AN EFF HANDBOOK FOR

Program Improvement

Using the Equipped for the Future Approach to Quality

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Jereann King and Beth Bingman

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NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE

NIFL
National Institute for Literacy

Equipped for the Future—every child, every adult, every community. Nothing better defines the partnership between the National Urban League and the National Institute for Literacy. Our shared commitment is to assure that all young people, adults and communities have the skills, the knowledge and the resources they need to be equipped—not just for today—but for the future. For this very reason, we are working together to make a real difference in the quality of life for all Americans.

Ten years ago, Urban League affiliates—in Boston, Hartford, Chicago and Los Angeles—helped NIFL define what adults needed to know and be able to do to be better equipped for the future. NIFL used that information to build adult learning standards and an approach to instruction designed to help adults achieve their goals. This *Equipped for the Future (EFF) Handbook for Program Improvement* is a product of collaboration between NIFL and the Urban League to create standards-based tools that will help our programs achieve results that matter.

This *EFF Handbook for Program Improvement* guides program providers through a process of clarifying goals, refining program components, and evaluating program data. This process assists programs to more effectively tell the story about how adult education is helping community members move towards getting and keeping better jobs for a better future. It is our hope that this initial publication helps to address the educational needs of the diverse communities that the Urban League and the National Institute for Literacy are committed to serving.

Marc Morial
President and Chief Executive Officer
National Urban League

Sandra Baxter
Interim Director
National Institute for Literacy

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Jereann King and Beth Bingman
EFF National Center for Training and Technical Assistance

The target audience for this handbook includes administrators and other members of program improvement teams in community-based organizations that want to use Equipped for the Future as part of their efforts to improve program quality. While it will be of interest to others, the handbook targets administrators because of their specific roles as advocates for program change and because of their responsibility to ensure the delivery of quality organizational services.

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Background

Equipped for the Future is a standards-based approach to reform in the adult literacy and basic education system. It has been developed to strengthen the ability of adult education providers to improve their programs in order to better meet the needs of adult learners and the wider community. Standards-based reform is based on content standards that represent a consensus on what is important for students to know and be able to do. These standards set the definition of quality, and every component of a program should contribute to enabling students to achieve these standards. In standards-based reform we use the term *aligned* to describe how instruction, assessment, and accountability all focus on the same things so what we teach is what we assess and what we are held accountable for. This effort to use standards to align all parts of a program is the hallmark of standards-based reform and is critical to quality adult programs across the country.

Standards-based reform is based on content standards that represent a consensus of what is important for students to know and be able to do. These standards set the definition of quality, and every component of a program should contribute to enabling students to achieve these standards.

What makes Equipped for the Future an especially useful vehicle for standards-based reform is that the EFF Standards reflect two critical perspectives on what results matter: the perspective of policy makers who support our programs and the perspective of adult learners who attend our programs.

EFF Standards were developed to help us define—as a nation—what adults need to know and be able to do in order to meet the National Adult Literacy and Lifelong Learning Goal. This policy goal, developed jointly by the President and governors and affirmed by the Congress of the United States, defines what state and national policy makers think are important

for adult learning programs to achieve: it focuses on adults' ability to exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, help their children succeed in school, and be productive workers who can compete in the global economy.

National Adult Literacy and Lifelong Learning Goal (Goal 6)

Every adult American will be literate and possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

In defining what adults need to know and be able to do to achieve this policy goal, the National Institute for Literacy—which coordinated the development of EFF—went first to adult learners across the country and asked them to help us understand what these three roles—citizen, family member, worker—looked like in their daily lives and what they needed to know and be able to do in order to carry out these roles. The responses of adults gave us the second critical part of our framework—adult purposes for learning. Since the framework we used to develop EFF Standards includes a focus on both adult learner purposes and policy maker goals, it enables us to pay attention to both these critical customers of adult learning programs. Aligning programs toward achieving EFF Standards helps sharpen our focus on learner goals and at the same time achieve results that are important to policymakers. This is why we call EFF a customer-driven framework. If we meet EFF Standards, we are being accountable both to our learners and to our funders.

Introduction

This handbook is designed to help community-based organizations that provide adult education improve their program quality in order to better achieve results that matter. The target audience for this handbook includes administrators and other members of program improvement teams in community-based organizations that want to use Equipped for the Future as part of their strategy for program improvement. While it will be of interest to others, the handbook targets administrators because of their specific roles as advocates for program change and because of their responsibility to ensure the delivery of quality services.

The processes described in the handbook will increase organizations' abilities to meet funders' accountability guidelines and better meet the needs of their students and communities.

The handbook uses Equipped for the Future to frame a program improvement process. Carrying out the activities in the handbook will

- enhance an organization's understanding of EFF and how to use the EFF Standards and tools to improve quality
- help the organization identify strengths as well as areas of practice to change
- support the development of a plan for implementing changes
- support the documentation of the change process and results.

The National Urban League and its affiliates in Columbus, Ohio, and Charlotte, North Carolina, worked with Equipped for the Future to develop this handbook in order to enhance the quality, consistency, and accountability of their programs. The processes described in the handbook will increase organizations' abilities to meet funders' accountability guidelines and better meet the needs of their students and communities.

Program Improvement Focused on Quality and Results

Although there are many approaches to implementing a program improvement process in education, all include a systematic approach to defining program goals and to evaluating how well each program component contributes to achieving these goals.

This Equipped for the Future approach to quality is structured by five EFF Program Practices based on the theoretical foundations of EFF:

- A purposeful and transparent approach to education
- A contextualized approach to curriculum and instruction
- An approach to teaching and learning based on building expertise
- An approach to assessment based on cognitive science
- A systematic approach to program improvement.

These Program Practices provide guideposts by which programs can assess progress and make plans for improvement based on EFF.

Using EFF as a framework and guide can lead to improved outcomes for students, teachers, and programs:

- Students will be better able to articulate their goals and what they need to learn to reach those goals.
- Teachers' planning and instruction will be more focused on student goals and structured by the adult learning theory that is the basis of EFF.
- Programs will be better able to align program components, describe their student progress in measurable, real-world results that can be understood by their constituencies, and will be able to use data about student progress in a process of ongoing program improvement.

Program improvement processes involve organizations in an ongoing process of assessing current practice, planning needed changes, implementing planned changes, collecting data on the outcomes of these changes, evaluating the results, and based on these results, planning the next cycle of improvement efforts. This handbook guides organizations through four phases of using EFF tools and processes to carry out a program improvement process:

Phase 1 is a consideration of preliminary issues and organizational requirements for engaging in an improvement process. In Phase 1, the people leading the EFF quality process prepare for their role by examining

the reasons for launching the process, their role in facilitation, considering issues of team formation, and planning for Phase 2. They learn about and use some of the EFF Standards in this process.

Phase 2 is an examination of the adult education program using the EFF program practices to look at "what is" and "what could be" to identify needed changes. In Phase 2, the program improvement team takes part in a series of five sessions, using EFF concepts to examine the adult education work of their organization. These activities focus on the five EFF Program Practices.

Phase 3 is a prioritization and planning process to determine which changes to implement and what modifications in current program practices should be made to support those changes. In Phase 3, the program improvement team will use what they have learned in Phase 2 to examine possible program changes, to choose the most important, and to plan implementation of these changes.

Phase 4 includes the implementation, documentation, and evaluation of changes and modifications. In Phase 4 the program implements the changes planned in Phase 3, and the program improvement team documents and evaluates these changes.

These phases are part of an ongoing iterative process of program improvement using Equipped for the Future.

More About Equipped for the Future

EFF was initiated in 1993 in response to National Educational Goal 6:

> **Every adult American will be literate and possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibility of citizenship.**

THIS HANDBOOK INCLUDES

- **Steps** in Phase 1 to prepare for the process.
- **A facilitator's guide for team sessions** in Phase 2 to examine "what is."
- **Tools for developing specific plans** for program improvement in Phase 3.
- **Tools to be used to document the implementation and results** of program improvements in Phase 4.
- **Resource List** of other materials that support these processes.

By clearly defining what adults need to know to achieve this goal, EFF makes it possible for the adult literacy system to focus on measurable standards so that we can determine progress toward achieving Goal 6.

In research with adult students, EFF has identified **four purposes for learning**:

- to gain access to information and resources to orient themselves in the world
- to give voice to ideas and opinions with the confidence that they will be heard
- to take independent action to solve problems and make decisions
- to keep learning to build a bridge to the future in a rapidly changing world.

EFF helps organizations enable adults to achieve these four purposes in their roles as citizens, workers, and family members by providing

- a clear set of 16 Content Standards that describe what adults need to know and be able to do,
- a framework and tools that teachers and programs can use to link curriculum, instruction and assessment,
- an assessment framework that can be used to support program improvement and accountability.

The book, *Equipped for the Future Content Standards: What Adults Need to Know and Be Able to Do in the 21st Century* (Stein, 2000) summarizes EFF history and goals, defines the key elements of EFF, defines the EFF Content Standards, and gives examples of how the EFF Content Framework has been used.

The five EFF Program Practices reflect the theoretical foundations of EFF. These practices are explained in *Results That Matter: An Approach to Program Quality Using Equipped for the Future* (Bingman and Stein, 2001). See the Resource List in the Appendix for ordering information.

To begin exploring Equipped for the Future and for information on EFF materials and other EFF resources, visit the Web site:
www.nifl.gov/linc/collections/eff/eff.html

More About Program Improvement

There are many approaches used to structure program and organizational improvement. In the processes described in this handbook, you will learn about EFF program practices that will help you carry out a systematic analysis of your program and identify changes you might want to implement. While the EFF approach to quality presented in this handbook can be used alone, it can also be combined with other quality improvement systems that focus on the organization as a whole. One of the most widely used is the Baldrige National Quality Program in Education developed in the U.S. Department of Commerce in 1988. The Baldrige National Quality Program is based on seven criteria for performance:

- Leadership
- Strategic Planning
- Student, Stakeholder, and Market Focus
- Information and Analysis
- Faculty and Staff Focus
- Process Management
- Organizational Performance Results

These criteria can be used to assess performance on a wide range of key indicators and can help align resources; improve communication, productivity, and effectiveness; and achieve strategic goals.

Please refer to the *Baldrige National Quality Program: Education Criteria for Performance Excellence* for additional information. See the Resource List for contact information.

