

Indicators of Program Quality

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**COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
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Introduction

What are the elements of quality Adult Basic and Family Literacy Education programs? In 1993, as mandated by the National Literacy Act of 1991 (NLA), the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education adopted its first Indicators of Program Quality (IPQ) to outline the characteristics and goals every funded program would strive to achieve. This document served to guide evaluation and continuous program improvement. In 1999, after the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) replaced the NLA, a revised IPQ was developed. In 2014, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) replaced WIA as guiding legislation. In response, the Division of Adult Education revised the IPQ once again. The revisions, while not extensive, reflect alignment with WIOA language especially in the areas of digital literacy and standards implementation. The conceptual framework for the IPQ still relies on principles of the Baldrige National Quality Program, aimed at promoting performance excellence in the learning and sharing of successful organizational performance practices, principles, and strategies.

The Division of Adult Education encourages programs funded by the division to prioritize these newly revised Indicators of Program Quality and discuss ways to apply them to continuous program improvement and professional development planning. The IPQ are a valuable resource for identifying and analyzing key areas of service on which to concentrate program efforts for optimal results.

The Indicators of Program Quality

1. Program Operations

Key Concepts: Quality programs articulate and promote a clear mission and vision that aligns with state priorities and local needs. They also provide a learning environment and structure of support in which learners and staff can excel while continuously striving to improve products, services, and processes. Quality programs also provide leadership that ensures accountability, collaboration, continuous improvement, support for staff, and quality instruction. They account for activities, accept responsibility for them, and disclose the results in a transparent manner.

Learning Environment

- 1.1 The program's organizational and learning environments reflect the culture, community, language, goals, and special needs of learners.
- 1.2 The program offers a range of quality and intensive services to enable learners to persist in instruction and meet their educational and career goals.
- 1.3 Facilities are safe, accessible, and appropriate for learners and families.
- 1.4 The Family Literacy program has procedures and a process in place to fully integrate the four components of Family Literacy (Adult Education, Parenting Education, Early Childhood Education, and Interactive Literacy Activities) to maximize learning gains for its families.

Professional Support and Continuous Improvement

- 1.5 The program has a well-defined program improvement process that includes regularly scheduled program improvement team (PIT) meetings with agency-wide participation and an up-to-date program improvement plan that is informed using state, program, and student data.
- 1.6 The program provides ongoing assistance and supervision for staff to effectively do their jobs.
- 1.7 The program provides instructional leadership and supports professional learning communities.
- 1.8 The program develops and implements agency and individual professional development plans reflecting both organizational and individual needs. The program supports staff in professional development planning, reflection, and application of new knowledge and skills.
- 1.9 Program staff improve their practice through regular participation in professional development activities. New staff, paid and unpaid, receive orientation to program operations and to the field of Adult and Family Literacy Education.
- 1.10 The program has well-trained staff. Advanced training and degrees in fields such as Adult Education, Early Childhood Education (for Family Literacy) mathematics, English Language Acquisition, or social work are rewarded.

Leadership

- 1.11 Program leaders ensure compliance with federal and state legislation, rules and regulations, and Division policies, while demonstrating effective management skills.
- 1.12 Program leaders coordinate funding streams with Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I and Title II programs as well as additional partners including the PA CareerLink® system, community colleges, career and technical schools, early childhood education providers, and health and human services.
- 1.13 Program leaders, with input from stakeholders, WIOA local plans, and program data, develop multi-year, program-specific strategic plans that guide service delivery, program improvement, and staff development.
- 1.14 Program leaders ensure that all staff, paid and unpaid, are properly qualified through training, education, or experience. Program leaders supervise and conduct regular performance appraisals with all staff with an emphasis on quality instruction and services.
- 1.15 Program leaders recognize exemplary achievement in staff and learners.
- 1.16 Program leaders are aware of advances in the field of Adult Basic and Family Literacy Education and ensure research- and evidence-based instruction with a focus on life skills, employability skills, and preparation for postsecondary education and training.
- 1.17 Program leaders participate in activities, initiatives, and professional organizations at the state and national levels.

