MASSACHUSETTS
Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Adult and Community Learning Services (ACLS)

English Language Arts Proficiency Guide for Teachers of Adult Basic Education

A Companion to the

Massachusetts Professional Standards for Teachers of Adult Basic Education

Revised April 2023

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
Adult and Community Learning Services
https://www.doe.mass.edu/acls/

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Introduction to the ELA Proficiency Guide

Effective teachers and leaders matter. No other program-based factor has as great an influence on student achievement as an effective teacher (Hightower et al 2011, p.2; McCaffrey et al 2003; Rowan et al 2002). Likewise, effective educational leaders foster the conditions that enable powerful teaching and learning to occur. Ensuring that every student is taught by effective teachers and attends an adult education program led by an effective program director is key to preparing all students for success.

The Massachusetts Professional Standards for Teachers of Adult Basic Education (revised 2021), hereafter referred to as the ABE Professional Standards, outlines what is important for effective adult basic education (ABE) teachers of mathematics and/or English language arts (ELA) to know and be able to do. They are based on the MA standards for teachers in grades K-12 and have been piloted in a range of adult education programs. This document, the *English Language Arts Proficiency Guide for Teachers of Adult Basic Education*, hereafter referred to as the ELA Proficiency Guide, is based on the ABE Professional Standards and contains supporting explanations, essential concepts, and observable teacher and student behaviors.

The ELA Proficiency Guide is a resource for adult education ELA teachers and their program directors. Teachers and directors arrive in adult education programs from a variety of entry points, which ultimately enriches the field and the learning experiences of their students. The ELA Proficiency Guide serves to focus this diverse set of educators on a common vision by specifying what teachers should know and be able to do related to ELA instruction for adult learners.

The ELA Proficiency Guide is designed to be instrumental in:

- guiding the practice of new, developing, and advanced teachers of ELA for adult learners;
- fostering communities of practice among teachers and directors across the state by promoting a shared understanding of effective ELA practice; and
- advancing the adult education field in Massachusetts.

Why the Revised ELA Proficiency Guide?

The original version of this document was developed in 2017 and updated in 2019. This 2022 version addresses a substantive revision to the ABE Professional Standards (2021) that more transparently recognized English learners as a major population served in adult education contexts. The global COVID-19 pandemic that started in 2020 also propelled the adult education field into online and blended forms of delivery, highlighting the need for both instructors and learners to learn and apply new technologies. As a result of these new priorities and the adoption and implementation of the Teaching Skills That Matter (TSTM) framework, concepts related to second language acquisition, culturally responsive teaching, digital literacy, and remote instruction are emphasized in this 2022 version of the document.

The authors drew heavily on the following resources in crafting this document:

- Massachusetts Professional Standards for Teachers of Adult Basic Education and Indicators of Proficiency Rubric (MA DESE ACLS 2021);
- Massachusetts Professional Standards for Teachers of Adult English Speakers of Other Languages (MA DESE ACLS 2021);
- Mathematics Proficiency Guide for Teachers of Adult Education (MA DESE ACLS 2022);
- ELA/Literacy professional development materials created by the federal College and Career Readiness Standards-in-Action project (Standards Work, Inc. for US Department of Education, Office for Career, Technical, and Adult Education [OCTAE], 2016–2021);
- Teaching Skills That Matter (TSTM) initiative from the American Institute for Research (AIR) and OCTAE (2021), promoting contextualized approaches to teaching essential skills and knowledge in adult education.

Relationship of the ELA Proficiency Guide and the Educator Growth and Evaluation Model

The ELA Proficiency Guide is designed to be used in conjunction with the Educator Growth and Evaluation (EGE) Model[1], developed to support teachers and directors in reflecting upon and taking an active role in improving instructional practices.

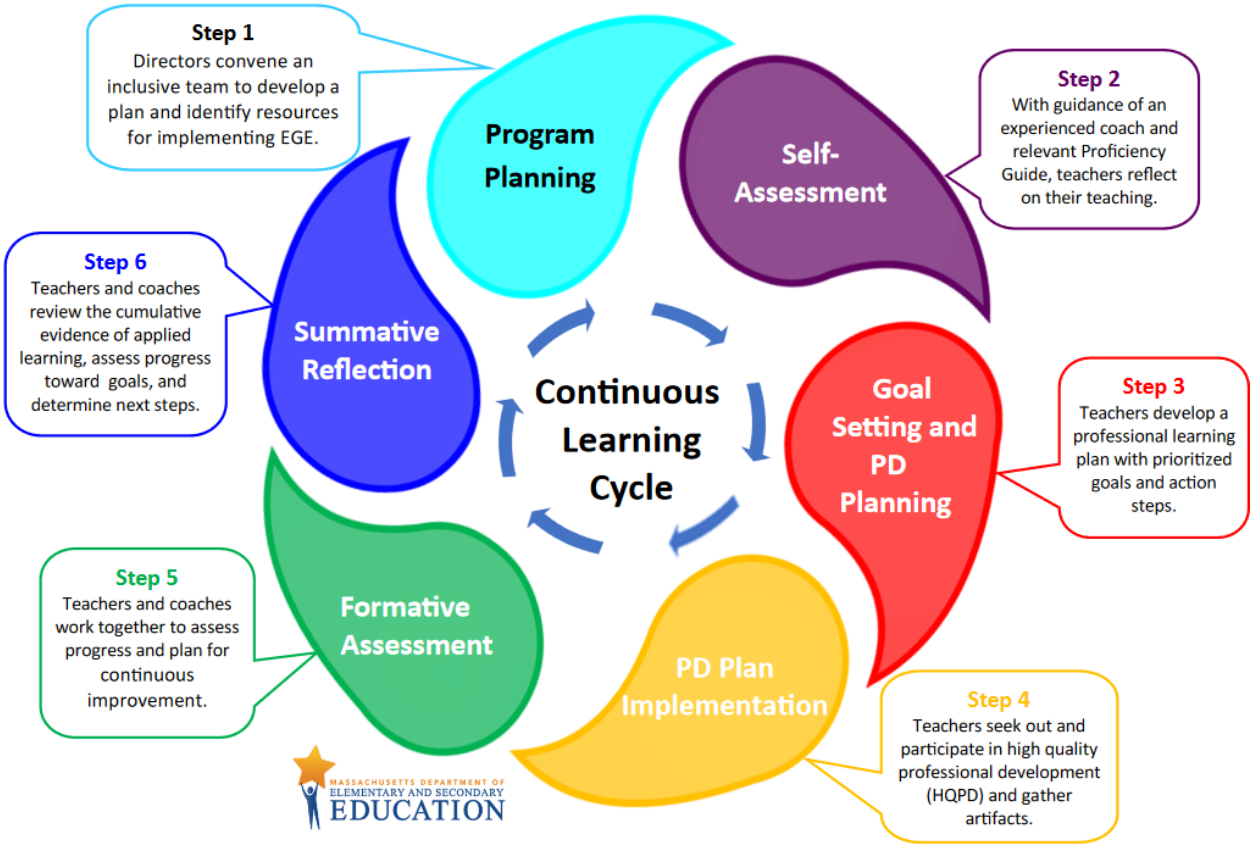
The EGE Model is grounded in three key questions:

1. Are students learning?
2. What is the teacher doing that contributes to and supports that learning?
3. What else might the teacher do to enhance student learning?

The EGE Model guides teachers through a continuous learning cycle and provides a process that can be adopted or adapted according to local program and staff needs and resources (see **Figure 1**).

[1] The EGE Model is adapted from the K-12 *Massachusetts System of Educator Evaluation*, found at http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/.

Figure 1: The Educator Growth and Effectiveness Cycle



Like all effective initiatives, the EGE Cycle begins with a planning step that invites programs to learn about and tailor the EGE process to function effectively within the context of their own programs (Step 1). When the logistics are arranged and an EGE team leader ensures that supports are in place, the teacher and coach (an experienced teacher who has been selected to work with the teacher) begin working together. With the guidance of an experienced coach, the teacher reviews the ABE Professional Standards and the relevant proficiency guide and reflects on their teaching and their professional learning goals (Step 2).

Based on their reflection, teachers draft a professional learning plan to anchor their professional development throughout the EGE Cycle (Step 3). With the support of the coach and EGE team leader, teachers seek out professional learning opportunities, implement new approaches, and reflect on the impact of their changed practice (Step 4). They meet with the coach periodically to assess their progress and receive support and encouragement (Step 5). At the end of the cycle, the teacher and coach review the cumulative evidence of applied learning, assess progress toward the professional learning goals, and determine next steps (Step 6).

The EGE Cycle and the ABE Professional Standards include the Indicators of Proficiency Rubric (MA DESE 2017, revised 2019 and 2021), an optional reference tool that targets effective adult education teaching practices at the "macro" level with descriptions of effective teaching practices that apply to teachers of English language arts and mathematics. The ELA Proficiency Guide provides a clear road map for what these macro-level practices look like for ELA teachers.

Organization of the ELA Proficiency Guide

The structure of the ELA Proficiency Guide builds on the organization of the ABE Professional Standards (see **Figure 2**).

Figure 2: At-A-Glance: The ABE Professional Standards

Domains	**Professional Knowledge (K)**	**Instructional Practice (P)**	**Continuous Improvement (C)**
Standards	**K1. Content, Theory and Research**	**P1. Design and Instruction**	**C1. Growth Mindset**
Indicators	K1.1 Adult Basic Education K1.2 English Language Acquisition* K1.3 Adult Teaching and Learning	P1.1 Standards-based Units P1.2 Well-structured Lessons P1.3 Student Engagement P1.4 Meeting Diverse Needs	C1.1 High Expectations C1.2 Student Ownership C1.3 Lifelong Learning
Standards	**K2. Standards**	**P2. Assessment**	**C2. Reflective Practice**
Indicators	K2.1 ABE Professional Standards K2.2 College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education	P2.1 Assessment Methods P2.2 Modifying Instruction P2.3 Student Progress	C2.1 Self-assessment C2.2 Goal Setting C2.3 Professional Development

**Note: Indicator K1.2 applies to ABE teachers who have English learners in their ABE classes.*

The proficiency guides for both ELA and mathematics use the exact language of the ABE Professional Standards for:

- **Domain**: Domains are the overarching categories of professional practices relevant to effective teaching in adult education contexts. There are three domains for teachers of adult basic education: Professional Knowledge, Instructional Practice, and Continuous Improvement.
- **Standard**: Standards are broad statements about the knowledge and behaviors of effective ELA practitioners. Each of the three domains has two standards.
- **Indicator**: Indicators elaborate on specific aspects of a standard and serve as checkpoints to measure progress toward meeting that standard.

The ELA Proficiency Guide is customized in these ways:

- **Supporting Explanation for Each Standard**: A brief narrative grounds the expectations of each professional standard in research and theory, providing an overview of why the standard and its indicators are relevant to ELA instruction, and pointing practitioners towards areas to explore in more depth.

- **Sample ELA Applications**: These items provide concrete examples of what effective ELA teachers know and do for each indicator. They are not meant to be exhaustive in scope.
- **References & Resources**: See the extensive lists located at the end of this document.

Related materials are located at https://www.sabes.org/content/ela-proficiency-guide, including a glossary of key terms used in the ELA Proficiency Guide and an ELA Self-Evaluation Tool (ELA-SET) that can be used by teachers to reflect on their instructional practice relative to the standards and set professional learning goals.

As you progress through the ELA Proficiency Guide you will note that some ideas are repeated across various items. For instance, *differentiation* is mentioned in several places. References to *culminating projects*, *text selection*, and *assessment* are also found multiple times. This purposeful redundancy is due to a number of factors:

- Repetition of certain concepts were built into the ABE Professional Standards, upon which this proficiency guide is based.
- Key concepts related to ELA instruction warrant repetition and reinforcement, so they become embedded in teaching.
- Multiple reasons for using specific approaches in the ELA classroom often exist. For instance, using **culminating projects** is important because doing so:
    - requires the integration of the College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education, English Language Arts and Literacy (CCRSAE-ELA) (K2.2),
    - provides a meaningful context and purpose for selecting, organizing, and teaching standards within a unit (P1.1),
    - provides vehicles for exploring cultural themes (K1.2; P1.4),
    - fosters student-to-student interaction and language production (K1.2; P1.3), and
    - develops problem-solving and critical thinking skills (P1.1).

Suggestions for Using This Document

The ELA Proficiency Guide reflects current research and understandings of what effective ABE educators know and can do related to English language arts (ELA) teaching and learning.