The Four Phases of Program Improvement

PHASE 1: Getting Started

- Deciding to do program improvement
- Building an administrative team
- Understanding roles and responsibilities

PHASE 2: Examining "what is" in your program using the five EFF Program Practices

The program improvement team participates in a series of five sessions learning about and using EFF to assess their adult education program.

PHASE 3: Planning changes for program improvement in:

Staff | Procedures | Teaching and Learning | Resources

PHASE 4: Implementing, Documenting, and Evaluating Changes

Using EFF tools to make and evaluate planned changes.

In continuous program improvement, this process is cyclical and after changes are implemented and data collected, the team will begin a new cycle of assessment, planning, and implementation.

Phase 1: Getting Started

This section of the handbook is written for the person or persons who will be leading the EFF program improvement process in an organization. Phase 1 includes information and activities needed to prepare for a program improvement process and to form and to lead a program improvement team. This section explains how to get started and how the EFF Standards support the program improvement process. The "Getting Started" phase is based on the assumption that the organization is committed to a timely process and has identified administrators and/or leaders within the organization who understand that leading the process is an essential part of their work.

In Phase 1, you will consider how your organization gets ready for a program improvement process and consider the questions:

What do we need to know about EFF and about leading an improvement process?

What do we need to do to ensure a smooth, thoughtful, and successful process?

This handbook provides the administrative team with information, tools, activities, and handouts needed to facilitate a process of using Equipped for the Future to strengthen your organization. The activities in the handbook can be carried out in a variety of organizational settings, such as staff and program meetings, organizational retreats, board meetings, strategic planning sessions, etc. Many of the activities in the handbook include guiding questions as discussion prompts. Handbook users are encouraged to adapt particular activities to meet the needs of diverse organizations and programs.

In Phase 2, "Examining Your Program," administrators and other team members, are introduced through practical activities, to aspects of the five program practices and other EFF tools, and examine their program to identify changes (documented as **Changes to Make**) to be implemented later. The facilitator and team members will become familiar with EFF language and tools through the process of examining current organizational and program practices. In Phase 2 of the handbook, you will also find several Cases in Point. These are scenarios of everyday situations that present themselves in adult education programs that participants use to reflect on how EFF might be used.

Phase 3 is framed using the EFF Content Framework Standards *Solve Problems* and *Plan*. The program improvement team will prioritize its goals and then evaluate the alternatives in the **Changes to Make** lists generated in Phase 2. The team will select the alternative(s) you want to implement and develop a plan of objectives and activities to implement the chosen alternatives. The change(s) might involve one or all of these program aspects: staff, procedures, teaching and learning, and policy.

Phase 4 is the implementation phase and continues to use components from the *Solve Problems* and *Plan* Standards. The organization or program will implement the plan, document what happens and the results, and use this documentation to evaluate what has been done.

Documenting activity outcomes. Users of this handbook are encouraged to document activity outcomes and use the results to inform and plan for changes in Phase 3 of the program improvement process. Lists generated during brainstorms, participants' questions concerning the program improvement process, suggestions for changes to improve program quality, and reactions to and evaluation of the activities are examples of information the facilitator should document and maintain. Information captured on flipchart sheets during the activity will need to be typed and filed in a folder or three-ring binder. Notes taken by the facilitator and participants' evaluations should also be saved.

This documentation symbol will appear throughout the guide as a reminder to facilitators **to take note of and document a particular activity's outcomes** and to save materials created.

Steps in Getting Started

Phase 1 asks the facilitator or facilitation team to take several steps in preparation for carrying out the activities in Phases 2-4. In Phase 1 you will

- consider your decision to engage in program improvement
- become more familiar with the EFF Standards
- review facilitation skills
- establish a program improvement team
- decide on the roles and responsibilities of the team
- set the schedule
- determine your communication processes
- assemble the materials you will need.

Your own schedule will determine how long Phase 1 will take.

Deciding to Engage in Program Improvement

Programs decide to undertake a program improvement process for many different reasons, in response to both internal and external factors. Internally, it may appear that changes are needed in your program because the students are not meeting their goals and are not attending classes. Teachers may be complaining that the work is too hard and that they see few positive results. Or they have seen extraordinary results in one class and would like to see other classes improve. Externally, funders are now requiring higher levels of accountability and want to see results that justify their financial support. Perhaps there is a funding source that you have never been able to access because your data collection process was not sufficient; or a funder may be interested in supporting your organization through an improvement process. Whatever the situation, being intentional about program improvement is a positive first step.

List as many reasons as you can think of for engaging in program improvement and save for future use.

Reasons for engaging in program improvement

Now that you have identified reasons for pursuing a program improvement process, consider whether you are thinking of focusing on a single program or your entire organization. You want to be clear from the beginning what you are changing and what the implications might be for the entire organization. This handbook will take you through the steps for an adult education program pursuing program improvement and interested in using the EFF Framework. However, with additional organizational development tools this approach can be adapted for improving an entire organization.

The EFF Standards

As you embark upon this program improvement process, you will need to know about team dynamics and development. The EFF Content Standards offer important insights and are useful for considering team work and other tasks related to a program improvement process. These Standards make clear the key elements of the core knowledge and skills adults use in their lives. Just as the Standards give students understanding of what a skill means, they also help teachers and administrators, and can help you, as a facilitator, understand what's involved in carrying out a particular skill.

REVIEW: The EFF Standards and how they work in the *Equipped for the Future Content Standards* book, pages 17 – 23.

The Standards are divided into four categories of skills:

- Communication Skills
- Decision-Making Skills
- Interpersonal Skills
- Lifelong Learning Skills.

Each Content Standard's page includes the four purposes for learning identified by adults, the three roles in which adults function, and the 13 Common Activities that represent the overlap between the three roles. Under each Standard is a list of specific skills and abilities that learners need in order to carry out a particular standard. These components support learners' purposes for learning.

The following Standards will be especially helpful as you approach the tasks in a program improvement process. Each Standard is explained in detail in the *EFF Content Standards* book:

- The **Cooperate with Others** Standard (page 41) for understanding team dynamics
- The **Reflect and Evaluate** Standard (page 51) for knowing how to facilitate reflection
- The **Plan** Standard (page 39) for learning how to plan and manage change.

Team Facilitation

Teams share a common purpose; team members work together to realize specific goals. As an administrator and leader, it is critical that you organize a representative team of staff and stakeholders. Here are some things to consider about team dynamics:

- Stages of team development
- Types of team behavior
- Processes for team decision-making
- Roles of team members.

All teams or working groups go through stages of team development: forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning.

Think about experiences you have had as a team member in your organization. "What seemed to unfold as the group developed?" Make a bulleted list.

Working with teams

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REVIEW: Review the "Stages of Team Development" in Appendix A. Compare your "Working with Teams" list with the stages of team development. Can you identify aspects of any stages on your list? Consider how you will take these stages into account as you facilitate this process.

Now, look at the **Cooperate with Others** Standard and think about how it is useful to your team building efforts. (See page 41 in the *EFF Content Standards* book.) The *Cooperate with Others* Standard is located in the interpersonal skills category. It has four components of performance:

- *Interact with others in ways that are friendly, courteous, and tactful and that demonstrate respect for others' ideas, opinions, and contributions.*
- *Seek input from others in order to understand their actions and reactions.*
- *Offer input on one's own interest and attitudes so that others can understand one's actions and reactions.*
- *Try to adjust one's actions to take into account the needs of others and/or task to be accomplished.*

Consider each component and determine how they relate to the list of experiences generated earlier. Compare issues of team development with components of performance from the standard *Cooperate with Others.*

Now, look at the **Plan** Standard. It is found under the Decision-Making Skills category and it has five components of performance:

- *Set and prioritize goals.*
- *Develop an organized approach of activities and objectives.*
- *Actively carry out the plan.*
- *Monitor the plan's progress while considering any need to adjust the plan.*
- *Evaluate its effectiveness in achieving the goals.*

The *Plan* Standard is an important one to consider in this program improvement process. The components of performance provide the direction that you and other team members will need in order to prioritize new program goals and practices and to implement programs changes. Phases 3 and 4 are structured around the *Plan* Standard.

Review the Standard **Reflect and Evaluate** and its components of performance:

- *Take stock of where one is: assess what one knows already and the relevance of that knowledge.*
- *Make inferences, predictions, or judgments based on one's reflections.*

Throughout the process the program improvement team will use these two components of performance. In Phase 2, the team members will repeatedly examine and take stock of current program practices and use that data to inform what might improvement the quality of a program.

The EFF Content Standards offer invaluable insights into implementing and managing a program improvement process, so use them often.

See Appendix A for additional resources on group facilitation.

Establishing the Team

You will need to establish a program improvement team. Members of the team will work together to reflect on current program practices and to plan and implement program improvements. Who should be on the team? It is important that the team is representative of the organization or specific program. Therefore the team might include the following:

- program director
- program administrator
- board member
- student leader
- lead teacher.

The team might also include key stakeholder representatives. For the initial phase, you may need eight to twelve people. It will be important to have administrators who can influence and advocate for program change. For adult education programs, it will be critical to have a lead teacher as part of the team. If the teacher works only part-time for the organization, it will be important to compensate him or her for time involved in planning and other team activities.

Roles and Responsibilities

Establishing clear and manageable roles and responsibilities is critical to the program improvement process. The program improvement team will be the primary entity responsible for reflecting on current practices and planning and implementing new program practices and improvements. There is no substitute for the commitment of all team members to the process. Since all teams develop through stages, it might be helpful for team members to check in periodically throughout the process to reflect on the stage in which they are operating. Making explicit what is going on keeps the communication channels open so the work can go forward.

Team members will need to decide what roles and responsibilities are necessary for at least the initial phases of the process. Consider the following questions:

- Will the team have a team chairperson?
- If so, will the chairperson be responsible for facilitating the meetings?
- Who will create the agenda and be responsible for collecting meeting evaluations and other information?
- What are the responsibilities of the team members?
- What will be the senior or executive director's role and responsibility during this process?
- Will the team have a recorder or note taker?
- If so, will the recorder be responsible for taking notes during all of the meetings and activities?
- Will some roles be rotated among team members?

