in Virginia. The AE&L Conference provides a great opportunity to engage with colleagues, network, and learn together while showcasing emerging trends and practices in the field of adult education.

This year's theme is: Innovate, Motivate, Integrate. *Innovate* was chosen as a way to encourage rethinking the status quo in adult education. As technology progresses and the ways individuals learn constantly shift, innovative thinking and practices are needed to best impact adult learners. *Motivate* was chosen as a way to keep all those in the field of adult education encouraged and excited about their work. Not only are our conference workshop sessions motivating, but there will also be opportunities to network and socialize with colleagues from around the state. The AE&L conference provides numerous opportunities to *integrate*, providing an opportunity for all practitioners within (and some outside) adult education to come together to share, learn, and make a collective effort to better support adult learners.

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The Adult Education Workforce in Virginia

by Virginia Department of Education Staff

This issue of the **PROGRESS** newsletter is devoted to professional development of adult education practitioners. As we consider the current issues that drive professional development decisions at both the regional and state levels, it is important to have a clear sense of the workforce. What is the composition of the Virginia adult education provider workforce and how does it compare to the national composition? What do these numbers tell us about how to support practitioner learning and development? This article explores who we are as adult educators in Virginia and highlights resources that articulate what high-quality adult educators know and can do with their students. Let's start by looking at some comparative data between Virginia instructors and those nationwide.

In 2016-2017, Virginia reported information on 981 paid instructors, 95 percent of whom were part-time employees, and five percent of whom were full-time. Of the 142 paid local administrators reported, 49 percent were part-time employees, and 51 percent were full-time. Nationally, states and territories reported information on 45,769 paid instructors in 2016-2017, 81 percent of whom were part-time instructors and 19 percent were full-time. Of the 10,760 paid local administrators reported nationwide, 48 percent were part-time, and 52 percent were full-time. This tells us that Virginia has a similar percentage of full-time administrators and a lower percentage of full-time instructors than the national rate.

Instructors in Virginia tend to be experienced at rates similar to the national rates. Sixty-two percent of Virginia's paid instructors were reported as having more than three years of experience in adult education, 20 percent have one to three years, and 17 percent have less than one year's experience.



In 2016-2017, Virginia reported information on 981 paid instructors, 95 percent of whom were part-time employees.

Nationally, 64 percent of instructors have three or more years of experience in adult education, 23 percent have one to three years, and 14 percent have less than one year of experience. The reporting range can be quite understated, however, with “more than three years” as the top of the range.

The majority of instructors in Virginia, 56 percent, do not have a teaching certification; however, five percent hold an adult education endorsement, 38 percent hold a K-12 teaching certification, five percent hold a special education certification, and six percent hold TESOL certification. Nationally, 35 percent of adult education instructors do not currently have a certification, 24 percent hold an adult education certification, 40 percent hold a K-12 certification, five percent hold a special education certification, and nine percent hold a TESOL certification. Note that there are instructors who hold multiple certifications. Many practitioners in Virginia are highly educated: 36 hold doctorates, and 611 hold master’s degrees.

How is your experience represented in these numbers? Are you a part-time or full-time instructor or administrator? How many years have you been teaching in adult education and what types of certification(s) do you hold? How do these factors influence your teaching and your students’ outcomes? What is it an experienced adult educator should know and be able to do?

One place to look for an answer to the last question is in the materials produced through the Teacher Effectiveness in Adult Education national study. This project produced a set of teacher [competencies](#) that identifies the core knowledge and skills expected of adult education teachers, a self-assessment, an introductory online course, and an interactive framework. Other materials produced through this project include materials for

teacher [induction](#) and mentoring to assist the many teachers who join adult education each year in getting off to a strong and productive start.

Providing professional learning opportunities to teachers who are part-time employees is one of the challenges of adult education. Not unlike our learners’ busy schedules, teachers’ schedules are also often busy, and it’s difficult to find a time when all instructors in a program can be together. Online, self-paced learning may be part of the solution to the time crunch. Programs can create a hybrid, blended experience that brings the best of self-paced and face-to-face learning together by creating a cohort of learners who can reflect on their online experience in an on-site environment.

The Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center website features information on free professional learning opportunities available to Virginia educators. Find information on [VALRC’s facilitated online courses](#), which allow educators schedule flexibility and the option to participate from home or work while interacting with an experienced facilitator and peers from across the state. Search the [Professional Learning](#) topic areas (numeracy, reading, ESOL, tech tools, career pathways, and more) for links to relevant resources, including websites to explore and, for some topics, self-paced online courses. Each topic area includes information about on-site and online trainings offered by VALRC; program managers can [call a VALRC specialist](#) to arrange a local training or to discuss recently developed or custom training options. 

This article was prepared by the staff of the Virginia Department of Education’s Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education.

Changes to Certification Program

You talked. We listened. It is time for the Virginia Adult Educator Certification Program (VAECP) to take on a new format. Since 2009, VAECP has promoted statewide professionalism in the field of adult education, first in a face-to-face format and then in an eight-week online format, creating a standard platform of knowledge for all certification recipients. We continue to hear how individuals use the knowledge and skills gained through VAECP toward continuous instructional and program improvement.

When the Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA) was signed into law in 2014, the standard platform of knowledge for instructors and program managers changed significantly, and it continues to change. In response, additional content was added to VAECP, making the eight-week online course a time challenge for participants and ensuring the most up-to-date content a challenge for course facilitation; in addition, "certification" has taken on a different meaning under WIOA, with its focus on industry-recognized credentials.

As a result, VALRC is revising the VAECP program, breaking it apart into a bundled, modular format; each module will focus on a specific topic of study. Practitioners will have greater choice, selecting training to help them grow or strengthen specific competencies through blended learning experiences and continuous learning.

VAECP Instructor Level 2 Online will be offered in the VALRC online fall and winter sessions to allow Level 1 completers an opportunity to complete their program.

New modules focused on instructing in ABE/ASE and ESOL classrooms for new and experienced instructors will be available in the spring of 2019. 

Be Part of VALRC Podcast Live!

Podcasts can educate, entertain, inform, inspire. But the most important reason to host a podcast is that they connect people in ways other training cannot. Podcasting allows training to be delivered on a flexible time schedule; learners can listen to a podcast whenever they want and wherever they may be.

VALRC is releasing a podcast series, beginning with an interview with Dr. Heidi Silver-Pacuilla, the Coordinator of Virginia Adult Education at the VDOE Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education. Dr. Silver-Pacuilla discusses the role of Title II, Adult Education, as a Virginia Workforce partner. The next podcasts in this first series are conversations with three regional program managers – Katy Parrish, Danielle Robinson, and Shirley Carlson – and their WIOA partners about how they make their partnerships work.

At the Adult Education & Literacy Conference on July 17-20, VALRC is offering an opportunity for instructors to be a part of the conversation, connecting to their counterparts across the state by sharing their best practices and how they will implement what they learn from conference presenters. We invite all conference attendees to be a part of VALRC Podcast Live!

Look for us in historic Williamsburg! 



Standards-based Instruction & the English Language Proficiency Standards

by Susan Watson

Since their release in late 2016, the English Language Proficiency Standards for Adult Education, or [ELPS](#), have posed some challenges for Virginia adult educators: (1) we already had [state-adopted standards](#) for ESOL, (2) we had few resources for rolling out professional development on these standards, and (3) we needed to articulate a clear path forward with standards-based instruction (SBI) for English language learners in order to meet the state's [full implementation of SBI](#) by the end of 2019. This article touches on some of the events of the past year in an effort to make clearer the decision to move forward with the ELPS rather than the Virginia ESOL standards and to explain what the field can expect in terms of professional development and technical assistance on the ELPS from [VALRC](#) in the 2018-19 program year.

Looking back over the last program year, it is clear how far we have come in our understanding of the ELPS and their role in the state's plan for SBI with the College and Career Readiness Standards, or CCRS. Virginia adopted the [CCRS](#) in 2015 as the standards for all adult learners. However, as we have learned, the CCRS were not written with English language learners (ELLs) in mind. On the other hand, the ELPS were designed for ELLs and meant to bridge instruction to the CCRS. What makes the relationship between the two sets of standards so important is that the CCRS continue to be the end-point goal for SBI, and the ELPS are a complementary resource for reaching this goal. The ELPS correspond to the CCR anchor standards for English language arts and incorporate the three keys shifts of accessing complex text, citing evidence, and building knowledge from multiple texts. The bridging relationship to the CCRS informed the rationale for moving

forward with the ELPS rather than the Virginia ESOL standards.

