

Introduction to Massachusetts Professional Standards for ABE Teachers

1. What is the history of the professional standards? How were they developed?

- a. The 1997 Education Reform Act prompted a call for professional development tied more closely to subject matter. It led ACLS and some field practitioners (including John McGovern, one of our panelists) to seek ways to ensure uniform professional standards for MA.
- b. SABES (Carey Reid) and ACLS (Mary Jayne Fay) administrators spent time researching what other states have said about skills, knowledge and abilities that ABE teachers need to have.
- c. Working groups at the Department of Education and SABES used that research to draft the standards. ACLS then convened an 18-member Advisory Council of educators in and outside of the ABE field that refined and approved the final standards that were adopted by the Board of Education in April, 2001.

2. Why is there a current emphasis on professional standards?

- a. There has been a growing emphasis over the years on accountability at the federal level, with more information required under the National Reporting System, for example.
- b. At the state level, we're unveiling a new 5 year strategic plan with 3 goals related on Access, Quality and Next Steps, as you know. One of the objectives under the goal of increasing system effectiveness and quality," is to "Continue to build a standards-based ABE system" Some of the steps identified to reach that objective include
 - Ensure that the ABE professional standards, including the subject matter knowledge requirements, are aligned with the Curriculum Frameworks.
 - Align professional development with the ABE professional standards and subject matter knowledge requirements.
 - Encourage the use of the ABE professional standards and subject matter knowledge requirements to strengthen teaching and learning
- c. With the passage of the most recent Workforce Investment Act, there has been a shift in professional standards at both the federal and state levels. Earlier focus was on inputs, e.g. process, regulations, etc. Current emphasis is on outcomes: What do teachers need to know and be able to do to provide the best services possible to students?

- d. Our focus today is on professional standards, but an equally valuable tool is the set of content standards called “Subject Matter Knowledge Requirements for ABE Teachers” found at this link:
<http://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr47.html?section=07&flag=abe#>
- . With the professional standards, they constitute a comprehensive picture of what teachers need to know and be able to do to ensure high quality teaching and learning.

3. How will ACLS use these standards? Will programs be required to use them? Are you implying that teacher licensure will be a requirement in the future?

ACLS is currently working with SABES to align professional development with the standards. There is no requirement for programs to use them, but we are promoting awareness and use of them because we are convinced that they will improve teaching, strengthen programs and improve student outcomes. Teacher licensure will remain voluntary, as usual.