Administrator's Role. There may be several administrators on the team. Remember this process focuses on the administrative level and the issues, changes, and improvements that align instruction, assessment, and accountability. Specifically, the administrator's role in this process has two parts: 1) understanding how to create an organizational environment to support teachers in using the EFF Teaching and Learning Cycle and other EFF tools to help students meet their goals; 2) learning how to increase program performance and accountability. The administrator provides leadership for using the EFF Program Practices in a systematic approach to program and organizational improvement.

As team members, administrative staff will be mindful of administrative

level tasks and needs throughout the process. It will also be important for administrators to understand (and internalize) the EFF Program Practices in order to model EFF quality instructional leadership.

Facilitator's Role. This handbook is addressed to the facilitator of the program improvement process and particularly to the facilitator of the reflection activities in Phase 2. The facilitator's role may be shared or rotated among team members, or one administrator might serve as facilitator throughout the process. The facilitator's role is to

- understand the overall direction of the process and the goal and objectives of the sessions
- organize materials and handouts for the sessions
- ensure that everyone participates and no one person dominates the meeting
- focus the energy of the group on the task
- help resolve conflict
- understand when decisions are needed and suggest discussion or decision-making methods
- ensure that there is accurate documentation of activity outcomes and process evaluation.

As a team you might want to add to or delete from this list as well as think of other roles and responsibilities that are essential to this process.

Setting the Schedule

Your organization's leaders can determine when the time is right for starting a program improvement process. Remember that the best time for implementing change is when the organization is stable and things are going smoothly, not when the organization is experiencing uncertainty and chaos. If the organization is using the Baldrige National Quality Program framework or some other quality framework, that schedule should be taken into account.

The initial phase of this program improvement process involves a series of five sessions, which can span anywhere from a month to three months, depending on the organization's situation and circumstances. The organization's senior directors should have input into the amount of time allocated for the entire process. The meetings should be held at a convenient

time for all team members. There should be enough time set aside to comfortably complete all of the steps in a session.

Communication

Moving forward with a program improvement process requires effective communication throughout all levels of the organization, including trustee boards, advisory boards, the entire staff, stakeholders, consumers of services, etc. The organization or program should determine how extensive this communication needs to be at different points in the process. Consider the messages that you want to convey about program improvement in your organization and get it out to all concerned parties.

Materials to Assemble

As part of your own preparation, you have reviewed EFF publications. Every team member should have a copy of the *Equipped for the Future Content Standards* book and *Results That Matter*. These should be ordered a few weeks before you plan to begin Phase 2. *Results That Matter* can also be downloaded from the EFF website. You may want to order copies of the "EFF Research to Practice Notes 1-3" for each team member, although you can also copy these as handouts from masters in the Appendix. Information for obtaining EFF materials is in the Resource List.

In addition to EFF materials, you will need to assemble these documents from your organization:

- mission and vision statements
- brochures, newsletters, recruiting pamphlets
- samples of tests and forms used to document student progress.

At every meeting, you will need an easel, flipchart pads, writing paper, pens, and large color markers. At the beginning of the guide for the steps in each session is a list of specific materials and handouts required for that session. The facilitator will need to review and assemble these materials before each session. Handout templates used during the activities are in Appendix B.

The chart that follows outlines the materials and handouts needed for each session.

Overview of Phase 2 Activities

Sessions	Materials Required (handouts in Appendix)	Time
Session One: Introduction to EFF. Team members are introduced to the program improvement process and the EFF Framework, create a meeting schedule, clarify their program goals and compare them to the four purposes which adults identify as important reasons for adult education, and use EFF Standards to better understand the relationship between skill building, standards, and contextualized teaching and learning.	• Introduction to EFF handout • Role Maps or *EFF Content Standards* publication • EFF Content Framework handout • Example handout • Changes to Make form • Copies of organizational mission and vision statement • Copies of Goals Grid handout • Flipchart sheets with: 1) a reproduction of the **Goals Grid**, 2) **EFF Four Purposes**, and 3) **Changes to Make** • Standards Wheel Poster (See Resource List for ordering information) • Session #2 Background and Case in Point • Copies of *EFF Research to Practice Note 1*	3 hours
Session Two: A Purposeful and Transparent Approach to Education. Team members review the organization's stated goals through its mission statement and published materials, and compare those goals with student and staff goals.	• Copies of organizational brochure, recruitment materials, newsletters, other publications • Changes to Make form • Flipchart sheets labeled **Changes to Make**, **Intake Process/ Orientation Process** • Session #3 Background and Case in Point handouts • *EFF Research to Practice Notes 2 & 3*	2-1/2 hours
Session Three: Building Expertise Using a Contextualized Approach to Curriculum and Instruction. Team members identify contexts of students' lives and consider how the EFF Teaching/Learning cycle supports students in building expertise.	• Session #3 Background and Case in Point • *EFF Research to Practice Notes 2 & 3* • Flipchart page to list **Students' Real-life Contexts** • **Contextualized Approach to Curriculum and Instruction** grid on flipchart • Constructivist Learning handout • EFF Teaching and Learning Cycle handouts • EFF Teaching and Learning Grid handouts • **EFF Teaching and Learning Cycle** grid on flipchart • Session #4 Background and Case in Point handouts • Joan Benz's articles	3 hours
Session Four: Assessment, Accountability and Program Improvement. Team members explore the organization's assessment practices and consider how assessment might look if it were based on the EFF Assessment Framework and review the organization's current documentation methods and accountability processes.	• Session #4 Background and Case in Point • Questions on Assessment handout • Current Approach to Assessment handout • EFF vs. Traditional Assessment handout • Current Approach to Assessment Grid handout • Joan Benz's article on assessment in the EFF classroom • **Current Approach to Assessment, Documentation Methods Grid, Changes to Make** on flipcharts • Large table for sorting documents • Goals list from Session 1 • Session #5 Background and Case in Point • Merrifield article handouts	3 hours
Session Five: Program Improvement: Accountability, Change and Quality. Team builds on the organization's experiences with implementing changes and compares funders' accountability requirements with current organizational accountability processes.	• Questions about Change handout • Flipchart pages from Steps 1 • Program goals list generated in Session 1 • **Quotes** flipchart • Merrifield's article on accountability • Changes to Make forms from previous meetings • EFF and Baldrige matrix drawn on flipchart sheet	2-3/4 hours

Phase 2: Examining Your Program

This section of the EFF Handbook for Program Improvement contains step by step directions for facilitating five sessions that take the program improvement team through a series of activities in which they examine various aspects of the program and learn about Equipped for the Future. Each session is organized in a similar way.

Within the session directions, **handouts** are indicated by this symbol.

Before each session, all participants should read the handouts "Background and Case in Point." The Background for Session One includes an introduction to EFF and should be distributed to participants a few days before the first session. These handouts are reproduced at the beginning of each session section as an introduction and review for the facilitator. Copies for participants are found in the Appendix.

Information, ususally recorded on **flipchart pages,** is indicated by this symbol.

Each session has goals and objectives. As facilitator, you should review these with team members at the beginning of each session. You may want to copy them on a flipchart sheet and post during the session.

This documentation symbol will appear throughout the guide as a reminder to facilitators **to take note of and document a particular activity's outcomes** and to save materials created.

As you and the team take part in these sessions you will generate a variety of information that will guide you as you plan and implement changes in your program. This information, usually recorded on flipchart pages, should be saved. Be sure to label and date each flipchart page. It may be helpful to have this information typed and copied for team members to save in a notebook.

At the conclusion of Phase 2 your team should be ready to design a program improvement plan in Phase 3.

Session One – Introduction to EFF

Handout 2.1

HANDOUT 2.1

Introduction to EFF

In the initial session of this program improvement process, team members are introduced to EFF as a standards-based framework for guiding the delivery of quality adult basic skills education. A quality program is one in which the organization's purposes and goals are clear, so that students and community members can understand how a program or organization contributes to the students' goals and to the broader community's goals.

EFF was initiated in 1993 in response to **National Educational Goal 6**:

> **Every adult American will be literate and possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibility of citizenship.**

By clearly defining what adults need to know to achieve this goal, EFF makes it possible for the adult literacy system to focus on measurable standards so that we can determine progress toward achieving Goal 6.

In research with adult students, EFF has identified **Four Purposes for Learning**

- to gain access to information and resources to orient themselves in the world,
- to give voice to ideas and opinions with the confidence that they will be heard,
- to take independent action to solve problems and make decisions, and
- to keep learning to build a bridge to the future in a rapidly changing world.

EFF helps organizations enable adults to achieve these four purposes in their roles as citizens, workers, and family members by providing

- a clear set of **16 Content Standards** that describe what adults need to know and be able to do
- a framework and tools that teachers and programs can use to link curriculum, instruction and assessment
- an assessment framework that can be used to support program improvement and accountability.

The book, *Equipped for the Future Content Standards: What Adults Need to Know and Be Able to Do in the 21st Century* (Stein, 2000) summarizes EFF history and goals, defines the key elements of EFF, defines the EFF Content Standards, and gives examples of how the EFF Framework has been used.

The five EFF Program Practices reflect the theoretical foundations of EFF. These practices are explained in *Results That Matter: An Approach to Program Quality Using Equipped for the Future* (Bingman and Stein, 2001). See the Contacts list in the Appendix for ordering information.

Session 1 Goals:

To review primary components of the EFF Framework and the organization's stated goals through its mission statement and published materials, and to compare those goals with student and staff goals.

Objectives:

By the end of this session, participants will be able to

- understand the three role maps and how they help students set goals and plan learning
- understand how the role maps can enhance a purposeful and transparent approach to education and enhance program quality

- clarify the purposes of the educational programs
- identify specific steps for making the program purposeful and transparent, and
- discuss the EFF four purposes for learning.

Materials Required :

- The three Role Maps in the *EFF Content Standards* book.
- **Introduction to EFF** handout (2.1)
- **The EFF Content Framework** handout (2.2)
- Handout **Example** (2.3)
- Flipchart sheets with **EFF Four Purposes**, a reproduction of the **Goals Grid**, and **Changes to Make** form
- Copies of organization's mission and vision statement for each team member and a copy on a flipchart sheet
- **Goals Grid** handout (2.4)
- Post-it Notes
- **Standards Wheel Poster** *(See Resource List for ordering information)*

Time Required: 3 hours

Facilitator's Note: Since this is the first session that brings the program improvement team together, it will be important to review the organization's entire program improvement process or the phases of this project and the expected outcomes of this project. Then explain the goal and objectives of this session. Make sure that everyone is comfortable with the process. Announce any logistical issues related to the meeting. As the facilitator and team member, you will also participate in the session activities. Everyone should have copies of materials and handouts to be used in the session. You can create a packet of materials for each team member beforehand or distribute materials, as necessary, during the session.