Another event that helped inform the decision about standards for English language learning was a revision of the six educational functioning levels for ESOL by the National Reporting System, or NRS. These descriptors can be found in the NRS [Technical Assistance Guide for Performance Accountability under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act](#) (see document pages B19-B27 / PDF pages 102-110). We now know that the ELPS reflect the revisions and the Virginia ESOL standards do not. Revised descriptors imply many changes for adult educators, affecting testing and assessment policies.^[1] It became clear that the ELPS, because of their relationship with the CCRS and their alignment to the new NRS descriptors, were the way forward for Virginia educators working with ELLs and the path toward our goal of full implementation of SBI by next year. This means we have a lot of work ahead of us!

Over the 2017-2018 year, we have worked very hard to develop professional development resources on the ELPS that we could share with the field. A group of nine ESOL professionals from around the state met on a regular basis throughout the year to develop workshops and compile resources. Part of this work included attending national conferences and reaching out to colleagues in Minnesota and Illinois. During this time, [U.S. OCTAE](#) began releasing materials on the ELPS via the [LINCS](#) network, and we were able to incorporate some of these materials into our work. At this point, we are prepared to offer high-quality teacher workshops and technical assistance on SBI and the ELPS.

The [Adult Education & Literacy Conference](#)

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will be one of the first opportunities for professional development on the ELPS. In addition to several sessions given by our own Virginia experts, one not-to-miss workshop will be with [Jayme Adelson-Goldstein](#), author of the LINCS resource [Preparing English Learners for Work and Career Pathways](#). This resource highlights career

The CCRS continue to be the end-point goal for SBI, and the ELPS are a complementary resource for reaching this goal.

development and standards-based academic instruction for adult ELLs. In addition to Jayme's resource, LINCS offers a one-hour [online module](#) that introduces participants to the basic structure of the ELPS, addressing how they were developed, how many standards there are, how the levels work, and how the ELPS correspond to the CCRS. A second and third module are forthcoming in 2019. We recommend all teachers working with ELLs review this first module as a way to get acquainted with the ELPS. VALRC is also developing a self-paced introduction to the ELPS that will be available through the Virginia Learning Center (VLC).

VALRC offers professional development workshops on demand. These workshops, which are 3 hours or more, can be tailored to the program or region's needs and are relevant to both ESOL and ABE/ASE teachers and tutors. The workshops focus on one or more of the following areas: the basic structure of the ELPS, designing standards-based instruction, accessing and working with complex text, questioning strategies, citing evidence, building knowledge from multiple texts, and more. (Basic workshop descriptions can be found on the [VALRC website](#).) Workshops are facilitated by VALRC staff or one of our contracted trainers. Initial rollout of these

workshops began in January and will continue through the 2018-19 program year.

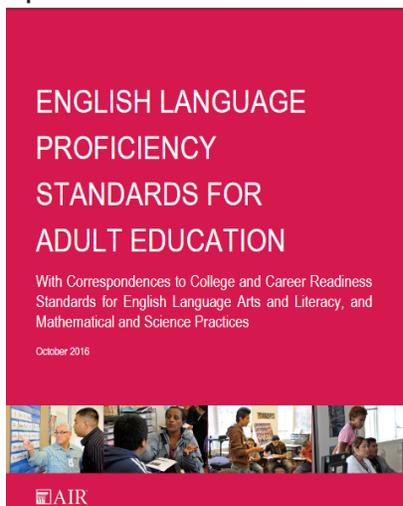
Listed below are some points to consider before requesting professional development on the ELPS. These ideas are drawn from feedback on workshops we've delivered, VALRC requirements, and the [Handbook for Sustaining SBI in Adult Education: Checklists for Assessing Effective Implementation](#) resource.