ELA teachers may use this guide to:

- Self-assess and reflect on their own ELA instructional practice and skills. The **Focus** column provided in the *ELA Sample Applications* section for each indicator can be used to track such reflections, which can then be used to shape professional development plans and collaborations with other practitioners.
- Choose from the examples in the **Do** column for evidence-based approaches to use in their classrooms.
- Target specific topics for in-depth exploration, guided by the References & Resources section.

Program directors, evaluators, and lead teachers may use this document for support with:

- Hiring, supervising, and evaluating staff.
- Facilitating collaborative efforts to enhance ELA instruction within programs.
- Targeting professional development activities that teachers might engage in as teams to enrich their experience and to build leadership.

Ultimately, the goal is to improve and accelerate students' outcomes, and both the ABE Professional Standards and the ELA Proficiency Guide directly support the achievement of those outcomes.

Where to Find Support

Use of the ELA Proficiency Guide is intended to be supported by professional development and training. Teachers, directors, supervisors, and evaluators should pursue ongoing professional learning to stay current on new approaches, policies, and materials and to maintain collaborative networks statewide.

The SABES ELA Curriculum & Instruction PD Center is the state's provider of high-quality professional development, coaching, and resources aligned with the ELA Proficiency Guide. For more information, contact Evonne Peters, Director (evonne_peters@worlded.org).

The SABES Program Support Professional Development Center provides support, guidance, and professional development to program directors and EGE team leaders, assisting them in adopting and adapting the EGE Model to their needs.

Additional online resources and support related to the ELA Proficiency Guide are available through the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Office of Adult and Community Learning Services (ACLS). All resources meet the states' standards for high quality professional development and incorporate current research and evidence-based instruction.

PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE DOMAIN (K)

Effective teachers draw on a body of professional knowledge, research, and standards to respond to the needs of their students within their educational contexts. They have considerable knowledge of what they teach (i.e., mathematics, ELA). They know and understand the content and underlying concepts relevant to what they teach. They understand what constitutes effective, developmentally appropriate teaching strategies and use this knowledge to make the content meaningful to students.

Professional Knowledge (K)
K1. Content, Theory and Research
K1.1 Adult Basic Education
K1.2 English Language Acquisition
K1.3 Adult Teaching and Learning
K2. Standards
K2.1 ABE Professional Standards
K2.2 College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education

Effective teachers know their students well, including their diverse linguistic, cultural, and educational backgrounds. They know how the experiences that adult learners bring to the classroom affect their continued learning. They know how to structure their lessons to meet the social and intellectual development and characteristics of adult learners so they can succeed academically.

STANDARD K1: Content, Theory, and Research

Knows the subject matter well, understands how adults learn, and draws upon relevant theories and research in adult education. Applies this knowledge to the design of rigorous learning experiences that enable students to acquire increasingly complex knowledge and skills.

Supporting Explanation for Standard K1

Teachers of English Language Arts (ELA) in Massachusetts know how to read, write, speak, and listen at high levels of proficiency. But effective ELA teachers also know how to *teach* language and literacy skills and practices to adults. To do so, they draw upon theory and research (and related policies) related to adult basic education, English language acquisition, and adult teaching and learning.

Adult Basic Education

As professional educators, effective ELA teachers in ABE programs construct a complex network of knowledge related to their work. One guide to relevant theory and research comes from current federal and state policies. For instance, at the federal level, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) focuses the field on research related to reading, requiring that adult education programs provide to learners at all instructional levels explicit and systematic instruction in the four essential components of reading (alphabetics, vocabulary development, reading fluency, and reading comprehension).

In Massachusetts, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) office that oversees adult education is the Adult and Community Learning Services (ACLS) unit. Based on WIOA, ACLS requires that ABE programs use evidence-based reading instruction (EBRI) to teach the essential components. EBRI refers to those instructional approaches to reading that are based in rigorous research and professional wisdom.

Effective ELA teachers stay apprised of the latest developments in EBRI through readings, discussion groups, and workshops. The SABES ELA Center offers EBRI training, including for the federal STAR project, an initiative of the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE) for teachers of intermediate-level readers (GLE 4-8).

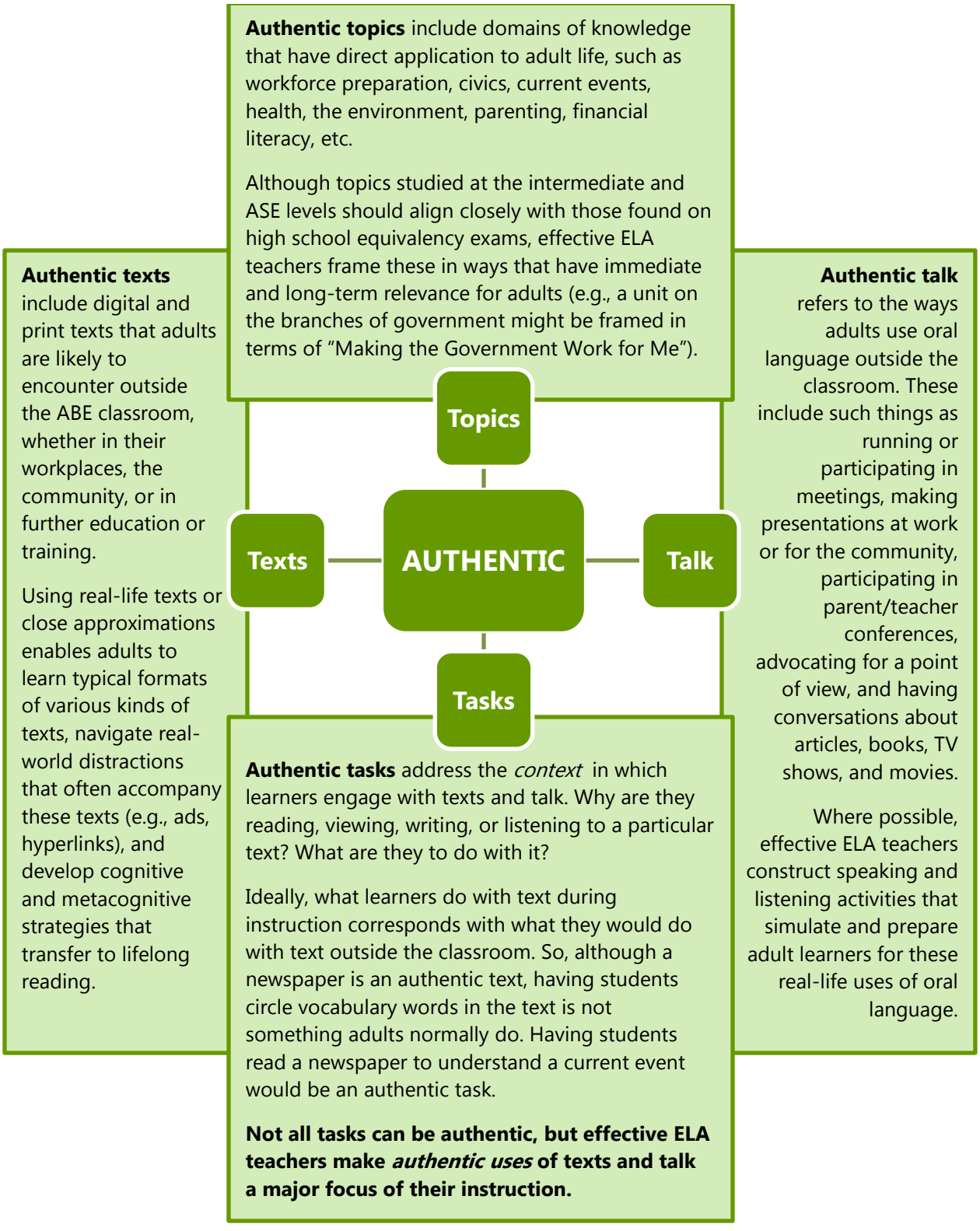
In addition to continuing to deepen their knowledge of EBRI, effective ELA teachers are familiar with evidence-based research in teaching writing and oral communication, emphasizing the use of language in authentic and varied contexts (see **Figure 3**, next page). They use process approaches to developing written texts and formal presentations, incorporating drafting, feedback, and revisions before "going public." Effective ELA teachers also realize that all the areas of English language arts instruction—reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language—are integrated when put to use in adult tasks outside the classroom. Therefore, these instructors know to provide opportunities for students to integrate the ELA skills inside the classroom, where the teachers can provide the necessary scaffolding.

And, in a world increasingly dependent on technology, adult educators support their learners in developing digital literacy. Digital literacy refers to the ability to use technology to find, evaluate, organize, create, and communicate information (MA DESE ACLS, 2021a). Digital literacy goes above and beyond a focus on the mechanics of technology: it emphasizes the ability to use technology to achieve goals. Digital literacy empowers adults to explore, to experiment, and to develop expertise; thus, effective ELA teachers know to provide learners opportunities to use technology for these purposes as part of instruction.

Although all teachers play a role in incorporating digital literacy into their instruction, ELA teachers appreciate their unique responsibility to stay up-to-date on instructional techniques that use and cultivate digital literacy skills through real world applications.

Figure 3: What Does "Authentic" Mean?

"Authentic" refers to materials, activities, and conversations adults might encounter outside the ABE setting. Effective ELA teachers provide regular opportunities for adult learners to engage with authentic **topics, texts, talk,** and **tasks**.



Support for English Learners

The adult education system in MA has both ABE (Adult Basic Education) and ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) classes. While ESOL classes focus exclusively on teaching those who need to learn the English language, many ABE classes serve both students who speak English as a first language and students for whom English is their second or third language. The latter are:

- Students who graduated from ESOL classes and are moving into ABE content classes, or
- Students whose level of English is too high for ESOL classes but who still need support in building English language proficiency, especially in the academic content areas.

Because English Learners (ELs) comprise such a significant portion of ABE classes, effective ELA teachers provide additional instructional scaffolds to support the language development of these students.

Considerable overlap exists between "good teaching" as it applies to speakers of English as a first language and "good teaching" of ELs. Effective ELA teachers are able to think intentionally about why certain approaches may or may not be useful for their ELs, making instructional moves as needed to address specific issues. In the ELA classroom, examples of instructional moves to support ELs include:

- Building knowledge about the text and topic of the lesson;
- Providing ample opportunities for ELs to construct, deepen, and refine their understanding of the text(s) and to develop their language; and
- Solidifying or extending ELs' understanding of what they are reading and learning.

Effective ELA teachers also know that some ELs arrive with at least some or even substantial literacy in their first (or another) language, but the language(s) with which they are familiar may or may not be based in an alphabetic system. ELs who arrive with an understanding of how an alphabetic system works may quickly transfer that learning to English, whereas learners with no literacy or literacy in a different kind of language system may experience initial challenges. Similarly, some ELs enter an ABE program with experience with schooling, bringing positive and/or negative interpretations of that experience with them. ELs who have experienced education systems that are highly structured and didactic may need support in understanding how instruction is delivered in an ABE setting.

For all these reasons, effective ELA teachers learn as much as they can about the languages, literacy practices, and school experiences of their English learners in order to make connections and distinctions that may aid ELs as they learn a new language.

Adult Teaching and Learning

Another key knowledge area important to ELA instruction is the theory and research related to adult teaching and learning. Effective ELA teachers of adults know that teaching adults literacy and language skills can differ from teaching children. The explanations for the literacy levels of adult learners can be more complex than those for children and may involve the lack of or interrupted schooling as well as trauma, past or current homelessness, substance abuse, learning

disabilities, or erratic and idiosyncratic sub-skill development. Multiple factors may interact over time to complicate literacy learning in adulthood, highlighting the role of motivation and persistence. Effective ELA teachers are attuned to instructional approaches that may be appropriate for K-12 students but are not necessarily applicable to adult education, especially without adaptation.