In this session, the terms "goal" and "purpose" might be used interchangeably and might refer to students and/or to the program. As the facilitator, it will be important that you clarify how the terms are being used.

Steps in Session One

Settle-In and Session Overview – *20 minutes*

Allow time for everyone to settle in and get comfortable, and if necessary have team members introduce themselves.

Explain overall project goals, expected outcomes, and how this project fits with your organization's program improvement process, if any.

Discuss the schedule for team activities.

Invite participants to ask questions about EFF. All questions might not be answered at this time; however, encourage participants to make note of their questions for later discussions.

Pass out and use the handout below to briefly review the components of the EFF Content Framework.

Handout 2.2

HANDOUT 2.2

The Equipped for the Future Content Framework

Four Purposes	Role Maps	Common Activities	Content Standards
To gain ACCESS	Citizens and Community Members	• Gather, analyze and use information • Manage Resources • Work within the big picture	**Communication Skills** • Read With Understanding • Convey Ideas in Writing • Speak So Others Can Understand • Listen Actively
To give VOICE	Parents and Family Members	• Work together • Provide leadership • Guide and support others	**Decision-Making Skills** • Solve Problems and Make Decisions • Plan • Use Math to Solve Problems and Communicate
To take INDEPENDENT ACTION	Workers	• Seek guidance and support from others • Develop and express sense of self • Respect others and value diversity	**Interpersonal Skills** • Cooperate With Others • Guide Others • Advocate and Influence • Resolve Conflict and Negotiate
To build a BRIDGE TO THE FUTURE		• Exercise rights and responsibilities • Create and pursue vision and goals • Use technology and other tools to accomplish goals • Keep pace with change	**Lifelong Learning Skills** • Take Responsibility for Learning • Learn Through Research • Reflect and eEvaluate • Use Information and Communication Technology

Step 1: Using Role Maps to Set Goals and Plan Learning – *30 minutes.*

Be sure each person has handouts of the role maps or you can refer them to role maps in the back of the EFF Content Standards book. In this step you will discuss the three EFF Role Maps, decide which one is most relevant to your personal goals, and explore how the role maps can help students set goals and plan learning. ***Each team member should review all three of the role maps. Point out that***

- The role maps define key activities necessary to fulfill the three primary adult roles:

1. Effective citizens and community members take informed action to make a positive difference in their lives, communities, and world.

2. Effective parents and family members contribute to building and maintaining a strong family system that promotes growth and development.

3. Effective workers adapt to change and actively participate in meeting the demands of a changing workplace in a changing world.

- Each role map identifies key activities that are critical to carrying out the responsibilities associated with a particular role. Role Indicators found in the EFF Content Standards book describe key characteristics of effective performance of each activity.

Pass out and review the example below. Then ask each team members to think of a goal that relates to his or her work life. Ask team members to read through the Broad Areas of Responsibility and Key Activities on the Worker Role Map and figure out where their goals fit.

Handout 2.3

HANDOUT 2.3

EXAMPLE: Goals and Broad Areas of Responsibility

My personal goal is to create a small, home-based arts business that I can work and operate in my spare time. When I looked at the **Worker Role Map**, I located my goal under the **Broad Area of Responsibility**—"Plan and Direct Personal and Professional Growth." When I looked closer at the Plan and Direct Personal and Professional Growth" section of the Role Map, I found the following **Key Activities**:

- Balance and support work, career, and personal needs.
- Pursue work activities that provide personal satisfaction and meaning.
- Plan, renew, and pursue personal and career goals.
- Learn new skills.

So, these are four key activities that I need to "perform" so that I'm prepared as a small, home-based business "worker."

Go around and have each person share his or her goal and how it connects to the role maps. Finish this step by discussing and documenting how the role maps might help students set goals and plan learning.

Step 2: Using Standards – *25 minutes*

In this step, participants use the EFF Worker Role Map and Standards to better understand the relationship between skill building and using standards for contextualized teaching and learning. Ask participants to take a look at the **Worker Role Map** and read over the **Broad Areas of Responsibility**.

Now ask participants to read through the **Key Activities** of **"Work Within the Big Picture,"** which are to

- work within organizational norms
- respect organizational goals, performance, and structure to guide work activities
- balance individual roles and needs with those of the organization
- guide individual priorities based on industry trends, labor law/contracts, and competitive practices.

Assign at least two participants to each of these key activities and have them write on Post-It Notes the skills they personally think are needed to accomplish each of these Key Activities. Write one skill per Post-It Note.

For example

— To "work within organizational norms," a person might need to be able to read the personnel policies.

— To "balance individual roles with those of the organization," a person might need to be able to think critically.

Have participants partner up for about 5 minutes and compare skills they identified. Once partners have had an opportunity to discuss the range of skills they identified, ask them to agree on three to five skills for each key activity.

Now focus the group's attention on the **Standards Wheel** poster with the 16 Standards in four categories. Ask participants to place their Post-It Notes within the appropriate standard. This can be a fun and engaging activity, prompting lots of discussion and even debate. Ask participants to talk about what they understand from this activity in regards to the relationship between skills and the Standards. Help them understand that

- To accomplish a key activity, a student might need to use more than one Standard;
- Standards are much broader than skills; and
- Standards are useful to adults at all levels of skill.

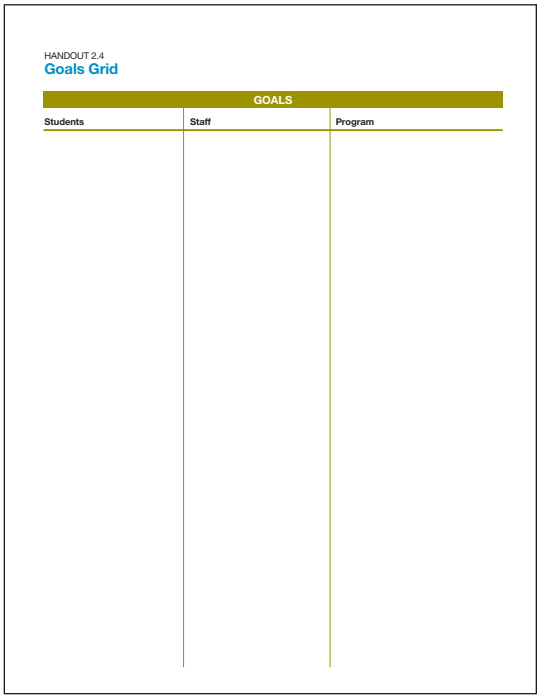
Explain to participants that teachers can use students' real-life roles—as workers and family and community members—as contexts for learning, as was done in this activity. The Four Purposes, the Common Activities, as well as the Standards, can help develop teaching and learning activities based on a variety of learners' goals.

BREAK – *10 minutes*

Step 3: Exploring Program Goals – *25 minutes*

In this step participants will generate a list of student, staff, and program goals. Make sure everyone has a copy of the **Goals Grid** handout. Using the Goals Grid, (see example below) ask team members to think about their personal goals for the students, the staff, and the program. ***"What do you hope is achieved by students, staff, and the program?"*** Have each person jot his or her ideas down in the appropriate column of their handout.

Handout 2.4


HANDOUT 2.4
Goals Grid

GOALS		
Students	Staff	Program

EXAMPLE of Goals Grid

GOALS		
Students	**Staff**	**Program**
For example: • to pass GED • to upgrade employment • to gain new learning strategies	• to make learning exciting • to create lessons that match different learning styles	• to support learning that is applicable and meaningful in students' everyday lives

Once members have completed their lists, ask each person to share his or her list of goals. As they do so, write their responses in the appropriate columns on the flipchart **Goals Grid**. If the same goals are repeated, place check marks by them to indicate that they have been previously stated or identified.

As a group, review the list of goals. Some goals, perhaps, are closely related and can be synthesized or collapsed into one goal or goal category. Look for ways to narrow the list without leaving out any of the goals. Use the following question to discuss the range of organizational goals.

> ***"What do these goals say about the program or organization's purposes?"***

Step 4: Clarifying Program Purposes – *35 minutes*

In this step you will review your organizational or program mission and/or vision statement. Post the flipchart sheet with these statements. Begin by asking a volunteer to read the mission and/or vision statement aloud. Ask each participant to jot down what they hear in the statements as organizational or program goals and purposes. Have each participant share his or her list. Use the following list of questions to guide a group discussion.

- ***How do the purposes and goals stated in the mission or vision compare to the goals identified on the Goals Grid in the previous step?***
- ***Do we have purposes that are not stated in the vision or mission?***
- ***Are the organization or program purposes stated in other documents?***
- ***As a group can we say what our purposes are?***

The facilitator will need to make notes of the important points in the discussion and review these points with participants. Then the group should come to consensus on a statement of purpose for your program. This statement should be written on a flipchart sheet and transferred to the notebook after the session.

BREAK – *10 minutes*

Step 5: Comparing Educational and Program Purposes – *25 minutes*

In this step you will discuss the Four Purposes for Learning that adult learners identified (during the initial EFF field research) as reasons for returning to education:

- To gain **access** to information and resources to orient themselves in the world
- To give **voice** to ideas and opinions with the confidence that they will be heard
- To take **independent action** to solve problems and make decisions
- To keep learning to **build a bridge to the future** in a rapidly changing world.

Post the flipchart sheet with the **EFF Four Purposes for Learning**.

Review the four EFF purposes. Use the following questions to guide a discussion:

- ***How meaningful are these purposes to our organization? Please explain.***
- ***How do these purposes compare with our students' stated purposes?***
- ***How do these purposes compare with our organization's purposes?***

Step 6: Wrapping-Up – *10 minutes*

Finish up the session with a go-around. Ask team members to comment on important aspects and major outcomes of the session. Wrap up by reviewing the goal and objectives of this session.

Review any tasks to be completed and set dates for future meetings.