1. Get to know the English language learner population in your area. What are their needs? What types of classes—ESOL, ABE, IET, GED® prep—do you offer for this population? For more information, you can visit [this helpful website](#) to find data on your region.
2. Consider these questions: What are your teachers' needs in terms of SBI with English language learners? What is their familiarity with the CCRS and the ELPS? What is your goal for them and your program? This helps us gauge what to include in a workshop when time and resources are limited.
3. Critically assess your current curriculum and instructional resources. Are they aligned to the CCRS or ELPS? Do teachers have the resources they need for SBI?
4. Have your staff view the [introductory ELPS module](#) prior to any professional development workshop. This helps us make the most out of our time together at the workshop.
5. Assemble a minimum of 10 participants for a workshop, keeping in mind that the ELPS are for all teachers of ELLs, not only ESOL teachers.
6. Allow a minimum of 3 hours for a workshop so there is time to practice with and apply some of the new materials.
7. Have a follow-up plan for sustaining professional development on the ELPS so that your program can fully implement

standards-based instruction by the end of June 2019. Please see Virginia's [SBI Technical Assistance Roadmap](#) and the [Sustainability Checklist](#) for more ideas.

8. Consider implementing an observation protocol with the [CCR Observation Tool for ELA/Literacy](#) as a way to generate data on your program's progress with SBI.
9. Create teacher leaders who will help you undertake this tremendous effort.

We hope this short article makes clearer



the state's decision to move forward with the ELPS and what you can expect from VALRC in the form of professional development and technical assistance in the coming year. If you would like to learn more about the ELPS and plan a workshop event for your program or region, please contact our office to begin the conversation. We look forward to working with you and your teachers in the coming year as we move toward full implementation of standards-based instruction for all adult learners. 📍

[1] The [Technical Assistance Guide](#) notes that new ESL descriptors have not yet been implemented, as the U.S. Department of Education has not yet approved any assessments aligned to the descriptors. This is similar to the lag in implementation experienced with the ABE/ASE descriptors. New NRS descriptors came out as states adopted the CCRS for instruction, but it took a few years to get assessments aligned and approved. That has happened now with the TABE 11/12 and CASAS GOALS series.

Susan Watson is ESOL Specialist at the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center.

Economic Empowerment Train-the-Trainer

The Train-the-Trainer for the Economic Empowerment "Citizen Seminar" will be held on Friday, September 28, 2018, from 8:30 – 4:30 at the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center in Richmond, VA. Adult educators, members of workforce boards, and business partners are invited to attend. Breakfast and lunch are included in this training, and all participants will receive a stipend for attending. Trainers will be asked to promote and deliver the Citizen Seminar curriculum in the format of their choosing in October or November and attend a debriefing meeting in December. The Economic Empowerment Citizen Seminar is a curriculum designed to empower low socioeconomic and low educational attainment students with basic knowledge and skills in economics, personal finance, and entrepreneurship.

To learn more about this opportunity, talk to Dr. Cheryl Ayers at the AE&L Conference, July 17-20 in Historic Williamsburg. Dr. Ayers, founder and director of the U.S. Economic Empowerment Project, will facilitate the "Recruit Adult Students with Economic Empowerment Seminars" breakout session at the conference. You can also contact Joanne Huebner, huebnerjm@vcu.edu, for more information. 📍

Supporting Diversity & Inclusion at the READ Center

by *Beatrice Lele*



Can you imagine what “your world [would] be like if you could not read? It would be very small, very stressful, and very sad,” writes Jean Proffitt, READ Center founder and board member. The READ Center is a Richmond area community-based nonprofit organization providing educational opportunities to adults with low-level reading and communication skills. Most of the students at the center are native speakers who need literacy assistance, and the teachers and tutors are volunteers. The organization’s mission is to help adults with low-level literacy develop basic reading and communication skills, so they can fulfill their roles as citizens, workers, and family members.

The READ Center provides professional development to its staff, teachers, and tutors in several ways. Recently, they partnered with the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities

(VCIC) to provide a two-hour diversity and inclusion training that was attended by more than twenty tutors, teachers, and staff. **PROGRESS** interviewed Nausha Brown Chavez, who has worked with the READ Center for more than eight years and serves as education program manager, to find out more about the diversity training and how the center incorporates student voices into their professional development planning and delivery.

Diversity and Inclusion

“The concept to participate in the training was brought up by a previous volunteer coordinator, who worked really hands-on with volunteers and pairing them ... with students one to one,” Nausha explained. “These interactions with the students and tutors” led her

to identify diversity training as a need. "Also," Nausha continued, "because most of our students are African American and a majority of our tutors are Caucasian women, there is a big difference in what they understand about each other since they all grew up in different environments and cultures."