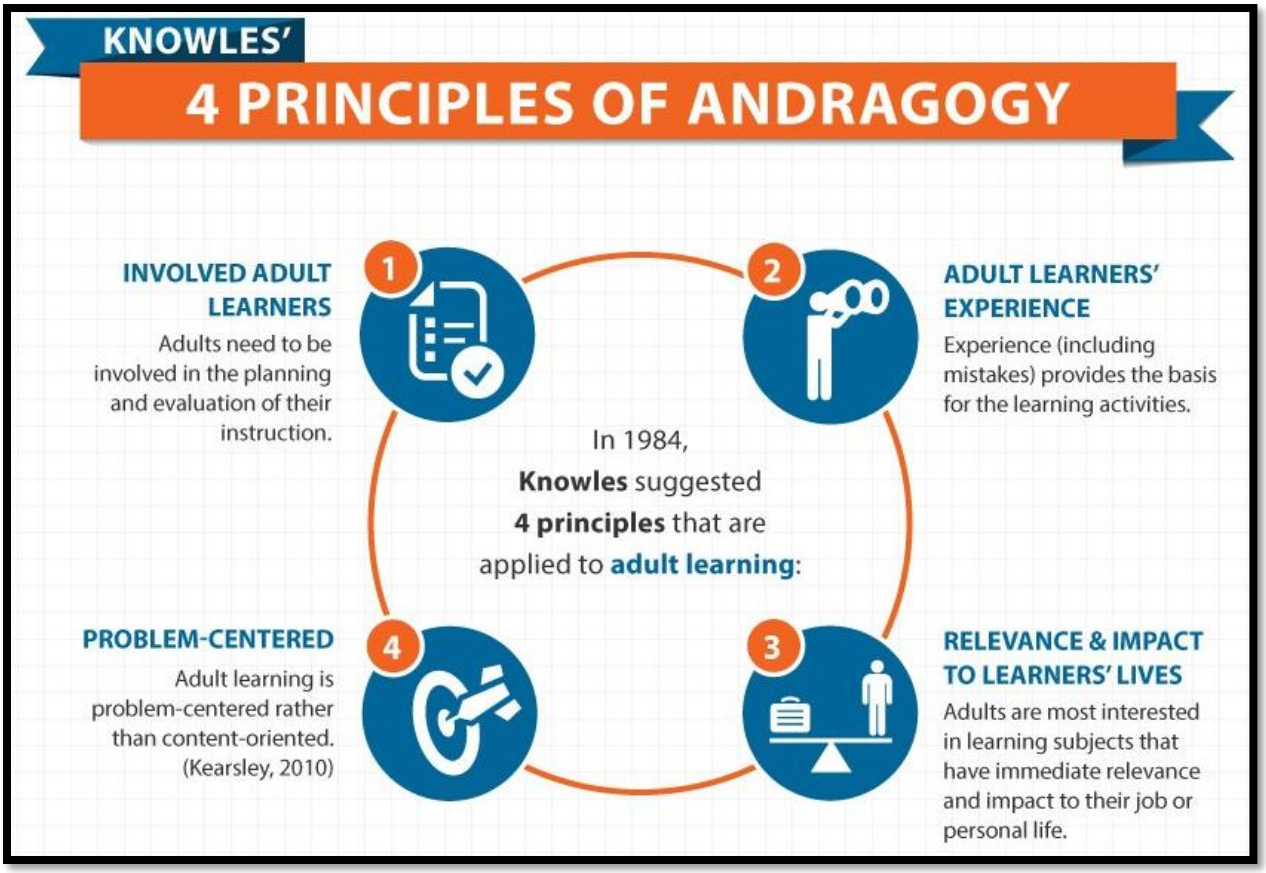
Adult learning theories can help tease out what is appropriate and what is not when making decisions about possible instructional approaches. Two major theories are especially relevant to adult literacy instruction: andragogy and self-directed learning (OVAE 2010b).

Andragogy and Self-Directed Learning

Malcolm Knowles (1984) was the first theorist to widely promote the notion that *andragogy*, the art and science of helping adults learn, is different from *pedagogy*, the teaching of children. The basic premise of andragogy is that adults have accumulated a good deal of knowledge from their family, community, and workplace experiences over the years, and these experiences can be assets when approaching new learning.

Andragogy suggests that adult educators should honor the experience that adult learners bring to the classroom, ensure that learners see the immediate relevance to their job or personal life, organize learning around problems/projects instead of decontextualized content, and involve adult learners in planning and evaluating their learning (Knowles 1984). (See **Figure 4**, next page.)

Figure 4: Knowles' Principles of Andragogy



Source: https://elearninginfographics.com/adult-learning-theory-andragogy-infographic/

Building on the work of Knowles, researchers have explored self-directed learning, or SDL, in relation to adult learning. SDL can describe either a personal attribute or an approach to organizing instruction. As a personal attribute, SDL refers to the ease individuals have in taking charge of their own learning. As an instructional approach, SDL refers to a learner-centered method that puts learners in the driver's seat, managing the learning process. The goal of SDL as an instructional approach is to tap into comfortable ways of learning for many adults as well as to develop the personal attribute of managing lifelong learning (Merriam & Bierema, 2014).

Although effective ELA teachers draw from key ideas that comprise andragogy and SDL, they understand the limitations of these theories to fully capture the complexity of adult learning. For instance, some adults come from cultures that expect teachers to take more of a traditional role in the classroom, and these learners may be resistant to approaches where teachers use more of a problem/project-based approach that relies on self-directed learning (Brookfield, 2003; Merriam & Bierema, 2014). In these cases, effective ELA teachers explain the rationale for the approach clearly and explicitly teach steps in complicated processes. Other adult learners may not have the literacy skills or the metacognitive abilities to manage their own learning. In these cases, effective ELA teachers scaffold learning and instruction to meet the needs of their learners, adapting approaches to ensure that all learners are successful.

Indicator K1.1. Adult Basic Education

Demonstrates knowledge of current research and a comprehensive understanding of the underlying concepts, procedural knowledge, and contextualized application of the subject matter by engaging students in evidence-based instruction that enables them to acquire increasingly complex knowledge and skills.

Sample ELA Applications		
What Effective ELA Teachers KNOW	**What Effective ELA Teachers DO**	**✓ Focus**
A. Students at all levels should be engaged in evidence-based reading instruction (EBRI), based on diagnostic assessment.	1) Diagnostically assess learners in the essential reading components *(i.e., alphabetics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension).* 2) For beginning readers (GLE 0-3), emphasize alphabetics and fluency instruction at learners' diagnosed instructional levels but also include vocabulary and comprehension instruction. (See report by Strucker, 2021.) 3) For intermediate readers (GLE 4-8), emphasize students' diagnosed priorities related to alphabetics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension, using materials and approaches appropriate for the diagnosed instructional levels. (See STAR.) 4) For ASE readers (GLE 9-12), emphasize vocabulary (with embedded word analysis) and comprehension at the diagnosed performance levels; address fluency as needed. (See Indicator P1.4, *Meeting Diverse Needs:* D, E, F, G.)	
B. The differences between informational and literary texts, their structures, and their importance in academic and non-academic settings need to be taught to both English as a first language speakers and English learners.	1) Engage students in using, analyzing, and distinguishing among the purposes and organizational structures of written arguments, informative/explanatory texts, and narrative texts. 2) Have students, through discussion and writing, evaluate how well authors support claims with verifiable facts, valid reasoning, and relevant and sufficient evidence. 3) Engage students in reading common literary genres *(e.g., novel, short story, poem, drama),* identifying, analyzing, critiquing, and appreciating the authors' use of literary techniques *(e.g., simile, metaphor, idioms)* and overall craft. 4) Incorporate a range of literary and informational text as both print and digital texts, exploring differences, drawbacks, and benefits of different formats *(e.g., website vs. textbook presentation of the same topic; reading a book on a screen vs. on paper).*	

What Effective ELA Teachers KNOW	What Effective ELA Teachers DO	✓ Focus
	5) Invite English learners to make connections with informational and literary structures in their own language/cultures.	
C. Writing takes time, both in terms of skill development and in terms of creating individual products.	1) Foster a writing community among students that encourages sustained, engaging, collaborative, and consistent writing routines. 2) Design learning experiences that lead students through the stages of the writing process *(e.g., planning/organizing, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing original compositions).* 3) Teach students how to use digital tools to organize their ideas before writing, draft and revise their writing, collaborate with others, and publish their final product. 4) Incorporate a broad range of writing products, including online and multimedia projects *(e.g., blogs, infographics, digital brochures).*	
D. Language instruction requires a working knowledge of standard English conventions and the evidence-based, contextualized approaches for teaching vocabulary, grammar, and writing conventions.	1) Highlight differences in language use in terms of appropriateness or "standard," not "correctness" *(e.g., point out that standard English is the English dialect of choice in college and many careers).* 2) Demonstrate how ideas within and across sentences connect to each other through their grammar *(e.g., modifying words and phrases; signal words).* 3) Teach and have students practice/use grammar skills and vocabulary within authentic communicative contexts *(e.g., using new sentence structures and vocabulary in speaking and writing about content topics under study; peer-editing for standard English usage; navigating complex structures in text; critiquing an author's word choice).* 4) Provide explicit instruction and ample practice with combining sentences and imitating model sentences, as appropriate. 5) Invite English learners to make connections and see differences between English grammar and their own language structures.	
E. Learners benefit from explicit instruction and practice in oral communication, collaboration, and presentation skills.	1) Provide modeling, scaffolding, and practice with the speaking and listening skills needed for effective adult oral communication. 2) Regularly engage students in speaking in informal, collaborative, and formal contexts *(e.g., small group*	

What Effective ELA Teachers KNOW	What Effective ELA Teachers DO	✓ Focus
	discussion of text; working on a project together; making a presentation to the class). 3) Engage students in creating videos, podcasts, and multimedia presentations to develop and showcase their learning.	
F. Sophisticated language users apply cognitive and metacognitive strategies to accomplish reading, writing, speaking, and listening tasks; these strategies are not known nor automatically used by many adult learners.	1) Engage learners in thinking, writing, and talking about their own thinking as it relates to specific literacy tasks *(e.g., through journals, logs, class conversations).* 2) Explain, model, and provide practice in specific strategies for reading comprehension *(e.g., margin notes, self-questioning, summarizing)*; writing *(e.g., graphic organizers, outlines, editing checklists)*; and speaking/listening *(e.g., taking notes, asking questions).* 3) Invite students to experience and compare different strategies in terms of effectiveness in meeting reading goals (not based on how "fun" the activity is).	
G. The development of digital literacy skills requires ongoing and regular practice and application.	1) Regularly require students to use technology to find, evaluate, organize, create, and/or communicate information and/or to perform practical tasks *(e.g., conduct an online search for articles related to a project; draft and edit using word processing program; posting to on an online class discussion board).* 2) Include explicit instruction in how to use digital tools/resources/processes, providing scaffolding as needed. 3) Provide opportunities for students to explore and experiment with technology and digital tools/resources/processes.	
H. Meaningful, authentic tasks/projects require adult learners to integrate reading, writing, and oral language in ways that thoughtfully address purpose, context, and audience.	1) Select and use evidence-based instructional practices that support the development of complementary skills *(e.g., writing-to-learn strategies that improve reading comprehension; reading, evaluating, and analyzing texts to inform research papers; reading to participate in a group discussion).* 2) Incorporate reading, writing, and oral language tasks that address a range of audiences and purposes, including building content knowledge in civics, health literacy, science, financial literacy, and workforce preparation as well as developing digital literacy. 3) Design authentic culminating unit projects that require the application of CCRSAE-ELA skills within tasks relevant to adults.	

Indicator K1.2. English Language Acquisition

Demonstrates knowledge of current research and a comprehensive understanding of language acquisition, communicative competence, and the structure and conventions of English by designing engaging learning experiences that advance English learners' linguistic and academic skills. *(For ABE teachers who have English learners in their ABE classes.)*

Sample ELA Applications		
What Effective ELA Teachers KNOW	**What Effective ELA Teachers DO**	**✓ Focus**
A. Building knowledge about the text and topic of each lesson prepares ELs to read the text and access the content of a lesson.	1) Get to know their students' backgrounds, including their experiences with English literacy and U.S. schooling *(e.g., how long they have been speaking English; their comfort with reading and writing English; educational experiences).* 2) Encourage learners to draw on their past experiences and home language to understand key concepts. 3) Provide graphic organizers that help learners access prior knowledge related to the text. 4) Use visuals, movies, photographs, or illustrations to build knowledge prior to reading/listening to a text. 5) Teach Tier 2 (academic) and Tier 3 (specialized) vocabulary, inviting learners to make connections to cognates and other aspects of their home language. 6) Be transparent/explicit about the differences between informal language practices and academic language practices.	
B. ELs should be provided multiple opportunities to construct, deepen, and refine their understanding of the text(s) and to develop their language.	1) Include multiple close reads of the text for different purposes to enable learners to recognize new information and reach deeper understanding. 2) Have students read aloud a text to build fluency with its words, syntax, and meaning. 3) Engage ELs regularly in authentic communicative activities, enabling them to produce language, experiment, and refine their use of English *(e.g., through large group discussions, small group conversations, presentations, writing tasks)*. 4) Encourage and include communication that supplements language *(e.g., gestures, visuals, manipulatives).* 5) Spiral instruction, revisiting skills and topics in more sophisticated ways and in new situations. 6) Accept that ELs make many mistakes in their English language use and choose carefully when to correct errors.	

