



National Coalition For Literacy

Professional Quality Policy Principles

Purpose

Research shows that sustained professional development leads to improved student outcomesⁱ. *Professional quality*—including both teacher quality and the conditions professionals need—is critical for advancing the adult education and literacy system. *Professionals* in this system are *practitioners* who work in the fieldⁱⁱ, including adult education, family literacy, and English language learning teachers and tutors, program directors, paraprofessionals, and program staff.

Professional quality in adult education and literacy begins with *teacher quality*, the capacity of teachers to use what they learn from research and professional development to provide effective instruction that helps students acquire knowledge and skills and achieve their learning goals. Teacher quality includes content knowledge and teachers' knowing and using best practices and implementing effective instruction.

Effective instruction in adult education and literacy must also include the extent to which adult students persist in reaching their goals, and outcomes beyond skills development, such as better employment, transition to post-secondary education or training, or achievement of personal and family goals. Teacher quality, therefore, enables students to achieve, persist, and reach their goals.

Second, professional quality includes conditions professionals need in order to be effective: professionalization (licensure and credentialing), professional development, improved working conditions, and research that explores the relationship among these so that the field can continuously improve.

Professionalization, according to TESOL, is “the movement within a field to enhance the quality of practice by establishing standards of competency and educational preparation.” *Licensure and credentialing*, key components of professionalization, are “systems to recognize and document practitioner achievement of competencies or standards.” Credentialing, in particular, involves “the demonstration of proficiency and skills, and recognizes experience and nontraditional qualifications.”ⁱⁱⁱ

Principles

The National Coalition for Literacy supports authorizing legislation that strengthens and sustains a trained, highly effective, and stable adult education and literacy workforce. Such legislation should enable conditions that:

Increase Access to Professional Development

- Increase access to professional development for practitioners, based on practitioner needs, credentialing requirements, and funding priorities.
- Insure that a minimum of 15% of any funds made available at the state level are dedicated for professional development activities.
- Provide the resources necessary so that professional development is high quality, sustained and meaningful, using a variety of evidence-based models and approaches.

Provide Opportunities for Credentialing and Career Advancement

- Provide federal initiatives (policy and funding) that support states to develop, implement, and sustain state-level licensing and credentialing systems.
- Establish pathways to careers through credentials, degrees, and career ladders that are linked to compensation commensurate with performance, experience, and qualifications.

Improve Working Conditions

- Link credentialing initiatives and professional development to supports that enable practitioners to access and benefit from them.
 - Examples of these supports include stable, full time employment, paid benefits, paid professional development release time, paid preparation time, career ladders; and pay on par with professionals commensurate with performance, experience, and qualifications.

Provide for Research in Professional Development

- Fund research that explores the relationship between professional development, working conditions, and student outcomes, and guides decisions about improving the professional quality of the adult education workforce.

While aimed at the federal level, these principles broaden the discussion on what's needed at *all levels* in order to advance the professional quality of the field and help adult learners achieve more.

ⁱ Taylor, B. M., Pearson, P. D., Peterson, D. S., & Rodriguez, M. C. (2005). The CIERA School Change Framework: An evidence-based approach to professional development and school reading improvement. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 40, 40–68.

ⁱⁱ Practitioners who work in the field are those who provide adult education and literacy services as defined in Title II of the Workforce Investment Act. <http://www.ncladvocacy.org/WIASidebySide.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ TESOL (2008). *Position Statement on Professionalization and Credentialing for Adult ESOL Educators*. Alexandria, VA. Retrieved from http://www.tesol.org/s_tesol/bin.asp?CID=32&DID=10883&DOC=FILE.PDF