Sometimes we fail to acknowledge our own biases. "We thought the training would give us an opportunity to just look at our own unconscious biases that we may have and ... be sensitive and mindful to other individuals who may not fit that lens that we see things through," said Nausha. "The training was very insightful. The scenarios used in the training were real; it really touched home with individuals and made the trainee possibly think 'did I do that'? After the session, a lot of the tutors came up to the volunteer coordinator and said, "'I hope that was not me ... I just hope that was not me.'"

While most staff would never intentionally say something hurtful or harmful, "we sometimes speak without thinking about the things we say." Nausha felt that "the training created an environment where people were able to honestly sit and talk about [their] biases without judging." This free environment was possible because a framework was developed at the beginning of the training that addressed how participants would be open to the information and what they would do or not do in order to make it a good session. Due to the impact of the training, the READ Center has decided to offer it on a yearly basis so that those who had not taken it can take it. Nausha expects the training will contribute to greater mindfulness among all members of the READ Center community. "[W]hile the training was meant for the teachers and tutors," she said, "it is also something that could be good for students."

The challenges in selecting and preparing professional development will be different for different organizations. Presenters "will come with a lot of ideas. You want to make

sure that it is impactful because [if there's] too much information, at some point, people can stop listening. You want to make sure that the information is concise and useful." In preparing for the diversity and inclusion training, "the biggest challenge was timeframe ... Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities provides vast knowledge about the topic, so we had to choose what was relevant to our Center." Nausha encourages other programs who are considering a diversity and inclusion training workshop, to "have it!" "It made a big difference for us," she said, because "it takes you out of your little bubble."

- It makes you more aware and more conscious in your thinking.
- It gives tutors, teachers, and staff an opportunity to interact with each other in ways they could not have otherwise and gives them helpful information through the interaction.
- Through the training, Nausha said, "we get a better understanding of who we are as teachers and as tutors; when we understand who we are, then it helps us to guide other people. ... A lot of our students, when they were in school, may have received negative comments, and we want to make sure that we do not continue those cycles."

Student Voices and Incorporating Feedback

The READ Center also aims to incorporate student voices and perspectives more directly in their program improvement efforts through collecting student evaluations at the end of each trimester. Students are asked whether the teachers and tutors are effective in helping them reach their goals. The evaluation forms:

Continued on p.10>>>

- give the teachers some idea of how the students feel about aspects of the class.
- give READ Center staff who are not out in the field daily a better sense of how the students think those classes are going.
- allow students to comment on how classes could be made better (in addition to responding to some yes-or-no evaluation questions).

Overall, the evaluations can be an eye opener for teachers. “Sometimes as humans, we just go along with the flow, but when given an opportunity to express ourselves on how we truly felt about something, we can express more,” said Nausha. “When students know that such information will be valued, then they can be a lot more open in what they share with us.”

The READ Center recently began using students’ feedback systematically to restructure their lesson plans. There are three semesters within a fiscal year. At the end of every semester, said Nausha, “I sit down with the teachers and we go over the feedback ... The teachers share with me what they have discovered based on what the students have said ... The teachers then can go back and adjust their lessons to follow more in line with what is best for the students. The goal is to make sure that what the center offers is what is best for the students. ... We want to make sure that [students’] voices are heard, and it is not just something that is coming top down. We want them to know that they are important to the process because without them, The READ Center would not exist.”

When planning further training based on feedback, the READ Center also incorporates teachers’ and tutors’ self-reflection. After reflection, the teachers tell Nausha what they think could have been done better; as the education program manager, she then decides what professional development to offer. This could include:

- providing teachers with strategies for teaching comprehension or providing them with various workbooks, books, or websites that will help them to increase their students’ knowledge as well as their own.
- sending them to a professional development training or course.
- sending them to tutor training to get a broader picture of how students learn as adults and how adult basic education classes are taught.

The teachers at the READ Center are all from different backgrounds; some have a teaching background and some do not. Nausha emphasizes that “teaching a kid is different from teaching an adult, because children have no prior knowledge while adults have a lot of prior knowledge that just has some gaps that needs to be filled in. ... During our meetings, I ask teachers to bring in some comprehension strategies that they use in their classes to help students who are struggling. Each teacher shares their strategies and other teachers can hear strategies that they are not aware of and they can use these strategies in their classes.”