What Effective ELA Teachers KNOW	What Effective ELA Teachers DO	✓ Focus
C. It is important for ELs to solidify and extend their understanding of what they are reading and learning.	1) Have students recreate orally or in writing parts of the text in their speaking or writing. 2) Incorporate scaffolds such as sentence starters, linking words, transitional phrases. 3) Encourage students to reflect on their learning. 4) Ensure that ELs are regularly engaged in all ELA skill areas (reading, writing, speaking, and listening), using areas of strength to prepare for more challenging communicative tasks *(e.g., pair/share before writing a response, for those with more advanced oral skills; making notes [but not scripts] before joining a focused conversation, for those with stronger writing skills).* 5) Invite learners to express increasingly more complex and abstract ideas.	

Indicator K1.3. Adult Teaching and Learning

Demonstrates knowledge of current research and a comprehensive understanding of andragogy and the learning processes of adults. Designs engaging learning experiences that honor the life experiences of adult learners.

Sample ELA Applications		
What Effective ELA Teachers KNOW	**What Effective ELA Teachers DO**	**✓ Focus**
A. Students vary greatly in their language proficiency levels and in the underlying reasons for these levels, so diagnostic assessment, scaffolding, and practice are especially important.	1) Assess student strengths and needs. (See *Standard P2: Assessment*) 2) Use assessment results and CCRSAE to inform level-appropriate instruction. 3) Provide structured, evidence-based instruction, including explicit instruction and a variety of opportunities for individual practice/application.	
B. Many adult learners have experienced failure with previous schooling, resulting in negative attitudes and anxiety about ELA learning.	1) Create learning environments where students can gain confidence in their ability to learn by succeeding with tasks that require productive struggle. 2) Develop non-judgmental learning environments that value mistakes and misunderstandings as ways to deepen learning.	
C. Adult learners need to see the relevance of new skills to their lives and take responsibility for the learning process.	1) Explore topics of interest and relevance to the learners in the classroom. 2) Apply new CCRSAE-ELA skills in authentic texts and projects. 3) Support learners in managing their learning, solving problems, and completing projects (e.g., stating goals, making action plans). (See *Indicator C1.2. Student Ownership*.) 4) Integrate use of digital tools and resources as an authentic part of instruction in academic content *(e.g., accessing an article, video, or podcast that refines understanding about a content topic under study; submitting Exit Tickets electronically; using Jamboard for a group discussion).*	

STANDARD K2: Standards

Draws upon a comprehensive knowledge of adult education state standards for teaching and learning. Applies this knowledge to the design and implementation of rigorous units with lessons and learning experiences that enable students to acquire the knowledge and skills needed for postsecondary education, training, and careers.

Supporting Explanation for Standard K2

The Massachusetts ABE field has two sets of standards that all ELA teachers should know and use. One set describes **teacher** knowledge and behavior while the other describes **student** knowledge and behavior.

The ABE Professional Standards (revised 2021) describe what practitioners should know and be able to do as effective teachers in the adult basic education classroom. The ELA Proficiency Guide (this document) supports practitioners in customizing the more general ABE Professional Standards to the teaching of language and literacy.

The second set of standards that guides the work of ELA teachers is the *College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education* (CCRSAE; Pimentel 2013). The ELA content standards in that document provide guidance for what learners at each National Reporting System for Adult Education (NRS) level should know and be able to do in the areas of reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language, in order to be prepared for postsecondary education, family-sustaining employment, and civic life. Adapted from work in K-12, the CCRSAE were adopted by ACLS for ABE instruction in 2013. ELA curricula and instruction in programs throughout the state should now be aligned with the CCRSAE and integrate the three instructional shifts prompted by the content standards: (1) engaging with appropriately complex text, (2) focusing on evidence, and (3) building knowledge. More information about building standards-based curriculum is provided in the *Supporting Explanation* for Standard P1.

Indicator K2.1. Professional Standards for Teachers of Adult Education

Demonstrates comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the state standards for teachers of adult learners through engagement in an educator growth and evaluation process. Uses the Proficiency Guides to support effective instructional practice and to implement learning experiences that facilitate learners' achievement.

Sample ELA Applications		
What Effective ELA Teachers KNOW	**What Effective ELA Teachers DO**	**✓ Focus**
A. Professional standards provide clear guidance for adult education teachers about what the state and individual programs expect, related to curriculum, instruction, and academic rigor.	1) Connect the ABE Professional Standards, the ELA Proficiency Guide, and the EGE Model. 2) Use the ELA Proficiency Guide and associated tools to understand what effective teaching looks like in ELA classrooms. 3) Participate in program activities and state-level professional development that enhance understanding of the ELA Proficiency Guide.	

Indicator K2.2. College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education (CCRSAE)

Demonstrates comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the CCRSAE anchor and level-specific standards and the Standards for Mathematical Practice by aligning instruction to the appropriate standards at Levels A through D-E. Instruction regularly reflects the instructional shifts for English language arts/literacy or mathematics, depending on the content being taught.

Sample ELA Applications		
What Effective ELA Teachers KNOW	**What Effective ELA Teachers DO**	**✓ Focus**
A. The CCRSAE provide clear guidance about the ELA skills required for students to participate fully in the workplace, in college and training settings, and in civic life.	1) Use the narrative information accompanying the CCRSAE ELA standards to understand what they are, where they come from, and what they should accomplish. 2) Annually participate in program activities and state-level professional development that enhance understanding of the CCRSAE ELA standards, the instructional shifts, and standards-based instruction.	
B. ABE programs and teachers must use curriculum that matches the demands of the CCRSAE for ELA/literacy from Levels A through D-E.	1) Habitually review the same anchor standard across CCRSAE-ELA levels A-E to understand the developmental continuum and use it to differentiate instruction according to the levels of the students in the classroom. 2) Track lessons and units to ensure the full range of ELA standards for a level are being taught. 3) Develop/adapt/use systems and templates to ensure that the CCRSAE-ELA standards and instructional shifts are the focus of instruction *(e.g., program scope and sequence; program unit plans; lesson plan templates).*	

INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICE DOMAIN (P)

Effective teachers operate effectively at all stages of the teaching and learning cycle, including planning learning experiences, delivering instruction, conducting formative assessments, providing feedback on student learning, and reflecting on and modifying practices as needed.

Effective teachers use a repertoire of effective instructional strategies to implement engaging, well-designed lessons with defined outcomes. They use technology to facilitate learning (e.g., providing extended practice, collaboration, differentiation) and expand their students' abilities with technology.

Instructional Practice (P)
P1. Design and Instruction
P1.1 Standards-based Units
P1.2 Well-structured Lessons
P1.3 Student Engagement
P1.4 Meeting Diverse Needs
P2. Assessment
P2.1 Assessment Methods
P2.2 Modifying Instruction
P2.3 Student Progress

Effective teachers design and implement engaging lessons based on well-defined learning objectives and use evidence-based instructional strategies that promote deep learning, problem solving, and the transfer of learning across authentic contexts.

Effective teachers regularly evaluate student progress to measure the effectiveness of their instruction and to ensure they are meeting the professional standards and the learning needs of their students. They interpret and use student data to assess progress, diagnose barriers to learning, and challenge students to improve their performance.

STANDARD P1: Design and Instruction

Uses knowledge of the adult education state standards to guide the design of academically rigorous instruction that makes knowledge and skills accessible to all students and facilitates mastery of adult learning standards. Incorporates a variety of differentiated instructional methods that engage adult learners in challenging but accessible tasks, support the language and academic development English learners where applicable, the development of critical thinking, and accommodate diverse needs.

Supporting Explanation for Standard P1

A major responsibility of ELA teachers is to design and implement instructional plans that are standards-based, engaging, and meet the diverse needs of adult learners.

Standards-Based Curriculum

Each program should use **standards-based** ELA curriculum that is **rigorous** and **coherent**.

Curriculum is considered **standards-based** when it is designed to develop the knowledge and skills required to meet a specific set of standards. In MA, ELA teachers use the ELA/Literacy standards in the College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education (CCRSAE) (Pimentel 2013).

Curriculum is considered **rigorous** when it appropriately challenges learners in their skill development, develops critical thinking and problem-solving, and prepares learners for their next steps in college, careers, and citizenship.

Curriculum is considered **coherent** when the knowledge and skills for each program level build logically on each other within any one level (horizontal alignment) and across all the program levels (vertical alignment).

Curriculum Elements

Developing rigorous and coherent standards-based curriculum is a sophisticated enterprise that teachers cannot be expected to do on a daily basis. Therefore, MA programs develop or adopt a number of products to support their teachers. These include:

(1) a program scope and sequence,

(2) program unit plans, and

(3) teacher lesson plans.

A ***scope and sequence*** presents an overview of the curriculum, an at-a-glance picture of all the instructional units taught at each program level over the course of a learning cycle (usually a school year). An instructional unit, or "unit," is a set of linked lessons designed to teach a set of ELA skills over a period of time. For each unit, the scope and sequence includes (at least) the CCRSAE-ELA standards, the corresponding knowledge-building topics within which they are taught, the culminating assessment through which learners demonstrate their learning, and major texts used in the unit.

Unit plans take a deep dive into each unit mentioned on the scope and sequence, providing teachers with specific unit objectives, formative and summative assessments, a suggested sequence of lessons and major activities, recommendations for differentiating instruction, additional resources, and (possibly) sample lesson plans.

Teachers use the rich resources provided through the program unit plans to then create their own ***lesson plans,*** adapting them as needed to address the needs, interests, and goals of their particular students in real time.

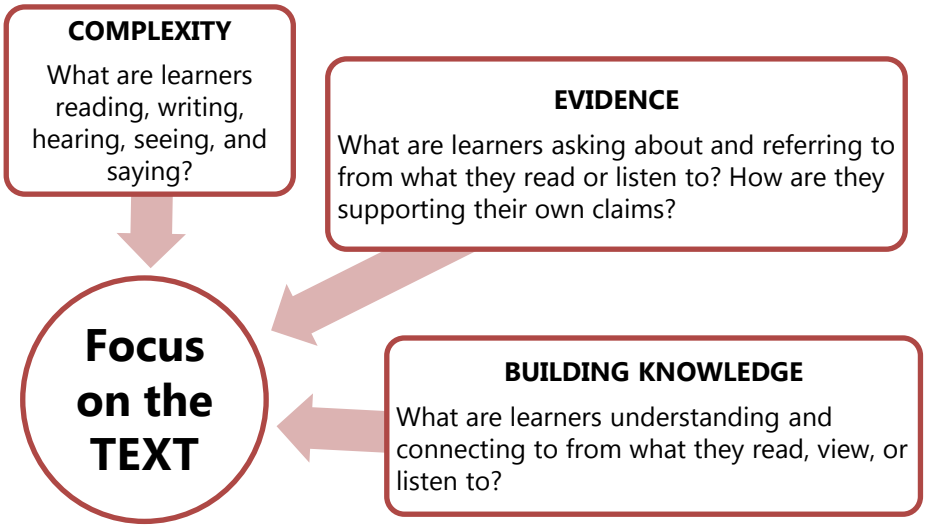
ACLS and the SABES ELA C&I PD Center have developed optional curriculum templates and tools, supplemented with professional development and coaching.

Designing Curriculum

Effective ELA teachers are integral to the development of a program's curriculum. In this work, they are careful to embed the three instructional shifts prompted by the CCRSAE-ELA into units and individual lessons (see **Figure 5**):

- Practice with (appropriately) complex text and academic language
- Ground reading, writing, & speaking in evidence from texts
- Build knowledge through connected texts, especially content-rich non-fiction

Figure 5: The Three Shifts of the CCRSAE-ELA



In designing curriculum, ELA teachers are guided by the research in adult literacy that has found that instruction "is most likely to lead to durable, transferable learning if it incorporates real-world activities, tasks, and tools" (NRC 2012c, ch. 4, pg. 13). Thus, they design units around meaningful, adult-oriented topics and academic content, employing contextualized learning approaches (e.g., project-based learning, problem-based learning).

Using the **backward design** strategy for instructional planning, specific reading, writing, speaking/listening, and language standards are turned into desired unit outcomes, objectives, and accompanying assessments. Achievement of the unit outcomes is measured through performance on complex assessment tasks, such as written products, oral presentations, or similar projects that foster the integration of ELA skills, the development of digital literacy skills, and the transfer of learning to the contexts in which adults use their literacy and language skills: work, communities, families, and postsecondary education and/or training.

Unit developers and teachers in real time carefully select meaningful complex texts at the appropriate level, printed and digital texts that will challenge learners and facilitate learning of ELA skills, digital literacy, and knowledge of the world. They also consider in-person and remote modes of instruction, incorporating specific technology and/or online tools and resources into each unit and most lessons. Since unit outcomes may involve (appropriately) complex products, lessons taught across the unit present information in a clear and organized manner, chunk information appropriately, develop skills over time, and provide regular review and reinforcement (NRC 2012c).