Give each team member a copy of the handout **A Purposeful and Transparent Approach to Education: Background and Case in Point # 2** and **EFF Research to Practice Note 1**. Ask them to review Note 1 and consider the Case in Point before the next session.

Information to Save From Session One

- **Completed Goals Grid or List of Goals**
- **Program Purpose Statement**

Session Two – A Purposeful and Transparent Approach to Education

Background: A quality program is one in which the organization's purposes and goals are clear. It is important for students and community members to understand how a program or organization relates and contributes to the student's goals and to the broader community's goals. Intake and orientation processes that are purposeful and transparent contribute to program quality by helping students to clarify what they need to learn in order to meet their goals.

Educational theory and research says that learning is most effective when it is purposeful, when it connects to the attitudes, knowledge, skills, and behaviors that students need and want to fulfill their goals, and when it helps them become competent in their many adult roles. The purposes of the teaching and learning activities should be clear or transparent to the learner, teacher, and program. For additional background information on a purposeful and transparent approach to education, see *EFF Research to Practice Note 1* in the Appendix. Administrators of an adult education program using EFF and wanting to improve program quality should consider the question:

> ***How will this agency develop a purposeful and transparent approach to education?***

One way in which a program is purposeful and transparent is when its program goals are clear and understandable. In this session, the team members review promotional and other organizational materials and reflect on current intake and orientation processes to identify changes that would make these processes more purposeful, transparent, and useful.

Handout 2.5

HANDOUT 2.5

A Purposeful and Transparent Approach to Education: Background and Case in Point 2

Background:
A quality program is one in which the organization's purposes and goals are clear. It is important for students and community members to understand how a program or organization relates and contributes to the student's goals and to the broader community's goals. Intake and orientation processes that are purposeful and transparent contribute to program quality by helping students to clarify what they need to learn in order to meet their goals.

Educational theory and research says that learning is most effective when it is purposeful, when it connects to the attitudes, knowledge, skills, and behaviors that students need and want to fulfill their goals, and when it helps them become competent in their many adult roles. The purposes of the teaching and learning activities should be clear or transparent to the learner, teacher, and program. For additional background information on a purposeful and transparent approach to education, see EFF Research to Practice Note 1 in the Appendix. Administrators of an adult education program using EFF and wanting to improve program quality should consider the question:

How will this agency develop a purposeful and transparent approach to education?

One way in which a program is purposeful and transparent is when its program goals are clear and understandable. In this session, the team members review promotional and other organizational materials and reflect on current intake and orientation processes to identify changes that would make these processes more purposeful, transparent, and useful.

Case in Point:
An eleven-year-old community based organization, The Pierce CommunityBuild Adult Education Center serves mostly young (18 to 25), low-income adults. The program offers students an opportunity to obtain a GED, learn a building trade, and gain valuable life skills such as budgeting and civics. Most of the students come to the program to get their GED, and they become frustrated when instruction is not tied directly to GED preparation.

The program has decided that it needs to present a clearer picture to potential students about the program's purposes and that it has to get a clearer picture from students about their learning purposes and their life goals. In fact, all the processes connected to the teaching and learning (intake, placement testing,

Session 2 Goals:

To review the organization's intake and orientation processes and identify changes that would enhance a purposeful and transparent approach to education.

Objectives:

By the end of this activity, participants will be able to

- clarify the purposes of the educational programs
- identify specific steps for making the program purposeful and transparent
- understand the organization's current intake process.

Materials Required:

- Session # 2 handout **Background and Case in Point** (2.3)
- Organizational brochures, recruitment materials, newsletters, other publications
- Flipchart sheets labeled **Changes to Make**, **Intake Process**, and **Orientation Process**

Time Required: 2 1/2 hours

Facilitator's Note: This session focuses on the purposefulness and transparency of organizational goals and processes. In this activity you will examine the organization's intake and orientation process as a way of better understanding the concept of a purposeful and transparent approach to education.

Steps in Session Two

Settle-In and Session Overview – *20 minutes*

Remind team members of the overall project goals, the outcomes from the previous session, and the goals and objectives of this session. Involve participants in a discussion on what makes something purposeful and transparent (you may want to refer to *EFF Research to Practice Note 1*—handout 2.6—on purposeful and transparent approaches to education and to the handout Case in Point #2).

Step 1: Reviewing Promotional Materials – *40 minutes*

In this step you will examine your organization's promotional materials—brochures, recruitment materials, newsletters, other publications, etc. If there are six or more people involved in the meeting, you can have members work in twos or threes to examine different materials. Or they can work as a whole group to examine a specific promotional piece. For this step, use these guiding questions:

- ***Do our recruitment and other program materials reflect our purpose?***
- ***What would make our purposes more transparent?***

Distribute promotional materials, etc., to group members. Ask participants to scan materials for content that makes clear the program's purpose and/or goals. The content can be highlighted or underlined for quick reference. Give participants about 10 minutes to accomplish this task. Then

go around and have each team share examples of content that reflect the program's purposes. They might also share what changes they feel would make the program purposes transparent or clearer. Record the key points in response to these questions on flipchart paper. Make sure that everyone has an opportunity to share his or her views and opinions.

Document changes in a "Changes to Make" list.

Changes to Make in Recruitment

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Next, brainstorm a list of changes or improvements in recruitment that would make the organization's purposes clearer. Document brainstorm responses on "Changes to Make" flipchart.

Step 2: Reviewing Intake Process – *40 minutes*

In this step you will examine the organization's student intake process. Ask team members to think about the organization's student intake process. As a group, list the steps involved in the organization's current intake process, for example, collecting information from new students or identifying students' purposes for attending the program.

Document in "Intake Process" list.

Intake Process

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

After the group completes the list of steps in the current intake process, ask the group to answer the following questions. Facilitator will record responses on a flipchart sheet.

> ***During the intake process, when does the learner have an opportunity to understand about the program or the program's purpose is?***
>
> ***During the intake process, when does the program have an opportunity to understand about the learner (learner's goals)?***

Break – *10 minutes*

Step 3: Reviewing Orientation Process – *40 minutes*

In this step you will examine your organization's orientation process. Ask team members to think about the student orientation process. Make a list of what currently happens during the orientation process. After the list is completed, ask the group to answer the following questions and document responses on a flipchart.

- ***During the orientation process, when does the learner have an opportunity to understand the program or the program's purpose?***
- ***During the orientation process, how do you currently find out what learners' goals are?***
- ***During the orientation process, how do you help learners' go deeper into why they have certain goals? For example, "You want to get a GED in order to . . ."***
- ***During the orientation process, how do you help learners make informed decisions about what they need to learn in order to achieve their goals?***

Document in an "Orientation Process" list.

Orientation Process

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Use the following flipchart grid to capture suggested changes for both the intake and orientation processes. All of the notes will need to be typed up and filed after the meeting for future reference.

INTAKE/ORIENTATION GRID

CHANGES TO MAKE	
Intake Process	**Orientation process**

Finish this step by summarizing the notes on the flipchart page above.

Step 4: Wrapping-Up – *10 minutes*

Finish up the session with a go-around. Ask team members to comment on what was most important about the learning activity.

Wrap up by reviewing the goals and objectives. Ask team members to comment on the overall process. Review any tasks to be completed and remind participants of dates for future sessions.

Pass out the handouts **A Contextualized Approach to Curriculum and Instruction**: **Background and Case in Point 3** and ***Research to Practice Notes 2 and 3*** and ask the team members to read before the next session.

✻

Information to Save From Session Two

- **List of "Changes to Make" in recruitment**
- **List of "Changes to Make" in Intake and Orientation Process**

Session Three – Building Expertise Using a Contextualized Approach to Curriculum and Instruction

Background: In effective adult teaching and learning environments, research shows that attention to context—the environments, conditions, and circumstances in which learners exist—helps students apply knowledge, skills and processes across contexts, and that the learning context itself contributes to the learning process. For additional background information, see *EFF Research to Practice Note 3*. Understanding learners' contexts is important for identifying EFF Standards that would help learners achieve their goals. It is also important to understand the many contexts of learners' lives when focusing and designing the learning activity. Learning activities that directly connect to learners' lives are more effective.

Building expertise is a complex developmental process in which new knowledge is built on prior knowledge. Students need cognitve and metacognitive strategies to learn and apply new information. For additional information on building expertise, see *EFF Research to Practice Note 2*. The EFF framework, particularly the EFF Standards and the Teaching/Learning Cycle, gives teachers a structure for designing learning activities that address the issues arising from the contexts of students' real lives while also building strategies and basic skills.

Administrators can support contextualized teaching and learning by clarifying both their programs and students' contexts. Awareness of these contexts might mean that administrators foster alignment of program goals with student goals and student contexts, budget for materials relevant to the teaching and learning contexts of students and the program, plan and support staff development activities that focus on contextualized curriculum development, and design and monitor assessment and evaluation processes based on contextualized instruction.

Administrators can play an important role in supporting activities that extend learning to different contexts outside of the program. To do this, it might mean that administrators also network with and disseminate program goals and activities to community partners such as employers, other

educational institutions, community-based organizations, and social service agencies.

The question for the team:

> ***How will this agency help students build expertise through a contextualized approach to curriculum and instruction?***

Handout 2.7

HANDOUT 2.7

A Contextualized Approach to Curriculum and Instruction: Background and Case in Point 3

Background:

In effective adult teaching and learning environments, research shows that attention to context—the environments, conditions, and circumstances in which learners exist—helps students apply knowledge, skills and processes across contexts, and that the learning context itself contributes to the learning process. For additional background information, see EFF Research to Practice Note 3. Understanding learners' contexts is important for identifying EFF Standards that would help learners achieve their goals. It is also important to understand the many contexts of learners' lives when focusing and designing the learning activity. Learning activities that directly connect to learners' lives are more effective.

Building expertise is a complex developmental process in which new knowledge is built on prior knowledge. Students need cognitve and metacognitive strategies to learn and apply new information. For additional information on building expertise, see EFF Research to Practice Note 2. The EFF framework, particularly the EFF Standards and the Teaching/Learning Cycle, gives teachers a structure for designing learning activities that address the issues arising from the contexts of students' real lives while also building strategies and basic skills.

Administrators can support contextualized teaching and learning by clarifying both their programs and students' contexts. Awareness of these contexts might mean that administrators foster alignment of program goals with student goals and student contexts, budget for materials relevant to the teaching and learning contexts of students and the program, plan and support staff development activities that focus on contextualized curriculum development, and design and monitor assessment and evaluation processes based on contextualized instruction.