“I love being given the opportunity to help people reach their goals,” said Nausha. “Everyone deserves the same opportunity to take care of their families, to be a good advocate in their community, to work, and to have a voice – the READ Center give[s] an opportunity to have a voice.” The READ Center supports this crucial mission by offering professional development that values diversity and inclusion and responds meaningfully to student feedback and instructor self-reflection. 

Beatrice Lele is a graduate student at Virginia Commonwealth University and graduate assistant at the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center.

Professional Learning Communities in Action: Initial Responses & Next Steps

by Hillary Major

In early spring 2017, we surveyed adult educators around the state who had participated in professional learning communities (PLCs) focused on standards-based instruction. Following a summer 2016 facilitator training on using a CCR Standards-in-Action protocol to analyze and revise assignments, more than 60 new PLCs were launched across the state. More than 40 of these met at least four times, beginning to set a collaborative routine for participants. 125 PLC members responded to our survey. When asked about the benefits of PLCs, more than 80% said they received helpful input from other teachers and became more familiar with standards. Nearly 60% reported that they discovered more about their own strengths and weaknesses as educators.

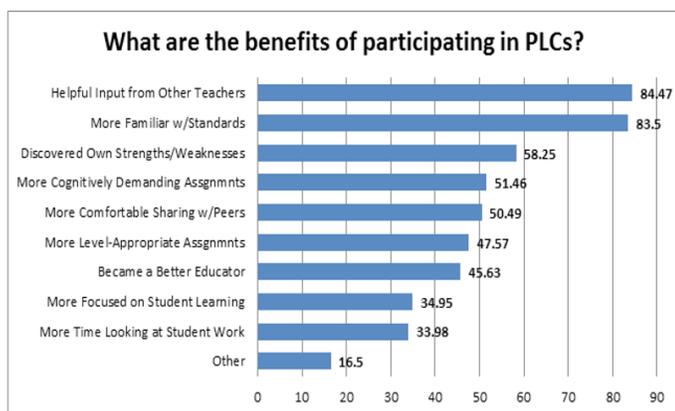
Some respondents focused on including standards and the CCRS key shifts in their lesson planning: “increased repertoire of lesson resources,” “commitment to continue to match standards to all lesson assignments,” “thinking about rigor of assignments and not worrying about students having to push deeper to do the work.” Responses showed PLC participants responding to different aspects of the Standards-in-Action protocol.

“The opportunity to just TALK together about specific things was invaluable.”

A teacher wrote, “I include rubrics at more stages for myself and the students’ use”; the protocol prompts PLC members to discuss the “scoring guidelines” for assignments. The protocol also focuses on how well an assignment’s tasks are aligned to standards and whether students’ work shows that they understood the assignment and are demonstrating the assessed skills. A PLC participant wrote, “[I am] reconsidering how I give assignments – clarity of instruction has improved. Also reflecting more on teaching of writing and how to correct writing and engage students in process writing.”

While the large majority of responses were positive, not all were. For example, one educator wrote, “There was nothing of benefit gained from participating in the PLC. Adult is very different from [a] regular classroom” Because the Standards-in-Action student work protocol asks educators to bring in several examples of student work responding to a single assignment, it can be a challenge for instructional settings that rely heavily on individual, independent work or one-to-one tutoring.

Continued on p.12>>>



When asked about the benefits of PLCs in an open-ended question, many responses focused on the benefits of collaboration. “The opportunity to just TALK together about specific things was invaluable. Got great ideas for all sorts of things,” wrote one respondent. Another reported that they had formed a “much closer relationship w/some teachers [they] rarely saw otherwise. We are now friends. Great feedback. Great ideas. Very supportive people.”

This can be an opportunity to focus on how instructional delivery may need to be adapted to achieve full implementation of standards-based instruction; the Standards-in-Action Observation Tools, for example, place a high priority on student collaboration, discussion, and engagement with tasks that go beyond textbook worksheets. PLC group members can help strategize ways to find meaningful opportunities for small group work in multilevel classes, creatively use multimedia to increase student engagement or connect with other learners, or suggest ways a tutor can vary the types of interaction within a one-to-one session. The protocol asks teachers to share an honest example of their current practice and then participate with peers in making revisions; teachers with different levels of experience may demonstrate different strengths and weaknesses, but all have room to grow through reflection and peer feedback. PLCs give an opportunity for programs to harness the professional wisdom of their instructional staff, using an evidence-based structure and resources to guide the discussion.