Accountability

- 1.18 The program demonstrates effectiveness in improving learners' academic and employability skills by meeting or exceeding performance standards established by the state.
- 1.19 The program maintains a high-quality local information management system including paper and electronic records with the capacity to document learner progress and outcomes and program performance.
- 1.20 The program has a system to ensure complete, accurate, and timely data collection and accurate and timely entry of that information into the statewide data collection system.
- 1.21 The program maintains fiscal records and follows sound financial practices that enable compliance with federal and state legislation, rules, and regulations.

2. Instructional Systems

Key Concept: Effective instructional systems use assessment results and student goals as part of a comprehensive and integrated process of instructional planning. They incorporate technology, real-life contexts, research, and proven practices into curriculum and instruction.

Assessment

- 2.1 Program staff are trained in and correctly use state-approved adult standardized assessments to obtain valid and reliable results. Family Literacy staff is also trained in and correctly uses appropriate state-approved early childhood and Interactive Literacy Activity (ILA) assessments to obtain valid and reliable results.
- 2.2 Assessment results are used to place learners within the instructional program, document student progress, continuously guide instruction, and update goals.
- 2.3 Additional assessment tools are used to assess literacy and numeracy skills, career interests, work-readiness and vocational skills, knowledge, and abilities.
- 2.4 Family Literacy instructional staff use formative assessments and personal/family goals to assess parenting skills and parents' knowledge of their children's development and school success.
- 2.5 Instructors are trained in and correctly use alternative assessments when standardized assessments are not appropriate in accordance with Division policy related to serving adults with special needs.

Planning for Instruction

- 2.6 Program staff and learners jointly develop, regularly evaluate, and update individual learning plans that incorporate the students' assessment results and short- and long-term educational and employment goals.
- 2.7 Program staff develop instructional plans that support the learning and development of adults. Family Literacy instructional plans support the learning and development of adults, children, and families in all Family Literacy components.
- 2.8 Instructors are allotted sufficient planning time to develop standards-based lessons of appropriate intensity and duration with clear learning objectives that support instructional goals and individual learning plans.

Curricula

- 2.9 Curricula provide for learning and skill building in real-life and in culturally appropriate contexts that support learners to be effective family members, workers, and citizens.
- 2.10 Curricula development is based on learning theory and proven practices, current materials and technologies, and well-articulated instructional goals of reasonable scope and sequence.
- 2.11 Curricula and lessons are standards-based, utilizing the *College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education*, the *Foundation Skills Framework*, and the *International Society for Technology Education Standards for Students*.
- 2.12 Family literacy curricula meet Pennsylvania's Learning Standards for Early Childhood and are modified to meet children's individual developmental abilities.

- 2.13 The Family Literacy program integrates curricula that increase the knowledge and skills parents need to support their children's success with curricula that support language and literacy development for the parent and child.
- 2.14 A process is in place for the regular comprehensive review and revision of curricula incorporating new technology, materials and research, and evidence-based teaching methods.

Instructional Practices and Delivery

- 2.15 Instruction focuses on helping low-skilled adults attain the basic literacy, English language, digital literacy, and employability skills they need to successfully progress to postsecondary education or training or family-sustaining employment.
- 2.16 Family Literacy instruction connects effective instructional practices to ages and stages of child development and learning, parent and family needs, and positive family relationships.
- 2.17 The program uses technology, research and evidence-based instructional practices, and multiple delivery systems to accommodate a diverse student population.
- 2.18 Instructors apply knowledge and skills from professional development in the classroom.

3. Community Partnerships

Key Concept: Effective programs work within community systems.

- 3.1 The program coordinates educational and support services with community resources, especially the PA CareerLink® system, to ensure non-duplicative, comprehensive, and seamless services, including basic skills instruction that meets the needs of the workforce development system.
- 3.2 The program participates in community awareness activities to inform the public of the need for adult education and family literacy services and to target populations most in need of educational services.
- 3.3 Program staff are cross-trained with community and workforce partners to ensure comprehensive interagency knowledge and ongoing communications. The program is well represented in activities with community agencies and on local workforce board committees.
- 3.4 The program recruits and uses volunteer tutors, classroom aides, and other volunteers from the community to support program goals.
- 3.5 The program provides community and workforce partners with timely and accurate program information regarding recruitment, programming, reporting requirements, and policies.