Administrators can play an important role in supporting activities that extend learning to different contexts outside of the program. To do this, it might mean that administrators also network with and disseminate program goals and activities to community partners such as employers, other educational institutions, community-based organizations, and social service agencies.

The question for the team:

> **How will this agency help students build expertise through a contextualized approach to curriculum and instruction?**

Case in Point:

Kenesshia, one of Ms. Franklin's GED students, has recently moved into her own apartment. She has been working on math skills in preparation for the GED test. Ms. Franklin is interested in knowing how Kenesshia is applying the math she is studying in class to her new situation, managing her own apartment and finances. One day Ms. Franklin asked Kenesshia how things were going with the apartment.

Session 3 Goals:

To better understand the relationship between skill building, EFF Standards, and contextualized teaching and learning.

Objectives:

By the end of this session, participants will be able to

- identify a variety of learners' real-life contexts
- understand common barriers to contextualized approaches to curriculum and instruction
- understand how the EFF Standards can be used to connect learners' contexts to specific skills to be learned
- articulate new questions about the various roles of administrators and how they might support contextualized approaches to teaching and learning
- identify program improvements that might help the organization take a more contextualized approach to curriculum and instruction.

Facilitator's Note: It is important for teachers and program administrators to understand not only the real-life contexts of students but also how program and organizational contexts matter in teaching and learning. Program administrators need to be aware of the variety of ways in which "contexts" and contextualized teaching apply to quality programs and quality instruction. This session guides the program improvement team members through a reflective process to examine how student contexts impact instruction, review some common barriers to contextualized instruction, and examine two examples of contextualized instruction.

Materials Required:

- *EFF Research to Practice Notes 2 & 3* (handouts 2.8 and 2.9)
- **Constructivist Learning** handout (2.10)
- **Teaching/Learning Cycle** handouts (2.11)
- **Teaching/Learning Cycle Grid** handout (2.12)
- Flipchart sheet labeled **Students' Real-Life Contexts**
- **Contextualized Approach to Curriculum and Instruction** grid on flipchart
- **Teaching and Learning Cycle** grid on flipchart
- *EFF Content Standards Book*

Time Required: 3 hours

Steps in Session Three

Settle-In and Session Overview – *10 minutes*

Review goals and objectives for the session. Remind participants of the overall project goals, what happened in previous sessions, and summarize where the project is currently.

Step 1: Identifying Learning Context – *20 minutes*

In this step, participants will identify various contexts of learners' lives. As a group, brainstorm a list of issues from the contexts of learner lives that might frame instruction.

> ***What are real-life contexts you've heard students talk about?***

Record the list on flipchart.

Get a discussion going on the program's experiences designing lessons that incorporate students' real-life contexts. Use the following questions as discussion prompts.

Sample List

Real-life contexts that students talk about:

- finding a living wage job
- keeping children safe in the neighborhood
- losing welfare benefits
- dealing with mother's death
- rising costs of living expenses

- ***What are the program's experiences with using real-life contexts to frame instruction?***
- ***What was the motivation for taking this approach?***
- ***What was learned from these experiences?***
- ***What might get in the way of doing contextualized learning?***

Record the group's responses to these questions on flipchart. Keep for future reference.

Step 2: Understanding Contextualized Teaching and Learning – *50 minutes*

In this step participants will work in pairs to examine two examples of contextualized approaches to curriculum and instruction. These examples are excerpts from *EFF Research and Practice Note 3*, the section "Putting Contextualized Learning to Work in Your Program," written by Marilyn Gillespie. The examples demonstrate how a program might implement the program practice of a contextualized approach to curriculum and instruction. Make sure participants have copies of the program examples from the *Research to Practice Note 3*, on contextualized instruction. Assign an example to each pair.

Have pairs read and discuss:

Example 1: Teachers and students use the EFF framework to construct learning opportunities that focus on the development and practice of skills students need to carry out activities and accomplish purposes in the lives.

OR

Example 2: Teachers use the EFF Framework to integrate "found lessons" that arise from in-class or out-of-class student needs into an overall plan.

Using the *EFF Content Standards* book ask participants to review and become familiar with the *Use Math to Solve Problems and Communicate, Speak So Others Can Understand, Convey Ideas in Writing, Learn Through Research*, and *Solve Problems and Make Decisions* Standards.

Focus the group's attention on the bulleted items under each standard, which are the components of the Standard. Explain that the components describe what the Standard means and that you use the Standard to do something.

Have each pair discuss their example, using the following guiding questions:

- ***Why do you think the teacher used these particular Standards?***
- ***What other Standards might the teacher use?***

Now, still in pairs, think about your program contexts. Answer the following on the Contextualized Approaches to Curriculum and Instruction form.

- ***Are there program contexts, issues, and concerns that might be used for curriculum development?***
- ***Are there community contexts, issues, and concerns that might be used for curriculum development?***
- ***What program improvements could help the organization take a more contextualized approach to teaching and learning? Make a list.***
- ***As an administrator, what questions do you have about your role supporting contextualized approaches to curriculum and instruction in your program or organization?***

Have each pair share with the group what they discussed. Use the flipchart to record the suggested program issues, improvements, and questions as in the example below.

Contextualized Approaches to Curriculum and Instruction	
Program and Community Issues	**Program improvements for Contextualized Approaches**
For Example: The lack of awareness about community based recreational activities for children.	*For Example:* Identify and use newsletters from local CBOs for lessons that are relative to the issues.
Questions *For Example:* • What are information sources for identifying local CBOs, their mission and program activities? • How do I build effective partnerships for receiving and disseminating information?	

Break – *10 minutes*

Step 3: Understanding Constructivist Teaching and Learning – *30 minutes*

Explain to participants that they just experienced an important step in building expertise or "constructivist" learning, reflecting on what they already know about contextualized learning in their organization and then adding new information. Use the following **Constructivist Learning** handout to guide a discussion on the approach.

Handout 2.10

HANDOUT 2.10

Constructivist Learning

Building Expertise

Constructivism, in educational theory and practice, means that learning is a process of constructing new meanings in which prior knowledge and experiences are the basic building blocks for building expertise. Constructivism is a theory of learning and of knowing. For additional background information, see *EFF Research to Practice Note 2* in the Appendix. From conception, the human brain accumulates and stores knowledge, information, and skills which become the basic building blocks for understanding and making sense of the world. As knowledge and experience are added, a person gains new understanding and perspective. A teacher who approaches teaching and learning from a constructivist standpoint starts by finding out what learners already know and have experienced that relates to a topic or idea and helps the students build on that knowledge and experience to gain new concepts, information, and skills. The teaching and learning process is interactive and dynamic. Review the chart below which illustrates a constructivist learning process.

Constructivist Learning Process

Student's prior knowledge, skills, background, and experience	+	New Information and Experiences	=	New Meanings and Knowledge
• Language • Social Skills • Phonemic Awareness • Sense of Community • Historical Perspective		• Reflections • Information • New Skills • Knowledge • Analysis • Practices		

Constructivist teaching and learning is a process of discovery. It is one in which teachers and students use the EFF framework to identify, reflect on, and revise their own mental models of adult role performance. For example, the EFF Standards show the various components of a particular skill. The students and teacher can review those components of performance and decide what's already known about the skill and what needs to be learned or improved. This review and reflection process is the first step in constructivist teaching and learning.

Now ask participants to think about think about:

> ***In what ways do teaching and learning in our program enable students to build expertise ?***

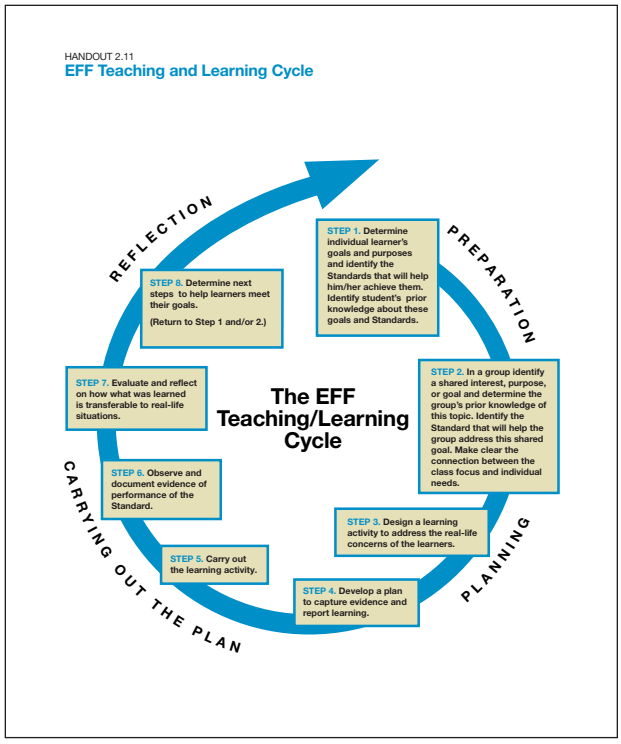
Get a discussion going for about 15 minutes. The facilitator/scribe should take note of the comments on a flipchart sheet to be used in final planning.

Step 4: Reviewing the Teaching and Learning Cycle – *60 minutes*

In this step, participants will examine the Teaching and Learning Cycle. They will look at the steps in the cycle and determine what already happens in their programs that is relative to the teaching and learning cycle and what program changes might better support the activities of the teaching and learning cycle.

Distribute the **EFF Teaching and Learning Cycle** handout, with the eight steps, guiding questions, and sample tools. Briefly review each of the eight steps and the guiding questions. Have the team members work in dyads or triads.

Handout 2.11



HANDOUT 2.11

EFF Teaching and Learning Cycle

- Discuss each step of the cycle and how these steps help students build expertise.
- Discuss each of the steps in the cycle and decide if and when the activities outlined in the teaching and learning cycle happen in your program
- Discuss what program improvements or changes would better support the teaching and learning activities.

The small groups should work for 30 minutes using the Teaching and Learning Cycle Grid to record their comments.