The challenges Virginia educators reported in implementing PLCs were overwhelmingly related to scheduling and logistics: 34% of survey respondents selected “logistics (e.g., scheduling)” as a challenge, which was the highest response to that question. Additionally, 33% of respondents reported “other” challenges, nearly all of which (like budgeting for professional development hours or driving distances to PLC meetings) also focused on logistics. Only 5% of respondents reported “low attendance” as a challenge, indicating that programs and educators made their commitment to PLCs a priority.

While more than half of responding PLC participants reported developing more cognitively demanding assignments (51%) and becoming more comfortable sharing with peers (50%), somewhat fewer reported crafting more level-appropriate assignments (48%)

The protocol asks teachers to share an honest example of their current practice and then participate with peers in making revisions.

or that they became a better educator (46%). Despite the focus of the protocol, only about a third reported that they became more focused on student learning (35%) or spent more time looking at student work (34%). The reasons for this are uncertain: quite possibly, teachers who invested in PLC participation already considered themselves to be strong educators, committed to their learners and to continuous improvement of their own practice. Perhaps some respondents similarly felt they already prioritized looking at student responses and making formative assessments of student learning. Another possibility is that many participants found becoming familiar with the standards to have a bigger impact because CCR standards were relatively new and because the first task of the protocol involves assessing the demands of an assignment and matching it to standards, while the process of looking at student work comes later in the session. Continuing to offer PLC sessions after participants have become more familiar with CCR standards might lead more participants to focus on the formative assessment aspects of the protocol.

Did PLC participants continue to meet into the 2017-2018 program year? We don't have comprehensive statewide data for this year, although a few regions have continued to report on their PLC meetings. Some regions that have continued PLCs have taken the opportunity to reach a larger number of teachers across their programs, in some cases using teachers who participated in 2016-2017 PLCs as facilitators for new PLC groups.¹ The benefits reported by PLC participants offer a compelling argument for making PLCs a central part of professional development for

The benefits reported by PLC participants offer a compelling argument for making PLCs a central part of professional development for all adult educators.

all adult educators. PLCs using the Standards-in-Action student work protocol exemplify the features of “high-quality professional development” (see page 14).

For regions that have already offered some PLCs using the Standards-in-Action protocol, options for wider rollout include:

- forming additional PLC groups to reach more teachers (perhaps having experienced PLC members serve as facilitators);
- continuing PLC meetings using the Standards-in-Action protocol beyond the minimum four (or one per participant) meeting sessions,
 - giving instructors additional opportunities to workshop their own assignments and give constructive feedback to peers,
 - allowing participants to focus on a different subject area (e.g., math or English language arts/literacy), or
 - choosing a specific sub-focus for the activities workshopped by the PLC (e.g., having all participants bring in activities that incorporate workforce preparation, include a rubric, target learners at a skill level that often struggles to make gains);
- offering a PLC that does not use the Standards-in-Action protocol but instead

takes an inquiry approach to a local regional or programmatic challenge. This option is most appropriate for educators who are already familiar with state instructional standards; staff developing and facilitating such PLCs should be mindful of incorporating the features of high-quality professional development, including an evidence basis, and providing structure that encourages effective time management and participation from all PLC members. The Resource Center is happy to share models and discuss facilitation considerations.

I am always happy to hear PLC success stories from around the state, stories of teachers learning from each other and supporting each other in pushing their instruction to the next level. If you are considering how to draw on the power of PLCs for your region or program, I (and my Resource Center colleagues) would love to talk! 

Hillary Major is Instructional Standards and Communications Specialist at the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center.

¹ PLC facilitators should be familiar with the Standards-in-Action student work protocol (either from attending a train-the-trainer or through PLC experience). They should be comfortable leading by example, knowledgeable about standards (able to guide discussion to ensure key standards or shifts are not overlooked), and willing to speak up to enforce time management and constructive feedback guidelines (or effectively delegate those roles). If you need to train additional PLC facilitators, please contact Hillary Major at VALRC for more information.