4. Learner Outcomes

Key Concept: Learner achievement is the true measure of program success.

- 4.1 Learners advance through instructional levels.
- 4.2 Learners demonstrate skills needed to understand, critically evaluate, and manage life skills, such as digital literacy, fiscal literacy, health literacy, civic involvement, and citizenship.
- 4.3 Learners earn appropriate educational credentials or certificates, gain employment, and/or pursue postsecondary education or training.
- 4.4 Children in family literacy programs meet developmental milestones, are ready for school, and demonstrate proficiency in school.
- 4.5 Learners persist in instruction long enough to acquire skills necessary to achieve their personal, educational, and career goals. They engage in self-directed study when unable to attend class and return to the program as soon as possible.
- 4.6 Learners move from being dependent learners to independent lifelong learners through self-efficacy, awareness of barriers and resources, and establishment of and progress toward goals.
- 4.7 Learners are able to independently access workforce and educational systems.
- 4.8 Learners provide feedback regarding services, which is used to guide program improvement and address learner needs.

Glossary

Adult Education – Academic instruction and education services below the postsecondary level that increase an individual’s ability to: read, write, and speak English and perform mathematics or other activities necessary for the attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent; transition to postsecondary education and training; and obtain employment.

Alternative Assessment – Assessment for the special needs populations that requires the instructor to define student-specific learning targets (academic or behavioral), and to periodically measure and document the extent to which those targets or objectives are met.

College and Career Readiness Standards – A set of academic standards that identify what is most relevant in preparing adults for success in higher education and training.

Curriculum – A written plan that includes the goals for learning, the experiences through which the goals will be achieved, what instructional staff and learners do to achieve those goals, and the materials needed to support the implementation.

Evidence-based Instruction – Methods and materials based on instructional practices that have a record of success. That is, there is reliable, trustworthy, and valid evidence to suggest that when used with a particular group of students, adequate learning gains can be expected. (International Reading Association, adapted)

Family Literacy – Programs addressing the literacy needs of all members of the family while promoting parents’ involvement in their children’s education as their children’s first teachers and most powerful influence on their academic success. These programs improve educational opportunities of eligible families by integrating early childhood education, interactive literacy activities, parenting education, and adult education in a unified program.

Formative Assessment – Assessment used by teachers and students during instruction to provide feedback to adjust ongoing teaching and learning to improve students’ achievement of intended instructional outcomes. (PA Department of Education, Standards Aligned System, www.pdesas.org)

Foundation Skills Framework – A common set of work-related basic skills, knowledge areas, and competencies that adults need to work effectively and safely in today’s workplace.

Instructional Leadership – This involves the following major functions: setting academic goals; organizing instruction; hiring, supervising and evaluating instructors; protecting instructional time; creating a climate for learning and monitoring achievement; and evaluating programs. Instructional leaders understand and are accountable for all facets of the instructional program, minimize the distance between instruction and administration, and instill pride and interdependence among teachers. (Based on the work of James Weber (1987) *Instructional Leadership: A Composite Working Model. Synthesis of the Literature*)

Interactive Literacy Activities (ILA) – One of the four components of a Family Literacy program that consists of regularly scheduled center-based sessions for parent-child interaction, in which

parents and children learn and play together as a family unit and acquire ideas for transferring learning to the home.

ISTE Standards for Students – A framework of the skills and knowledge students need to effectively use technology for learning and at work.

Parenting Education (PE) – One of four components of family literacy that focuses on strengthening parents' support of their young children's language and literacy development and early school success.

Professional Learning Community – A group of educators that meets regularly, shares expertise, and works collaboratively to improve teaching skills and the academic performance of students.

Special Needs – Classification for adult learners who demonstrate one or more of the following characteristics: intellectual disability, severe emotional illness, brain injury, severe visual impairment, severe hearing impairment, or specific learning disabilities.

Standards-based Education – Provides a structured approach to create a system that explicitly links standards, assessments, and instructional delivery.

Standardized Assessment – Assessment with predetermined, established, standard procedures for administration, scoring, interpretation, and reporting of results. (McMillan, J. (2001). Essential Assessment Concepts for Teachers and Administrators, p. 103. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, Inc.)