Individual lessons within the unit target specific standards-based objectives, and effective ELA teachers include scaffolded, explicit instruction. They use the gradual release of responsibility model liberally, providing explanations, models, and guided practice, before expecting learners to be successful with independent practice/application. They think intentionally about grounding concepts in concrete experiences and making abstract ideas as transparent as possible. In addition, they carefully sequence and pace activities and lessons in logical ways. They vary

instruction, structuring small-group and large-group activities to expand learner experiences with types of people, texts, and tasks (NRC 2012c).

Student Engagement and Diverse Learners

Effective ELA practitioners pay special attention to student engagement, designing learning tasks that foster curiosity, cultivate student interest, and promote intrinsic motivation. Students who are engaged with their learning are more likely to learn in ways that are long-lasting and transferable. The National Research Council identified several guidelines teachers can follow to enhance engagement (NRC 2012c). (See **Figure 6**.)

Figure 6: Guidelines for Fostering Student Engagement

- **Choose the appropriate level of difficulty** (e.g., select goals, texts, and tasks that are not too easy nor too difficult)
- **Combine instruction in complex learning strategies with learning of content** (e.g., ask *who, what, where, when, why, how* questions when reading to understand the information)
- **Encourage learners to generate content** (e.g., synthesize information from several sources in a written form instead of answering multiple-choice questions)
- **Encourage learners to generate explanations or resolve contradictions** (e.g., construct arguments in support of a claim)
- **Encourage learners to construct ideas from multiple points of view and different perspectives** (e.g., explore a short story from the perspective of different characters or a controversial topic from the perspective of different stakeholders)
- **Cultivate adaptive, interactive learning environments** (e.g., offer finely-tuned feedback; provide prompts; practice skills for a real-life purpose)
- **Use and inspire learners' interests** (e.g., connect unit topics to students' longstanding personal interests; create interest in an immediate situation by making it relevant to students' lives or sense of curiosity)
- **Encourage collaboration and cooperation** (e.g., engage learners in peer reviews of student compositions; have students work together to solve a real-world scenario)
- **Provide (the right degree of) choice and autonomy** (e.g., offer options for which text to read, whether to read individually or in a group, or what kind of text to write)

Attending to student engagement is complicated somewhat by the reality that adult learners arrive in the ABE classroom with a mix of backgrounds. For instance, a large number of the students in the Adult Secondary Education (ASE) and pre-ASE classrooms in Massachusetts are English learners (ELs). These learners are sometimes placed in ABE classrooms because they are fluent English speakers and adequate readers; however, their specific language needs as ELs may

be overlooked. For instance, they may have gaps in their vocabulary knowledge related to English signal words, academic/Tier 2 words, and idioms. They may also need to develop an understanding of the more complex grammar structures that show up in written language as opposed to oral discourse. Lack of cultural background knowledge may further impact the reading comprehension of English learners, as well as their ability to produce effective written communications. Effective ELA teachers are familiar with the instructional nuances presented by this group of ELA learners and structure the classroom to address their needs (Strucker 2021).

ABE learners may vary in their racial and ethnic backgrounds, their life experiences, their ages, their genders, their experiences with print materials, their familiarity with negotiating online texts, their interests, and their comfort with reading and writing in English. They may also differ in their preferences for individual and group work; for visual, auditory, and kinesthetic activities; and for detailed versus big-picture thinking. Effective teachers take these differences into consideration when planning and implementing instruction.

Lastly, many adult learners have learning disabilities. In one survey, over 25% of adults in adult education programs reported having a learning disability (Tamassia et al 2007). Disabilities specific to reading and writing can especially hinder ELA learning. Effective ELA teachers seek out training related to learning disabilities and incorporate evidence-based techniques, supportive technologies, and accommodations into their classroom instruction (Taymans 2010; NRC 2012a).

Because of the diverse nature of the population of the United States, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and ABE classrooms, effective ELA teachers are familiar with methods to cultivate an appreciation of difference within the classroom and to meet the needs of each student. These include universal design for learning, differentiated instruction, and culturally responsive teaching.

Universal Design for Learning

Universal design for learning (UDL) (CAST 2021) is an overarching approach to designing curriculum in which the diverse nature of learners and learning is carefully considered from the beginning of the planning process. **Flexibility** and **student choice** are built into the curriculum, including a variety of methods for teachers to present information (or students to access it), for learners to engage with new concepts and skills, and for learners to demonstrate learning. When the curriculum is implemented as designed, most learners should be able to automatically select options that will match their learning needs and preferences with what is being taught. Again, the purpose of UDL is for instruction to be designed with built-in flexibility for meeting the needs of the vast majority of learners. It can be considered a proactive framework.

The purpose of UDL is for instruction to be designed with built-in flexibility for meeting the needs of the vast majority of learners. It can be considered a **proactive** framework.

Differentiated Instruction

Differentiated instruction (DI) (OVAE 2010c; Tomlinson 2014) has considerable overlap with UDL and is often used interchangeably, especially when teachers are not following a prescribed curriculum and are designing their own lessons. However, DI in its purest sense refers to what teachers do to adapt an existing curriculum (which may or may not have been designed using UDL) for the learners they are actually teaching at any one time. It is a responsive framework, in that it supports teachers in responding to the needs of students in real time.

> DI is a **responsive** framework in that it supports teachers in responding to the needs of students in real time.

The concept of DI encourages teachers to view curriculum and instruction through a number of dimensions when contemplating how to meet their learners' diverse needs. The first four dimensions are aspects of *instruction* that can be modified: the **content** (what is being taught), the **process** (how it is being taught), the **product** (how learners show their learning), and the **learning environment** (the physical or virtual parameters within which instruction occurs).

The remaining dimensions are aspects of the *learner* that inform modifications: learners' **interests**, learners' **profiles** (learning preferences, culture-based influences, environmental preferences, orientations to group and individual work), and learners' **readiness** (strengths, weaknesses, and attitudes towards the content).

One key feature of evidence-based reading instruction (EBRI) is how it differentiates instruction according to students' reading profiles. All ABE students are diagnostically assessed to determine their instructional levels for lessons in alphabetics, fluency, vocabulary, and/or comprehension skills/strategies. Effective teachers then use this diagnostic information to target level-appropriate texts and instruction in each component relevant for their specific students.

Culturally Responsive Teaching

Similar to UDL and DI, culturally responsive teaching (Ladson-Billings 1995; Hammond 2014; Gay 2018) highlights the unique context of each adult learner. Although both UDL and DI address cultural influences in their frameworks, culturally responsive teaching positions culture and identity as central considerations, viewing them as assets to be leveraged to enhance learning. Effective ELA teachers drawing from the culturally responsive teaching approach promote academic achievement, cultural competence, and sociopolitical awareness (Ladson-Billings 1995).

> ***Academic achievement.*** To support academic achievement, culturally responsive teachers hold high expectations for all students, differentiating and scaffolding to support learning. In addition, effective ELA teachers regularly make connections to students' cultures, languages, and experience while explicitly teaching English text patterns and the purposes of different types of communications (e.g., reading for pleasure vs. for information; writing a letter vs. an essay). They also encourage speakers of English as a first language to recognize their own dialects and cultures alongside the English learners in the classroom and make transparent the value of dialects/registers, what is appropriate when, and the importance of standard English for college and many careers (Schierloh 1991).

Students are invited to take responsibility for their learning and to see themselves as successful learners.

Cultural competence. Culturally responsive teaching also affirms students' backgrounds and identities and fosters learners' ability to understand and honor those of others. As part of this work, effective ELA teachers commit to self-reflection concerning their own biases and assumptions and support learners in doing the same. Taking care to avoid curricula or materials that overgeneralize or make erroneous assumptions about groups of people, effective ELA teachers are intentional in using resources with diverse representations and points of view.

Sociopolitical awareness. In line with the rich history of adult education (e.g., Freire 1970), culturally responsive adult educators make the real world central to the curriculum, immersing adult learners in using language and literacy to discuss, reimagine, critique, and address problems that affect their families, their workplaces, and their communities. Readings and projects may surface issues related to cultural and racial bias, economic inequality, and social/political structures, with the teacher intentionally modeling and teaching civil and productive discourse. In addition, students learn how to identify images and messages that, either subtly or explicitly, promote stereotypes or stoke fear and anxiety related to different groups or perspectives.

In essence, culturally responsive teaching is a framework that guides ELA teachers in connecting with who their learners are and where they come from (see **Figure 7**) in order to support students' academic learning, cultural competence, and understandings of how their communities operate. Ultimately, these efforts not only support language/literacy learning itself; they empower learners to move confidently in a diverse world.

Figure 7: Goal of Culturally Responsive Teaching

It is critical to recognize that, regardless of the terminology used, the goal of this work is for educators to have the knowledge and capacity to serve all students well.

In order to be highly effective, educators must develop an authentic understanding of the…adults in their school communities, ensure that their students' experiences in school are affirming of who they are and what they bring to the school community, and unpack how their own culture impacts their worldview and approach.

Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Schools and Classrooms (MA DESE 2021a, p. 1)

Indicator P1.1. Standards-based Units

Designs and/or uses instructional units that align to the CCRSAE and the program's scope and sequence. Academically rigorous units define clear evidence of outcomes and include differentiated learning experiences that enable all students to learn the knowledge and skills defined in state standards.

Sample ELA Applications		
What Effective ELA Teachers KNOW	**What Effective ELA Teachers DO**	**✓ Focus**
A. Programs develop instructional units targeting and contextualizing specific ELA standards; they order the units into a logical scope and sequence.	1) Collaborate with colleagues and stakeholders to identify topics important to students at each level *(e.g., related to civics education, culture, health literacy, workforce preparation, financial literacy, social inequities)*; use these to contextualize ELA skill instruction within units. 2) Support program efforts to build a scope and sequence that includes and aligns the following for each unit: • level-specific CCRSAE-ELA standards to be taught and learned, • the culminating task or project through which students demonstrate their learning, and • key level-appropriate texts to be read. 3) Support program efforts to ensure and demonstrate that the curriculum develops ELA skills and content knowledge in a logical manner within each level and across levels.	
B. In unit planning, unit-level learning objectives align to the CCRSAE-ELA level-specific standards and guide instruction and assessment.	1) Write measurable unit-level learning objectives that align with the CCRSAE level-specific standards and target higher-order critical thinking and knowledge building. 2) Include a mixture of reading, writing, speaking and listening, language, and digital literacy skills in each unit. 3) Include formative and summative assessments of the targeted ELA standards. (See *Standard P2: Assessment*.) 4) Outline a sequence of lessons that leads toward the achievement of the unit objectives and provides scaffolding and/or reinforcement of priority skills over time. 5) Ensures unit objectives, instruction, texts, additional resources, and assessments are aligned with each other and with the CCRSAE-ELA.	

What Effective ELA Teachers KNOW	What Effective ELA Teachers DO	✓ Focus
C. Students need to interact meaningfully with authentic and appropriately complex texts.	1) For each unit plan, use online adult learning resources *(e.g., Newsela, ReadWorks, Marshall Adult Education site)* and text analysis tools to find a range of texts for the targeted student levels; provide text complexity levels. (See Text Levels, Sets, and Complexity.) 2) Include options for texts and materials that reflect ethnic, racial, cultural, and linguistic diversity, and that allow students to make connections to their own lives and/or expose learners to diverse viewpoints and perspectives. 3) Use text sets that contain texts at a variety of complexity levels that work together to build knowledge over time. 4) Specify key print and/or digital text(s) that display exceptional craft and thought and/or provide useful information; be explicit about what makes them exceptional as models. 5) Prioritize tasks that engage students in thinking critically about printed, digital, online, and multimedia text *(e.g., analyzing, synthesizing, evaluating).*	
D. The use of technology plays a major role in all units, whether they are being taught online or in-person.	1) Consider how students will use technology to find, evaluate, organize, create, and/or communicate information in a way that is natural/authentic for the culminating project or an associated lesson *(e.g., finding an online article as part of a research project; peer-reviewing in Google Docs; drafting and revising a final product in Microsoft Word or PowerPoint).* 2) Carefully choose instructional platforms that are appropriate for learners' digital literacy levels, meet the instructional goals for the unit, and are accessible to students *(e.g., using Zoom breakout rooms for small group discussions; using Jamboard for word sorts; using Padlet to create a timeline; creating a quiz on Quizlet).* 3) Include ample time in unit plans for explicit instruction and scaffolding in the use of new technology/ platforms as well as student exploration and experimentation.	
E. A meaningful, culminating task/project for a unit provides purpose for the skills instruction and opportunity to focus on	1) Frame academic topics *(e.g., branches of government, cycles)* in terms of how they are relevant in real life and consider how ELA skills can be taught within an exploration of these topics.	

