

Standards for New Hampshire Adult Education Programs: A Rationale

For many years, federal regulators have set fairly limited parameters for determining the degree to which adult education programs are meeting their objectives. Adult educators have always realized that learners demonstrate successful growth in many areas of their lives besides increasing a reading level, passing the GED Exam, learning to speak English, or getting a job. Those achievements like voting for the first time, becoming involved in their children's education, or becoming a more active member of the community, while not easily quantifiable, are equally important determiners of success.

The Adult Education and Family Literacy Act of 1998 allows each state to add core performance indicators to those already mandated in the Act. This provision provides the opportunity for NH adult educators to establish standards to formally measure student achievement in areas not previously documented in any systematic way.

The development of the NH standards has been a five-year process. The standards were developed by a committee of adult educators from a variety of instructional programs around the state. The standards are structured to measure learner performance in the three adult roles of worker, family member, and community member, the same roles developed by the Equipped for the Future Project of the National Institute for Literacy.

Once the committee established the standards, a second group of four committees set about designing sample learning activities for teachers to use in integrating the standards into their daily work. Each committee collected materials, designed activities, created sample lesson plans, and submitted them to the Bureau of Adult Education for inclusion in the binders that have been prepared for each program in the state.

While the Bureau of Adult Education does not anticipate that the standards will immediately become criteria used to award funds to local programs, the material presented will enable teachers to begin including these important skills in their work.

These new standards are not meant to replace our emphasis on increasing basic literacy skills, attaining a high school completion credential or facilitating enrollment in further educational programs, but they will serve to focus our teaching and student learning on critical skills needed by all adults in today's society. The activities presented for all levels of adult education programs can be easily combined with the daily work of helping adult learners to achieve their goals developing their reading, writing, math, and critical thinking skills.