Handout 2.12

HANDOUT 2.12

EFF Teaching and Learning Cycle Grid

EFF Teaching/Learning Cycle Steps	Implications for Administrators	Changes or Program Improvements
1. Determine individual learner's goals and purposes and identify the Standards that will help him/her achieve them. Identify student's prior knowledge about these goals and Standards.	*For example:* Students complete an interest survey.	*For example:* Discuss student goals at intake and share with teachers who will use to plan with students.
2. In a group identify a shared interest, purpose or goal and determine the group's prior knowledge of this topic. Identify the Standard that will help the group address this shared goal. Make clear the connection between the class focus and individuals' needs.		
3. Design a learning activity to address the real-life concerns of the learner(s).		
4. Develop a plan to capture evidence and report learning.		
5. Carry out the learning activity.		
6. Observe and document evidence of performance of the Standard.		
7. Evaluate and reflect on how what was learned is transferable to real-life situations?		
8. Determine next steps to help learners meet their goals. *(Return to Step 1 and/or 2)*		

The facilitator then brings the small groups back together to share what they discussed.

The facilitator should record responses from each group in the appropriate column of the flipchart sheet, for each step in the teaching and learning process:

1. ***What happened in each step?***
2. ***What program improvements or changes would better support the teaching and learning cycle?***

For example, for Teaching/Learning Cycle Step 1, the program may have students complete an interest survey at intake. A possible program improvement might be to have a more explicit goal-setting discussion at intake and then revisit student goals as part of lesson planning.

Tell this team that EFF has developed an on-line "toolkit" to help teachers use the Teaching/Learning Cycle that is found at:
http://cls.coe.utk.edu/efftlc/

Step 5: Wrapping-Up – *15 minutes*

Wrap up this session by restating the goals and objectives as well as the steps in this session:

1. The team identified a variety of learners' real-life contexts for which curricula might be designed,
2. The team discussed common barriers to contextualized instruction,
3. The team examined the teaching and learning cycle to determine what they do and/or know about the steps in the cycle,
4. The team listed what administrators might do to support teaching and learning cycle activities,
5. The team brainstormed program improvements and changes that support the implementation of teaching and learning cycle activities.

Check in with participants to see if they feel that the session's goals and objectives were met. Invite participants to share comments and reactions to the session. Review any tasks to be completed and remind team members of dates for future sessions. Pass out copies of **Joan Benz's article on assessment** and **Program Goals Grid of List of Program Goals** from Session One, and **Assessment, Accountability and Program Improvement: Background and Case in Point 4** handouts to read before the next session.

✻

Information to Save From Session Three

- **List of Barriers to Contextualized Teaching and Learning**
- **Examples of Contextualized Approaches to Curriculum and Instruction**
- **List of Current Teaching and Learning Approaches that enable Students to Build Expertise**
- **List of Program Improvements or Changes That Would Support the Teaching and Learning Cycle**
- **List of Administrative Activities That Would Support the Teaching and Learning Cycle**

Session Four – Assessment, Accountability and Program Improvement

Background. In a quality program, assessment and instruction are aligned. Administrators need to know how student assessment is currently done and what needs to happen to move towards an approach that is grounded in cognitive science research on the development of expertise. In order to support the alignment of instruction and assessment, the quality improvement team reviews current assessment practices and compares them with assessment practices based on the EFF Framework. The team also reviews what and how the program collects data and documents student progress in order to identify changes that would improve organizational performance and outcomes.

The question for the team is:

> ***How will this agency align assessment with student and program goals and document student progress and change?***

Handout 2.14

HANDOUT 2.14

Assessment, Accountability and Program Improvement: Background and Case in Point 4

Background:
In a quality program, assessment and instruction are aligned. Administrators need to know how student assessment is currently done and what needs to happen to move towards an approach that is grounded in cognitive science research on the development of expertise. In order to support the alignment of instruction and assessment, the quality improvement team reviews current assessment practices and compares them with assessment practices based on the EFF Framework. The team also reviews what and how the program collects data and documents student progress in order to identify changes that would improve organizational performance and outcomes.

The question for the team is:

How will this agency align assessment with student and program goals and document student progress and change?

Case in Point:
Students enrolling in the Pierce CommunityBuild Adult Education Center first take a test to determine their reading and math levels. Based on the results of the test, students are placed either in the low-level class or the high-level class. At the end of the quarter, students are re-tested to see if their skills in reading and math have increased. Test data goes to the local community college because they provide some funding to the CommunityBuild Center. The test results help to inform how the community college allocates its resources to various community based organizations like CommunityBuild.

Ms. Franklin teaches the low-level classes and has observed how test results affect the attitudes of many students. Some of the students feel shamed by the test results and become discouraged. After seeing their low scores, some students feel that they have too much to learn and that they will never be able to earn a GED.

Ms. Franklin has been experimenting with the EFF Framework, selecting a Standard that will help the group of students address a real life goal. Recently, the class reviewed the Standard, *Take Responsibility for Learning*. This Standard was relevant to the students' attitudes about learning since they all wanted to take responsibility for their learning. Ms Franklin explained that there are several dimensions on which students need to perform in order to master a standard: the knowledge base, the fluency, the independence, and the range. The class had a lively discussion defining what these dimensions of performance mean to them.

Ms. Franklin had each student create a matrix that listed all of the Standard's components in the vertical column and the four dimensions of performance in the horizontal row. They each selected a particular skill that they wanted to master and did an initial assessment of their knowledge, fluency, independence and range. After three weeks

Session 4 Goals:

To explore the organization's assessment practices and consider how assessment might look if it were based on the EFF Assessment Framework; to review the organization's current documentation methods and accountability processes.

Objectives:

By the end of the session, participants will be able to

- identify the organization's current assessment processes
- consider what an assessment process would look like based on the EFF Assessment Framework
- identify the organization's current documentation methods and processes
- understand what the program is accountable for, to whom, and for what
- list program activities that would lead to a more systematic approach to program improvement.

Materials Required:

- **Questions on Assessment** handout (2.15)
- **EFF vs. Traditional Assessment** handout (2.16)
- **Current Approach to Assessment Grid** handout (2.17)
- Joan Benz's article on assessment in the EFF classroom (2.13)
- **Changes to Make** flipchart sheet
- Large table for sorting documents
- Goals list from Session 1 – on flipchart and copies to hand out
- **Documentation Methods** on flipchart or board
- Flipchart sheets labeled **Current Approach To Assessment Grid** and **Responses to Joan Benz's Article**

Time Required: 3 hours

Facilitator's Note: Review examples of Traditional versus EFF Approaches to Assessment handout in the Appendix.

It will be useful to have the list of program goals identified in Session 1. The facilitator should gather and bring to the meeting various forms of program documentation and encourage other group members to do the same. Documentation includes student information forms, test results, portfolios, copies of program completion certificates, state reporting forms, etc. Before the session prepare a flipchart sheet with the information across the top as in the example on page 50.

Steps in Session Four

Settle-In and Session Overview

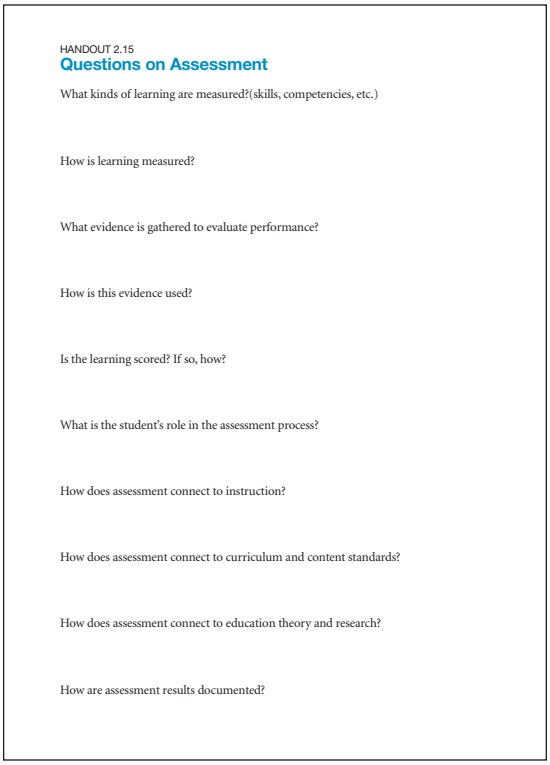
Explain that this session focuses on assessment and documentation. Explain the goal and objectives of the session.

Step 1: Discussing Current Approaches to Assessment – *60 minutes*

In this step participants will use questions to reflect on the program's current approaches to assessment. Make sure that participants have copies of the Current Approach to Assessment handout, which list the questions below.

- *What kinds of learning are measured? (skills, competencies, etc.)*
- *How is learning measured?*
- *What evidence is gathered to evaluate performance?*
- *How is this evidence used?*
- *Is the learning scored? If so, how?*
- *What is the student's role in the assessment process?*
- *How does assessment connect to instruction?*
- *How does assessment connect to curriculum and content standards?*
- *How does assessment connect to education theory and research?*
- *How are assessment results documented?*

Handout 2.15



HANDOUT 2.15

Questions on Assessment

What kinds of learning are measured?(skills, competencies, etc.)

How is learning measured?

What evidence is gathered to evaluate performance?

How is this evidence used?

Is the learning scored? If so, how?

What is the student's role in the assessment process?

How does assessment connect to instruction?

How does assessment connect to curriculum and content standards?

How does assessment connect to education theory and research?

How are assessment results documented?

Ask the group to think about ways in which the program approaches assessment, i.e. determines students' knowledge when they enter the program, what students are learning in the program, and how students' involvement in the program leads to new changes in their roles as adults. Then have

participants respond in writing to as many questions as they can in the "current approach" column.

Handout 2.16

HANDOUT 2.16

Current Approach to Assessment

Questions	Current Approach
What kinds of learning are measured? (i.e. skills, competencies, etc.)	
How is learning measured?	
What evidence is gathered to evaluate performance?	
How is this evidence used?	
Is the learning scored? If so, how?	
What is the student's role in the assessment process?	
How does assessment connect to instruction?	
How does assessment connect to curriculum and content standards?	

Post the prepared flipchart sheet of the Current Approach to Assessment grid and discuss each question and invite participants to contribute their ideas. The facilitator should make note of the group's responses, underscore questions the group found difficult to respond to, and any new questions raised.