What Effective ELA Teachers KNOW	What Effective ELA Teachers DO	✓ Focus
evidence and knowledge-building.	2) Craft culminating tasks and projects related to the topic that provide opportunities for learners to produce written, spoken, or multimedia products similar to what might be expected in contexts outside the classroom *(e.g., blogs, reports, presentations, formal letters, brochures, posters, infographics, videos, podcasts)* or in postsecondary education and training programs *(e.g., analysis essays, research papers).* 3) Engage students in tasks that revolve around rich questions, building knowledge, and/or constructing arguments that require close reading for text-based evidence. 4) Teach and assess ELA standards within the context of the unit project students are completing.	

Indicator P1.2. Well-structured Lessons

Develops well-structured lessons as part of instructional units that include clear learning objectives, meaningful formative assessments, appropriate pace and sequence, relevant resources, and the use of technology. Lessons are designed to optimize learner interaction.

Sample ELA Applications

What Effective ELA Teachers KNOW	What Effective ELA Teachers DO	✓ Focus
A. Lesson design requires a focus on specific learning objectives.	1) Write relevant, challenging, and measurable lesson-level learning objectives that align with the CCRSAE level-specific standards and unit-level learning outcomes. 2) Include a mixture of reading, writing, speaking and listening, language, and digital literacy skills in each lesson. 3) When possible, include both ELA standards and standards for applicable content areas *(e.g., social studies, science, workforce preparation).* 4) Fold standards into a lesson in a way that builds on their logical connections to each other. 5) Utilize formative assessment to monitor student learning of lesson objectives. (See *Standard P2: Assessment*.)	
B. Thoughtfully chunking and organizing activities and lessons helps learners to construct long-lasting understandings and build transferable skills.	1) Sequence and pace activities and lessons carefully, attending to the steps of explicit instruction: explanation, modeling, guided practice, and independent application. 2) Link lesson content to previous lessons or students' knowledge in a content area. 3) Provide multiple examples and models; ground concepts/skills in concrete experiences. 4) Space reinforcement of new material across time *(e.g., reinforce one set of vocabulary words over several days; revisit learned skills/strategies).*	
C. Accessing, evaluating, selecting, and using appropriate texts is complex but essential for effective ELA lessons.	1) Use quantitative and qualitative analysis tools to evaluate text complexity levels and select appropriately challenging print, digital, or multimedia texts for each lesson. 2) Include materials in lessons that reflect the diversity of learners as well as diverse viewpoints and perspectives. 3) Include opportunities for building background knowledge that will allow all students to access the main text.	

What Effective ELA Teachers KNOW	What Effective ELA Teachers DO	✓ Focus
	4) Incorporate activities that include practicing or applying new skills/strategies within authentic texts, read or listened to for authentic purposes.	
D. The inclusion of appropriate technology can enhance language and literacy learning and support students in developing an array of skills and competencies.	1) Use online tools and resources for authentic learning activities *(e.g., finding information; publishing work; communicating with the teacher)* to expose students to tools they may encounter in out-of-school environments. 2) Explicitly teach online navigation strategies *(e.g., scrolling; using tabs and side menus; using embedded links; using the back arrow; identifying and ignoring ads; distinguishing between .com, .org, and .edu sites).* 3) Explicitly teach how to evaluate websites and platforms for credibility. 4) Explore ways for students to use social media for instructional purposes *(e.g., students write a short summary of a text on Twitter; use Facebook to discuss readings).*	

Indicator P1.3. Student Engagement

Uses a variety of student-centered instructional methods. Provides opportunities for all students to communicate in meaningful ways, interact within authentic contexts, and develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Sample ELA Applications

What Effective ELA Teachers KNOW	What Effective ELA Teachers DO	✓ Focus
A. ABE students are most likely to be engaged with their learning when it is appropriately challenging and relevant to their immediate and future lives.	1) Have students develop and apply their ELA skills as they explore topics/questions relevant to their social, economic, and cultural realities. 2) Ensure ELA texts and tasks/projects are not too easy and not too difficult for students' level; scaffold as needed. 3) Use *wait time* and *prompting* to foster thoughtful student responses to questions. 4) Use lesson time effectively *(e.g., transition quickly between activities; engage students in meaningful language work if they complete tasks early).* 5) Have students generate products *(e.g., blogs, videos, multimedia presentations).*	
B. Students require a variety of interactions with texts and with each other to deepen learning and create a community of learners.	1) Spend the majority of class time having students read, write, or speak directly about a text or multiple texts. 2) Sequence questions/activities/readings to support students' delving deeper into text(s) to build their understanding of the big ideas and key information from the text(s). 3) Require student thinking and responses beyond recall; ask students to elaborate and justify their answers (both orally and in writing), using the text to support ideas and inferences with precision. 4) Ask questions that consistently pertain to the words, phrases, and sentences in the text(s). 5) Require that students use evidence to build on each other's observations or insights when discussing or collaborating. 6) Balance teacher-talk and student-talk by including activities that require students' active participation *(e.g., explorations and inquiry; class discussions; problem solving; group projects; debates; book clubs; book/poetry shares).* 7) Build in a variety of approaches to ELA learning *(e.g., explicit instruction; visuals; discussion/debate; digital tools; videos; collaborative peer work; self-directed activities).*	

What Effective ELA Teachers KNOW	What Effective ELA Teachers DO	✓ Focus
C. Adults are empowered by having choice and agency in their activities.	1) Offer choice whenever possible in topics, instructional texts, technology, and in demonstrating understanding (orally or in writing), as long as high expectations and CCRSAE-ELA-aligned objectives are still met. 2) Encourage learners to engage in sustained independent reading, choosing from among a range of print and digital texts about knowledge-building topics under study. 3) Facilitate academic conversations that center student voice and leadership.	

Indicator P1.4. Meeting Diverse Needs

Uses an understanding of students' diverse needs to differentiate instruction according to learning preferences and abilities, needs, interests, prior education, cultural beliefs and values, native languages, and life experiences.

Sample ELA Applications		
What Effective ELA Teachers KNOW	**What Effective ELA Teachers DO**	**✓ Focus**
A. ABE students' language/dialects, home cultures, learning differences, and prior experiences are important to their identities; this individual diversity is a strength to be appreciated and explored in the classroom.	1) Plan initial and ongoing class activities *(e.g., interviews, surveys, discussions, ice breakers)* to learn about students and gather information to inform ELA instruction. 2) Discuss with learners their values and beliefs about teaching, learning, and language *(e.g., the role of the teacher; the role of workbooks vs. authentic materials)*; share their own. 3) Establish a climate of respect in the classroom that acknowledges and affirms individual and cultural differences and fosters risk-taking. 4) Select reading and viewing materials that reflect a variety of cultures, global regions, identities, and diverse perspectives in respectful ways. 5) Invite learners to independently and collaboratively make connections to their own lives. 6) Explore inequities, cultural and racial bias, and community issues. 7) Encourage the sharing of different points of view, supporting students in questioning their own assumptions and supporting their assertions with credible evidence. 8) Develop an understanding of one's own cross-cultural awareness, cultural competence, and biases as a teacher.	
B. Differentiation can occur through adjustments to content, process, and products.	1) Maintain high expectations for all students when differentiating. 2) Use the CCRSAE level-specific standards (A through D-E) to align ELA instruction with leaners' level(s). 3) Have learners at different reading levels read about the same topic using texts specifically aligned to their levels. 4) Use flexible grouping and provide roles for group members when appropriate. 5) Provide appropriate support *(e.g., 1-1 assistance vs. peer support vs. small group).*	

What Effective ELA Teachers KNOW	What Effective ELA Teachers DO	✓ Focus
	6) Offer/assign different ways for learners to show their learning while maintaining high, level-appropriate expectations *(e.g., expecting students at different levels to write an essay vs. a paragraph on the same topic; discussing the main idea of a text in either an infographic or a poster).*	
C. Intentionally address the specific needs of students who have learning disabilities (LD) or are English learners (ELs).	1) Follow program procedures for LD screening and referral; access special services for LD students (if available). 2) Use Universal Design of Learning (UDL) techniques. 3) Use evidence-based techniques for LD instruction, including the incorporation of assistive technology *(e.g., scanning reading pens; speech-to-text apps).* 4) Especially attend to signal words, idioms, Tier 2 words, written syntax, and cultural understandings when instructing English learners. 5) Provide graphic organizers to help learners capture and reflect on new knowledge related to the text and topic of the lesson. 6) Use a variety of collaborative learning activities to help learners reach a mutual understanding, retain information, and develop their English language skills.	
D. Depending on how proficient students are at identifying words, they may need level-appropriate, evidence-based instruction in alphabetics *(e.g., word parts, word analysis, and/or sight words)* to improve their reading comprehension.	1) Base alphabetics instruction on diagnostic assessment. 2) To strengthen awareness of the sounds of English words and word parts, use rhyming, oral blending of spoken parts to form recognizable words, or oral segmentation tasks *(e.g., breaking a word into its parts by tapping out or counting the parts).* 3) Use a variety of materials, systematic and explicit methods, and multisensory instruction to develop and strengthen students' ability to identify words and word parts. 4) Make connections and distinguish the English alphabetic system from other writing systems that English learners may know. 5) Teach high-frequency but phonetically irregular words. 6) Teach common, level-appropriate prefixes, suffixes, and root words. 7) Provide students with opportunities to read aloud from texts where they can apply what they are learning about words and word parts to identify unfamiliar words.	

What Effective ELA Teachers KNOW	What Effective ELA Teachers DO	✓ Focus
E. Students need evidence-based fluency instruction, appropriate for their reading levels.	1) Base fluency instruction on diagnostic assessment. 2) Engage beginning adult readers in Guided, Repeated Oral Reading techniques, including echo reading and choral reading. 3) Engage intermediate adult readers in Repeated Readings, Marked Phrase Boundaries activities, and Collaborative Oral Reading. 4) Engage secondary-level readers in additional techniques such as sentence-combining and sentence chunking to build skills in tackling long, complex sentence structures. 5) Read sections of texts aloud with students to help them learn recurring words, the syntax of written English, and how to apply appropriate expression/intonation. 6) Incorporate technology that allows both native speakers and English learners to hear text read aloud. 7) Provide materials and processes *(e.g., book logs, reading logs)* that encourage students to increase the amount of time they spend reading outside of class.	
F. Level-appropriate academic vocabulary (Tier 2) and domain-specific words (Tier 3) need to be explicitly and habitually included in instruction, using evidence-based practices.	1) Base vocabulary instruction on diagnostic assessment. 2) Use direct instruction to teach students the meanings of level-appropriate academic (Tier 2) and domain-specific (Tier 3) words; incorporate meaningful examples, visuals, and gestures, especially for English learners. 3) Attend to English learners who may have gaps in everyday English vocabulary. 4) Provide students with multiple opportunities to use new words in speaking and writing, providing feedback *(e.g., Quadrant Charts, Yes/No/Why).* 5) Emphasize the importance of vocabulary outside of class by discussing students' encounters with words at work, on television, in the newspaper, on websites, etc. 6) Analyze the impact of an author's word choice on the meaning and tone of a text.	
G. Students need evidence-based instruction in reading comprehension, appropriate for their levels.	1) Base comprehension instruction on diagnostic assessment, understanding the role that alphabetics, fluency, and vocabulary play in comprehending text. 2) Engage emerging readers in developing listening comprehension skills that relate to reading *(e.g.,*	

What Effective ELA Teachers KNOW	What Effective ELA Teachers DO	✓ Focus
	making and checking predictions; asking and answering questions). 3) Model, scaffold, and allow students to practice high-impact reading comprehension strategies *(e.g., making and checking predictions; asking and answering questions to monitor comprehension; using graphic organizers/text maps to help identify relationships; writing summaries; combining strategies).* 4) Design instruction so students are following the details of, making inferences from, and/or evaluating what they read or listen to. 5) Ensure a large proportion of texts read is content-rich nonfiction and that the comprehension of these texts is closely tied to the acquisition of knowledge.	

STANDARD P2: Assessment

Uses a variety of formative and summative assessments to measure student learning and understanding, evaluate the effectiveness of instruction, develop differentiated and advanced learning experiences, and inform future instruction.

Supporting Explanation for Standard P2

Effective ELA instructors can think about assessment in a variety of ways.

Summative vs. Formative Assessments

One approach is to divide assessments into two broad categories: summative and formative.