PLCs and Defining “High-quality Professional Development”

With WIOA’s focus on quality and accountability, the national LINCS Professional Development Center released a [self-assessment](#) to help state leaders gauge their professional development (PD) efforts. As part of that project, LINCS identified five research-based features of high-quality professional development:

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

PLCs embody collaborative learning (Feature #3) almost by definition, but care must be taken to ensure they are designed to address the other elements as well. The CCR Standards-in-Action student work protocol reflects such careful design:

1. PLCs meet multiple times, over time, and focus on real assignments teachers bring from their current classrooms.
2. There are separate protocols for math and English language arts/literacy (ELA) so that PLC groups are encouraged to focus deeply on one academic discipline, but assignment choice allows flexibility to introduce other subject areas such as social studies, science, and workforce preparation. (Virginia has also used a separate protocol for ESOL instruction, though some ESOL-focused groups have used the CCR ELA protocol.) This element of professional development also has a focus on “evidence-based” practice; both the standards documents and the critical friends process used in the protocol are grounded in an extensive research. Again, teachers focus on real examples from their own classrooms and programs.
4. This element of teacher choice allows teachers from varied settings and with varied experiences to benefit from the PLC process. Especially experienced and knowledgeable teachers may have more suggestions for making assignment revisions or may serve as the PLC facilitator, while teachers of all levels can participate in the analysis of standards alignment
5. Feedback is built into the protocol, based on evidence of standards alignment and evidence of student performance. After discussion and feedback from colleagues, activities are revised, and participants are encouraged to report back on the effects of the changes made to their assignment or practice. PLCs, like other types of professional development, have the biggest impact when used in conjunction with other program improvement efforts (such as observations and analysis of student feedback and data). 

2018 Adult Education & Literacy Conference

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All of the keynote speakers and workshop sessions have been selected to embody this year's theme. Dr. Heidi Silver-Pacuilla will open the conference with the state of adult education in Virginia. In Wednesday's keynote, Ira Sockowitz, CEO of Learning Games Studios, will speak about how his work is changing the landscape of learning in adult education. Dr. David Coogan, Virginia Commonwealth University professor and author of *Writing Your Way Out: Memoirs from Jail*, will be the keynote speaker on Thursday. Dr. Coogan will be joined by two of his co-authors, Terence and Ronald, in telling an amazing story of how writing and learning changes lives. Dr. Kris Westover will end the conference with the inspiring story of how earning her GED® credential eventually led to her becoming the current President of Mountain Empire Community College. The AE&L conference will also offer more than 55 workshop sessions that address areas such as personal growth, the impact of poverty on adult learners, and helpful instructional practices to strengthen your region, organization, or classroom. Each 75-minute session has been tailored to meet the needs of the field and encourage creative ways of thinking about the work that is done in adult education.

In an effort to make the AE&L Conference a more engaging experience for all attendees, we have created dedicated opportunities for networking and gathering with other participants in your field: Think Tank Meet Ups. On Day One of the conference, you will have the opportunity to participate in your first Think Tank Meet Up. Think Tank groups focusing on different interests (corrections, ESOL, workforce, etc.) will have space and time to gather together and look over the conference agenda. You may choose to

"divide and conquer" workshop sessions, seeking out familiar and less familiar topics. After each day of workshops, you can meet up in your Think Tank to share what was taught, shown, and learned.

We are excited to make this conference memorable and enjoyable for all who attend. We know that even with all of our planning, it is all of you who make the conference exciting and memorable, so please encourage all those who can to attend. We look forward to seeing you all in Colonial Williamsburg from July 17th-20th! For more information, visit our [conference website](#) or email us at: aelconference@vcu.edu. 

Tony Ryals is Workforce Support Specialist at the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center and has served as chief conference coordinator for the AE&L Conference.

2018 PROGRESS CALENDAR

JUNE

26 Making the Pieces Fit:
Identifying and Boosting the
Integrated Skills Addressed in a
Transitions Minded Lesson
LINCS Webinar
<https://tinyurl.com/lincsJune26>



JULY

17-20 Adult Education
and Literacy Conference
Williamsburg, VA
<https://tinyurl.com/aelJuly18>



SEPTEMBER

25 Economic Empowerment
"Citizen Seminar"
Train-the-Trainer
Richmond, VA



OCTOBER

19 VATESOL Conference:
Empowering English Learners
for Today's Challenges
Charlottesville, VA
<https://www.vatesol.cloverpad.org>

23-24 VAACE/VLF Joint
Conference
Hampton, VA
<https://vllc.wordpress.com/>



NOVEMBER

12-14 National College
Transition Network (NCTN)
Conference
Cambridge, MA
<https://www.collegetransition.org>