Summative Assessments

Summative assessments include assessments that teachers use at the end of a set period of instruction (such as a unit) or an academic cycle (e.g., a quarter, a semester, a year). Results from these assessments "sum up" student progress. Summative assessments can include standardized tests, such as the MAPT-CCR or TABE 11/12, traditional types of unit tests, or cumulative projects or papers, which are evaluated with rubrics or checklists. Some of these assessments (e.g., high-school credentialing exams, the Accuplacer) are considered "high stakes" because they act as gateways to employment and further education.

Formative Assessments

In contrast, formative assessments are used within a unit or lesson to see if students are grasping the targeted standards or objectives being taught. Formative assessments are "assessments *for* learning" whereas summative assessments are described as "assessments *of* learning." Rubrics or checklists developed as part of the end-of-unit (summative) assessment may be utilized before the end of the unit as formative assessments (e.g., for peer review). Other activities are beneficial as well, including exit tickets, reflection journals, and review of student work.

Assessments by Program Purpose

Another more comprehensive way to consider assessments is to categorize them by their principal program purpose: to report student progress for program and system decision-making; to inform instructional decision-making, and to motivate students.

Report Student Progress

Standardized assessments such as MAPT-CCR or TABE 11/12 are often used to assess and then report student progress. In order for the results from these assessments to be valid and reliable, certain procedures must be carefully followed, so ABE teachers should be trained in these policies. Programs submit results from these assessments to the state, which compiles the results for federal reporting. With WIOA legislation and its greater emphasis on student outcomes (i.e., completion of NRS Educational Functioning Levels, achievement of a high school equivalency, and entrance into postsecondary education or training), funding can be affected by this performance data.

Effective teachers work together in their programs to study the data and determine how to improve classroom and program services, and ultimately, student outcomes. Therefore, it is important for students to understand the important role that standardized testing plays for students and for programs.

Inform Instructional Decision-Making

The MAPT-CCR and TABE 11/12 can fall within this category when the results are used for placing students into the right class level (TABE 11/12 only; MAPT-CCR may not be used for placement), identifying the appropriate level of reading material for reading comprehension, and/or making decisions about moving students into a higher class.

Diagnostic assessment also falls in this category. Diagnostic assessment usually involves administering short assessments to students to discern the underlying reasons for their performance in a particular skill. For instance, adult intermediate readers with the same silent reading comprehension score can have varying patterns of strengths and weaknesses (or "profiles") in word identification, oral vocabulary, and reading fluency (Strucker 1997).

In order to best serve these students, teachers gather more specific information by conducting either formal (i.e., standardized) or informal testing in the essential components of reading (alphabetics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension). Teachers can also use artifacts from authentic reading, writing, and oral communication experiences as informal assessments (e.g., oral fluency rubrics used during read-alouds, writing samples, rubrics during presentations). These formative assessments help teachers check what students have learned and in what situations they can apply their knowledge and skills. With this information, teachers are able to make decisions about re-teaching and/or extending learning.

Motivate Students

Helping students see their growth and learn strategies for monitoring progress towards goal attainment empowers students for immediate and long-term learning. Thus, effective ELA teachers engage students in understanding different types of assessments, and share and discuss assessment results with students, including how to use these results to guide learning and future educational decisions. They also incorporate tools and processes for student self-assessment.

Indicator P2.1. Assessment Methods

Uses a variety of methods to equitably assess a broad range of skills, accommodate diverse needs, and motivate students. Designs and administers a variety of formative and summative assessments to inform instruction, identify learning needs, and monitor students' progress toward achieving both personal goals and state standards. Understands and shares with students the importance of performing well on NRS-approved assessments.

Sample ELA Applications

What Effective ELA Teachers KNOW	What Effective ELA Teachers DO	✓ Focus
A. Federal, ACLS, and program policies related to placement, re-assessment, and accountability impact student assessment.	1) Read, discuss with colleagues, and follow relevant assessment policies. 2) Stay up to date with ABE standardized assessment trainings. 3) Understand which student outcomes impact measures of program achievement and work with students to develop a culture around achievement. 4) Explain to learners the kinds of appropriate and legal accommodations in assessments or testing conditions for which they may be eligible *(e.g., for the HiSET or GED)* and how they should request these.	
B. Standardized assessments provide valid and reliable information only when administered and interpreted according to the publishers' and ACLS's directions.	1) Read and follow with fidelity publisher and ACLS guidelines for the administration, scoring, and interpretation of standardized assessments used in the program. 2) Use standardized test scores as one tool to track students' Educational Functioning Level (EFL) gains over a substantial period of time. 3) Analyze standardized assessment information in conjunction with other assessment data *(e.g., portfolios, formative assessments)* to inform instruction.	
C. The results of diagnostic assessments provide important information about individual skills appropriate for instruction.	1) Use diagnostic assessments of students' component reading skills *(e.g., alphabetics, fluency, vocabulary, reading comprehension)* to focus instruction. 2) Carefully follow directions for each specific diagnostic assessment, paying special attention to administration and analysis instructions for English learners. 3) Use writing and oral assessment data to identify individual strengths and areas of needed growth in relevant ELA standards. 4) Use interviews, questionnaires, observations, and/or informal tools to assess digital literacy levels.	

What Effective ELA Teachers KNOW	What Effective ELA Teachers DO	✓ Focus
D. Structured classroom assessments should measure student learning at the end of an instructional unit.	1) Employ "backward design" to determine what the final learning product will be for a unit and how targeted ELA level-specific standards will be assessed. 2) Design and/or use rubrics, checklists, or other specific guidelines that make clear to students how performance will be evaluated. 3) Use quizzes/tests sparingly and for the purpose of preparing students for more formal education settings/credentialing assessments and/or to assess discrete knowledge or skills.	
E. Formative assessment takes many forms and provides teachers and students with important information about teaching and learning within a unit.	1) Check for student understanding, using informal yet deliberative methods *(e.g., walk around the room to check on students' work; individually solicit and monitor verbal responses from a wide range of students; use exit tickets).* 2) Engage students in evaluating and reflecting on their own learning. 3) Assess students' developing word identification, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension skills within units by such methods as: • recording accuracy when reading aloud from connected text • using a rubric that evaluates accuracy, rate, and prosody when students read aloud text related to the unit • asking students to use target vocabulary appropriately in unit products *(e.g., presentations, written pieces)* • using a checklist or journal reflection to evaluate students' application of new comprehension skills in relation to assignments related to the unit. 4) Provide students with prompt, specific feedback to correct misunderstandings and reinforce learning.	

Indicator P2.2. Modifying Instruction

Analyzes results from a variety of assessments and other data (e.g., attendance, engagement) to measure student learning, inform instruction, and determine differentiated interventions. Evaluates the effectiveness of instruction and modifies it based on formative assessment results and feedback from students and colleagues.

Sample ELA Applications

What Effective ELA Teachers KNOW	What Effective ELA Teachers DO	✓ Focus
A. A comprehensive assessment system includes organizing student data for individuals and classes.	1) Organize and maintain assessment data for each student *(e.g., using an electronic or traditional portfolio/folder system and/or spreadsheet).* 2) Organize assessment data for each class to manage flexible groupings for targeted skill areas.	
B. Even with careful planning, teachers often need to provide "just-in-time" supports to the class and/or individual learners, based on formative assessments.	1) Respond in the moment or plan to follow-up when gaps in understanding, confusions, or incorrect understandings are identified *(e.g., strategically group students; model usage; provide additional examples or visuals; provide different type of practice).* 2) Use knowledge of student characteristics and needs to reteach, making personal connections.	
C. Formal and informal assessment data need to be reviewed regularly to inform class instruction, student groupings and related instruction, and interventions for specific students.	1) Analyze formative and other kinds of assessment data regularly to adjust student groupings. 2) Use appropriate methods for analyzing assessment information to identify individual student's area(s) for re-teaching. 3) Offer strategic supports and scaffolds to students based on analysis of data *(e.g., individualized or peer tutoring; re-teaching; review of basic skills).*	

Indicator P2.3. Student Progress

Shares assessment results with students to acknowledge progress, identify gaps, and determine next steps. Seeks and implements feedback from students and colleagues to improve learning. Understands and shares with learners the role and importance of formative, summative, and NRS assessments as tools that allow students to demonstrate their learning. Encourages students to do their best on all assessments and helps students use results.

Sample ELA Applications

What Effective ELA Teachers KNOW	What Effective ELA Teachers DO	✓ Focus
A. Students need to know about different types of assessment and how to use strategies specific to each type.	1) Discuss with learners the different kinds, purposes, and formats of assessment, including (as appropriate) the HiSET, GED, and entry/placement tests into postsecondary education or training; be aware that some learners may have little or no understanding of the purposes of assessments or may be used to very different forms. 2) Explicitly teach test-taking strategies for various ELA assessment types and provide ample opportunities for students to prepare for varied formats, including self-evaluations, quizzes, tests, and portfolios.	
B. Students are more likely to take responsibility for their learning when they can track their progress.	1) Share assessment results with students in sensitive ways *(e.g., using CCRSAE levels and not grade levels).* 2) Help students cultivate a positive stance towards assessment results and feedback *(e.g., help students understand the role of assessments and how assessments are used to inform instruction).*	
C. Working with others (students and teachers) provides support for enhancing individual, program, and field approaches to ABE.	1) Involve students in designing and using assessment approaches *(e.g., help develop or give feedback on rubrics/checklists; assess own work and that of peers).* 2) Solicit student feedback on instruction and make needed adjustments *(e.g., student reflections at ends of units; class surveys).* 3) Share assessment tools and strategies with colleagues. 4) Discuss assessment data with program colleagues to identify assessment trends, both program-wide and across class levels; adjust instruction.	

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT DOMAIN (C)

Effective teachers value continuous learning, both for their students and for themselves. They cultivate a learning environment that nurtures a growth mindset for their students and supports them as they claim ownership of their learning. Effective teachers guide students to persevere and put forth effort as they engage in productive struggle, challenge misconceptions about their abilities, identify their own strengths and learning needs, set goals for themselves, and monitor their own progress as they become independent, lifelong learners.

Continuous Improvement (C)
C1. Growth Mindset
C1.1 High Expectations
C1.2 Student Ownership
C1.3 Lifelong Learning
C2. Reflective Practice
C2.1 Self-assessment
C2.2 Goal Setting
C2.3 Professional Development

Effective teachers are reflective practitioners. They identify their own learning needs to best support their students, set student learning and professional practice goals, and participate in a variety of high quality professional development activities to refine and expand their practices (e.g., coaching, workshops, courses, research, professional learning communities). They seek and integrate constructive feedback from students and colleagues. They demonstrate respect and professionalism in all interactions with their students and colleagues.

STANDARD C1: Growth Mindset

Cultivates a welcoming and judgment-free learning environment that motivates students and challenges them to believe that their abilities can be developed through persistence and hard work, both now and in the future. Promotes learning outside the classroom and over the lifespan.

Supporting Explanation for Standard C1

Carol Dweck, a researcher in motivation and learning at Stanford, introduced the idea of "growth mindset" in her book, *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* (2006). A growth mindset is an understanding about one's abilities that recognizes the role that dedication and hard work play in success. Whereas an individual with a fixed mindset tends to believe his or her abilities come from innate ability (or "fixed" traits), an individual with a growth mindset values perseverance and effort. A growth mindset supports learning in the moment but also provides an orientation towards learning that fosters growth over the lifespan.

A principal component of learning environments that foster a growth mindset is an instructor who holds high expectations for all students. The effective teacher works to develop a culture of effort, one in which students understand that success is not in-born but earned. In their summary of research on adult literacy instruction, the National Research Council (2012c) discussed how self-efficacy (or students' beliefs about their ability in a particular area) affects student learning. Students who believe they "can't read" or "can't write" because they aren't smart enough often will not put forth the effort required to make the progress needed.

One way to counter these beliefs and foster self-efficacy in literacy and language learning is to help students frame their successes and failures in terms of effort instead of fixed intelligence. A significant task of the teacher is to "[provide] feedback that stresses the processes of learning, such as the importance of using strategies, monitoring one's understanding, and engaging in sustained effort, even in the face of challenge" (NRC 2012c, ch.5, pg.17).

Practitioners must also support their adult learners in looking to the future, inviting them to not only take responsibility for their learning in the present but also once they leave the ABE program. The learning environment can set the stage for how students approach lifelong learning. Researchers have noted that classroom practices that parallel the types of literacy activities performed in real-life are more likely to lead to literate activity outside the classroom, which over the course of time, may build reading and writing proficiency (as measured on standardized tests) (Reder 2013; Purcell-Gates et al 2000).

Thus, part of promoting lifelong learning is teaching in ways that allow students to "take up" literacy practices outside the classroom, which will provide the hours of practice required to develop expertise (NRC 2012c; Sabatini 2015). Students also need to know and use learning strategies that will help them access resources, practice new skills efficiently, and use current digital technologies to foster ongoing learning.

Indicator C1.1. High Expectations

Establishes high expectations for the quality of student work and the effort required to produce it. Within a safe classroom environment, encourages risk taking and productive struggle. Models and reinforces ways that students can master challenging material through persistence, focused effort, and critical thinking.

Sample ELA Applications

What Effective ELA Teachers KNOW	What Effective ELA Teachers DO	✓ Focus
A. Many students believe innate ability explains academic success more than effort and perseverance.	1) Explore stories, poems, essays, articles, interviews, and speeches around the theme of persistence. 2) Recognize success in ELA learning in terms of specific efforts, persistence, and development of skills *(e.g., "You worked hard on linking the paragraphs with effective transitions, so it's a much stronger piece" instead of vaguely saying "Good job" or crediting innate ability with "You're so smart").* 3) Cultivate an appreciation for mistakes as a valuable part of the learning process. 4) Teach students the cognitive and metacognitive strategies they need to take control of their language/literacy use and learning; make conversation about these strategies a major component of the class.	
B. Students rise to high expectations that are clearly communicated and built into class routines.	1) Share unit outcomes and lesson objectives with students so they know what they are supposed to learn. 2) Define high expectations for the quality of student work through rubrics and checklists; teach students how to use them. 3) Have students incorporate peer and instructor feedback when revising writings, presentations, and other projects. 4) End lessons by reviewing with students what was learned *(e.g., revisit lesson goals; summarize student learning with references to student work and discussion)* and previewing how the next lesson will build on that learning.	

Indicator C1.2. Student Ownership

Provides learning experiences that enable students to claim ownership of their learning by identifying their own strengths, interests, and needs; setting meaningful and challenging learning goals for themselves; asking for support when needed; and monitoring their own progress.

Sample ELA Applications		
What Effective ELA Teachers KNOW	**What Effective ELA Teachers DO**	**✓ Focus**
A. Adult learners benefit from active involvement in determining and managing their ELA goals and learning.	1) Provide opportunities for students to identify, reflect upon, and/or share their personal, career, reading, and writing interests/goals through inventories, surveys, and discussion. 2) Engage students in shaping their personal ELA goals, setting both long-term and measurable, attainable short-term goals. 3) Support students in making, following, and revisiting action plans to achieve their goals. 4) Provide opportunities and supports for students to make decisions related to their own learning *(e.g., making a plan for projects; choosing from among options for texts and activities).*	
B. Adult learners often need to learn strategies for overcoming the barriers they may face in pursuing their goals.	1) Support students in identifying barriers to their learning *(e.g., family responsibilities; work schedules; study preferences)* as well as strategies to address them *(e.g., asking for help; writing down and revisiting goals; keeping learning logs).* 2) Discuss the importance of risk-taking and productive struggle, sharing examples from own lives, modern and historical role models, individuals from various cultures/global regions, and literature.	

Indicator C1.3. Lifelong Learning

Incorporates strategies that assist students in becoming self-reliant, independent learners who are motivated and adequately prepared for postsecondary education and careers.

Sample ELA Applications		
What Effective ELA Teachers KNOW	**What Effective ELA Teachers DO**	**✓ Focus**
A. Responsive ABE instruction prepares adult learners for transitions to higher-skilled employment and/or advanced academic pursuits.	1) Before and/or after learning new ELA skills, invite students to consider how these skills are needed outside the classroom. 2) As students make ELA learning goals, help them think about the role of postsecondary education and/or training in gaining family-sustaining employment, and what ELA skills they will need. 3) Integrate the technology and written communication skills needed to function in online environments *(e.g., effectively choose appropriate digital tools to convey information; use email etiquette; use online job applications; write work-related emails; conduct Internet searches and research).*	
B. Adult learners need to use oral and print skills outside the classroom in order to continue to develop their proficiency.	1) Incorporate authentic literacy practices *(e.g., reading prescription labels; accessing and reading news; speaking about community issues)* in the classroom so that students can continue these practices when they leave the program. 2) When possible, include application of oral and print skills in students' homes and community in units and lessons *(e.g., reading something they have written to their children; interviewing a family member, friend, or community member; going to a public library; conferencing with a child's teacher and reporting back).* 3) Encourage students to utilize printed or online reading logs and/or book logs to track reading as a way to nurture reading habits. 4) Invite students to share outside readings in class to foster an appreciation for reading as a way to meet goals or find enjoyment.	
C. Knowledge of independent study resources can maximize the ELA learning of motivated students.	1) Identify mentors and colleagues with whom students can share ideas, ask questions, and receive feedback. 2) Become aware of and suggest websites or apps for students' practice and reinforcement outside the classroom.	

STANDARD C2: Reflective Practice

Engages in a continuous improvement process that includes self-assessment, goal setting, high quality professional development, and ongoing reflection to gain greater expertise, develop new teaching approaches, and refine current instructional practices.

Supporting Explanation for Standard C2

Adult education teachers of ELA come into their roles from a variety of pathways. Some enter with a strong K-12 background but lack formal credentialing in teaching adults. Some may have experience and training in working with adults but lack the content knowledge related to English language arts instruction. Others may have taught literacy at one level (for instance, beginning readers) but not at the full range required for the classes they are currently expected to instruct. Still other teachers may suddenly be tasked with remote or blended classes that require an additional skill set, or they may only have taught native English speakers before and now have classes with significant numbers of English learners. Regardless of their background or teaching context, ELA teachers in adult education need to continue to develop their expertise and stay current on emerging research and policies related to ELA instruction, assessment, adult learning, digital literacy, second language acquisition, and culturally responsive teaching. Professional development supports teachers in doing just that.

ACLS defines professional development for teachers as a learning activity that is designed to strengthen the skills and/or knowledge needed by individual practitioners to impact student learning positively (MA DESE ACLS 2021g). Research in professional development emphasizes that sustained engagement in extended learning opportunities is more likely to impact practice than short workshops divorced from the teacher's own instructional context.

Especially relevant high quality professional development (HQPD) activities that address individual, program, and state priorities are offered by the state's System for Adult Basic Education Support (SABES). Effective ELA teachers regularly engage with the SABES ELA Curriculum & Instruction PD Center, taking advantage of the Center's offerings. Effective teachers may also participate in the online, self-paced LINCS courses offered for free to practitioners nationwide, or in PD sponsored by organizations such as COABE, ProLiteracy, and ASCD. In addition, they may read professional journals, visit other programs to learn new approaches, or participate in webinars, study circles, teacher research projects, and/or online learning communities. Whatever form the PD takes, it should meet the ACLS definition of High Quality Professional Development.

A key factor in professional learning is reflective practice, in which professionals reflect on their student outcomes and target the professional knowledge, skills, and theories of the field that will most enhance those outcomes (Merriam & Brockett 2007). This kind of reflection requires critical thinking: testing assumptions, realizing the effect of context on thoughts and actions, intentionally considering the research, and recognizing when a procedure or process is in place only because "it's always been done that way" (Brookfield 1991).

Two aspects of ACLS's approach to reflective practice are key:

1) using student and program data to assist in reflecting on practice, and
2) using that data to set professional development goals and determine next steps.

Since teacher effectiveness is tied closely with student learning and outcomes, these are the focus of reflection. Effective ELA teachers scour the data looking for evidence that answers questions such as:

- What are students achieving?
- What is supporting that achievement, and what is getting in the way?
- What is my role, and what can I do to further student learning?

Effective ELA teachers also reflect on their professional knowledge in relation to the professional standards. As referenced earlier in this document, ACLS has implemented a Six-Step Cycle of Continuous Learning as part of the Educator Growth and Evaluation (EGE) Model. Within this cycle, effective ELA teachers work with their supervisors and other colleagues to plan for ongoing professional learning (Step 1); reflect on their teaching, using the ELA Proficiency Guide (Step 2); craft learning goals and action plans (Step 3); engage in high-quality PD activities (Step 4); monitor their progress and adjust as needed (Step 5); and reflect on the impact they see on student learning and program outcomes (Step 6). For more information, see *Relationship of the ELA Proficiency Guide and the Educator Growth and Evaluation Model*, earlier in this document.

Indicator C2.1. Self-Assessment

Engages in a self-assessment process using state professional standards, student data, and feedback from students and colleagues to reflect on the effectiveness of instruction, with the intention of improving practice and student learning. Considers how personal beliefs and cultural values influence instructional decisions.

Sample ELA Applications		
What Effective ELA Teachers KNOW	**What Effective ELA Teachers DO**	**✓ Focus**
A. Regular reflection on one's own teaching, using a variety of lenses, can help to identify potential areas of focus for professional learning.	1) Use the ELA Proficiency Guide (this document) to identify areas of proficiency and areas to target for further development. 2) View own instructional practice through different lenses *(e.g., digital literacy; culturally responsive teaching; second language acquisition; contextualized teaching).* 3) Keep abreast of system-wide priorities and consider strengths and growing edges related to each. 4) Review student assessment data and student work to target areas of practice to improve through professional development. 5) Question own assumptions, experiences, and cultural values and the role they play in decision-making. 6) Review notes written during lessons/units to reflect on what went well and areas that need improvement.	
B. Students and colleagues can offer valuable input for improving practice.	1) Review and incorporate feedback from students on such things as instruction they didn't understand, their perceptions of instructional effectiveness, and their suggestions for enhancing learning. 2) Enlist colleagues and/or supervisor to observe teaching and learning and offer feedback. 3) Invite colleagues to offer feedback on lesson plans/units as "critical friends." 4) Offer to provide feedback/input on the work of colleagues.	

Indicator C2.2. Goal Setting

Uses insights from self-assessments to identify meaningful student learning and professional practice goals that are clear, results-focused, and measurable or observable. Reviews goals, monitors progress, and makes revisions as needed.

Sample ELA Applications		
What Effective ELA Teachers KNOW	**What Effective ELA Teachers DO**	**✓ Focus**
A. Professional learning is often the most powerful when it is intentional and framed around concrete goals that target improvements in instructional practice, student learning, and program outcomes.	1) Prioritize and articulate goals that will improve student learning and/or program outcomes. 2) Seek input from supervisor and colleagues to make sure own PD goals align with the program's continuous improvement process/plan. 3) Craft clear goals that are specific about the targeted results and how to tell when the goal is achieved.	
B. Goals are more likely to be achieved if they are accompanied by action plans and are reviewed regularly.	1) Develop a PD plan around articulated goals, identifying PD activities, resources, and checking-in points. 2) Include strategies for determining if the goal attainment has an impact on student learning and program outcomes *(e.g., reviewing student assessment and program outcome data).* 3) Implement strategies to track and document changes in practice; revise plan as needed. 4) Seek input and assistance from supervisor and colleagues at various points.	

Indicator C2.3. Professional Development

Engages in a variety of high-quality professional development activities. Seeks out and applies new ideas from professional development, supervisors, colleagues, and other resources to gain expertise and advance student learning.

Sample ELA Applications

What Effective ELA Teachers KNOW	What Effective ELA Teachers DO	✓ Focus
A. Professional development is key to keeping up-to-date with ELA and adult education research and in sustaining quality professional practice at the individual and program level.	1) Actively engage every year in sustained, collaborative, and high-quality professional development *(e.g., extended trainings, coaching, study circles, online discussion groups).* 2) Attend SABES trainings in evidence-based ELA instruction for appropriate instructional levels. 3) Participate in state and national webinars and online courses (e.g., SABES and LINCS). 4) Attend ELA workshops at state, regional, and national conferences. 5) Participate in state and national online discussion groups. 6) Regularly read professional materials and publications. 7) Join COABE or another professional organization focused on ELA instruction. 8) Based on PD, identify new techniques and approaches, integrate them into practice, and monitor impact.	
B. Colleagues look to each other for professional wisdom and expertise.	1) Meet with supervisor to target and debrief professional development activities. 2) Work with other practitioners in teams to learn new ideas and implement them at the program/classroom level. 3) Share individual PD plan with appropriate PD Centers. 4) Reflect on progress and share successes with colleagues at the program, state, and national levels.	

Related Materials

Available at
https://www.sabes.org/content/ela-proficiency-guide

- ***The ELA Proficiency Guide*** is available in both MS Word and PDF formats
- ***To the Point: The ELA Proficiency Guide and the MA Professional Standards for Adult Basic Education***
- A brief ***Guide*** to this ELA Proficiency Guide
- ***Glossary for ELA Instruction***
- ***ELA Self-Evaluation Tool*** is an online self-assessment with 30 questions aligned with the ABE Professional Standards. The results may be used to help develop a professional learning plan.

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