Next, participants will discuss and compare their current approach to assessment to the EFF approach to assessment. Distribute copies of the

Traditional versus EFF Approaches to Assessment with the EFF column filled in. Ask participants to review the list and compare how they currently approach assessment with the EFF approach to assessment.

Handout 2.17

HANDOUT 2.17

Traditional Versus EFF Approaches to Assessment

	Current Approach	EFF Approach
Construct (what is measured)	Discrete knowledge, skills, or competencies	Integrated knowledge, skills, strategies, and abilities
Task format (how it is measured)	Questions or problems posed in isolation or with a small amount of supporting context, tasks (test items) usually of short duration, and typically require recall and analysis	Task situated in activity that closely mirrors real-world activity, may take place over an extended period of time, and can involve creativity, strategic thinking, and problem-solving
Response format (evidence used to evaluate performance)	Selected response or short, written response, usually collected at one time	Constructed response, oral, written, graphic, and/or behavioral response or performance that may be collected over a period of time (as in a portfolio)
Scoring format	Scored as right or wrong or on a one-dimensional scale (assigned a letter or number grade)	Scored with a rubric that identifies dimensions of performance and qualitative differences in levels of performance
Role of student	Student are not told what the questions will be before the test and typically do not assess their own performance	Students know in advance the nature of the task and how their performance on the task will be evaluated and can self-assess and monitor their own performance
Connection to instruction	Separate from instruction but tests discrete skills or knowledge that are the objects of instruction	Embedded in instructional and learning activities or on-demand tasks that have the same structure as instructional and learning activities
Connection to curriculum and content standards	Assessed knowledge, skills, and abilities may be poorly or incompletely aligned with curriculum and content standards	Assessed knowledge, skills, and abilities are aligned with standards and standards-based curricular content
Connection to theory and research	Content and structure of assessments may be related to skill hierarchies but are typically not derived from a theory of learning, development, or expert performance	Content and structure of the assessments are derived from analyses of adult learner performance, cognitive science models of developing expertise, and adult learning theory

Step 2: Reflecting on Assessment in an EFF Classroom – *40 minutes*

Check in with participants to make sure that they have copies of the Joan Benz article, "Assessment in the EFF Classroom," distributed at the last session. Ask participants to scan and recall key points. Use the following questions to guide a discussion.

- ***What do you find most interesting about the article?***
- ***What stands out for you when comparing your program's current assessment approaches to the EFF assessment approaches?***

The facilitator should make note of the responses to these questions on a flipchart sheet. Add any ideas about possible changes in your program's assessment processes to the Changes to Make sheet.

Break – *10 minutes*

(The following activity is adapted from "How Are We Doing?" NCSALL Teaching and Training Materials)

Step 3: Reviewing Documentation Methods – *30 minutes*

In this step, participants move from examining assessment to considering the organization's current documentation methods, what data they collect, and how the data are used. The group will start by sorting the different kinds of documents into categories on a large table. For example, they may have a category with student registration forms, GED Practice Test results, student journals, etc. Documents that don't fit easily into a category can become a new category.

Now, have group members name the different categories and list them on the flipchart sheet under the Documentation Method column. Explain to the group that there are several things to consider about documentation:

- ***Documentation by whom? Who is responsible for collecting the document?***
- ***Documentation for whom? Who uses the information on the form?***
- ***How often is the documentation collected?***

Documentation Method	By whom	For whom	How often	How used	Information Documented
Registration Form	Program aide	Program	Every program cycle	For demographics	• Basic demographics • Educational background
Placement test					
Attendance form					
Individual learning plan					
Observation					

- ***How is the documentation used?***
- ***What information is documented?***

Now ask the group members to consider each of the documentation methods and complete the grid together, as a group.

Step 4: Matching Program Goals and Documentation Methods – *20 minutes*

Distribute copies of the "Goals List" generated in the first session. Post a large version of the list on the flipchart stand as well. Now ask participants to work in pairs and use the following questions to compare the list of goals with the documentation grid:

- ***For which goals does the program collect documentation of achievement?***
- ***For which goals does the program collect data that tells when the goals are met?***
- ***For which goals does the program not collect data? No documentation?***

Invite each pair to share a goal and the method of documentation. The facilitator should make note of the goals documented and the methods used. There may also be goals not documented or documentation that matches no goals.

Get a discussion going about the results of this activity. The facilitator should make notes of any new questions and concerns. Add suggested changes to Changes to Make sheet.

*****

Information to Save From Session Four

- **Notes From Discussion on Comparing Program's Current Assessment Approaches to EFF Assessment Approaches**
- **Documentation Methods Grid**
- **Notes on Goals Not Documented**

Step 5: Wrapping-Up – *10 minutes*

Wrap up this activity by restating the goals and objectives. Check in with participants to see if they feel that the goals and objectives were met. Invite participants to share comments and reactions to the activity. Review any tasks to be completed and set date for the next session. Give participants copies of the **article by Juliet Merrifield** and **Accountability, Change and Quality: Background and Case in Point 5** to read before the next session.

Session Five – Program Improvement: Accountability, Change and Quality

(Adapted from "How Are We Doing?" NCSALL Teaching and Training Materials)

Background: A systematic approach to continuous program improvement means having clear organizational goals and purposes that align with student goals and national policies. It also means having a process for documenting and monitoring not only student progress and outcomes but every aspect of the organization's performance. Performance accountability, an important aspect of program improvement, is a way of conveying to stakeholders "what" and "how" an organization is doing.

In this session, the quality improvement team builds expertise through a process that examines how organizational changes have occurred in the past, what changes would lead to a higher quality program in the future, and identifies changes that would improve organizational performance and outcomes.

A quality improvement program, such as the Baldrige National Quality Program, offers a framework for approaching quality improvement in an organization. Improvement processes require organizations to have a system for collecting and analyzing data on student progress and using it to review the effectiveness of program components and revise program goals.

The team might ask:

> ***How will this agency take a systematic approach to program improvement?***

Here's another case in point.

Handout 2.19

HANDOUT 2.19

Accountability, Change and Quality: Background and Case in Point 5

(Adapted from "How Are We Doing?" NCSALL Teaching and Training Materials)

Background:

A systematic approach to continuous program improvement means having clear organizational goals and purposes that align with student goals and national policies. It also means having a process for documenting and monitoring not only student progress and outcomes but every aspect of the organization's performance. Performance accountability, an important aspect of program improvement, is a way of conveying to stakeholders "what" and "how" an organization is doing.

In this session, the quality improvement team builds expertise through a process that examines how organizational changes have occurred in the past, what changes would lead to a higher quality program in the future, and identifies changes that would improve organizational performance and outcomes.

A quality improvement program, such as the Baldrige National Quality Program, offers a framework for approaching quality improvement in an organization. Improvement processes require organizations to have a system for collecting and analyzing data on student progress and using it to review the effectiveness of program components and revise program goals.

The team might ask: **How will this agency take a systematic approach to program improvement?**

Case in Point:

Mr. Johns, the education coordinator at the CommunityBuild Adult Education Center, returned from the state's annual adult basic education conference excited about the possibility of receiving additional funds for the Center's programs. At the conference, he learned about the state's new accountability requirements. To meet the accountability requirements and access the new funds, the Center needs to collect more information on the progress of students.

Mr. Johns spoke to Ms. Franklin about the new requirements, and she flatly stated, "I just don't have time to do more paperwork if I'm to really do my job as a teacher." Mr. Johns understood Ms. Franklin's dilemma. Mr. Johns then spoke with the Center's Director about the possibility of getting new funds for the adult education program. The director wanted to know how the new accountability requirements help to meet the needs of the students.

Mr. Johns was a bit overwhelmed by what he was hearing and decided to raise the issue in the next staff meeting. At that meeting, all of the staff agreed that the organization needed to be strategic in making program changes and that the entire organization needed to determine how to strengthen program processes and outcomes. One staff person summed it up this way, "One person can't do it alone; it takes the whole staff and anyway, it's all about helping students to meet their goals."

Session 5 Goals:

To build on the organization's experiences with implementing changes so as to better understand how to proceed with program improvement and accountability.

Objectives:

By the end of the session, participants will be able to

- reflect on current program practices for implementing change
- have a better understanding of performance accountability in adult education
- list program changes that would lead to a more systematic approach to program improvement.

Materials Required:

- **Questions About Change** handout (2.20)
- Flipchart pages from Steps 1 and 2
- Program goals list generated in Session 1
- Merrifield's article on accountability (2.18)
- Documentation from program **Changes to Make** forms from previous sessions
- EFF and Baldrige matrix drawn on flipchart sheet (2.21)

Time Required: 2 hours and 45 minutes.

Facilitator's Note: This session requires using the list of goals identified in Session 1.

Most of the steps in this session require participants to read articles and other materials. Check in to make sure participants read the Merrifield article on performance accountability before the session begins. If participants have not read the article beforehand, then make adjustments to the activity. Perhaps, in small groups, they can each read a particular section.

The facilitator will also need to pull together all the documentation of program changes generated during the previous sessions. This information will be useful for prioritizing and planning program changes.

Steps in Session Five

Settle-In and Session Overview – *10 minutes*

Review the goals and objectives for the session. Remind participants that this is the last session in this phase to assess and reflect on current program issues and practices. The next phases are to plan, implement, document and evaluate program improvement changes.

Step 1: Reflecting on Prior Program Changes – *45 minutes*

In this step, participants examine how program improvements or change currently happens in their organization. Ask participants to think about a recent change effort at work in which they were personally involved. Each person should think of one experience with change and write responses to the following list of questions.

Handout 2.20

HANDOUT 2.20

Questions About Change

What was the change to be made? What was (were) the goal(s) of the change?

What were the concerns or issues to which the change responded?

Who initiated the change?

What was your role in the change process? Who else was involved?

What was the plan for carrying out the change? What was the time frame?

What skills were essential to the change process?

What were the outcomes from the change?

What did you observe about this particular change process?

What could have happened to produce different outcomes?

What important lessons were learned from the change experience?

Have participants pair up, share, and discuss responses to the questions and consider if

- the change was part of or an entire system-wide change
- the change was resisted and by whom
- the change process was smooth or rough
- the change process resulted in the desired outcome
- leading the change was a comfortable or a not so comfortable role.

Give participants at least 15 minutes to discuss, in pairs, before having each pair report out to the larger group. Pairs should make a 5-minute presentation to the group, sharing what was most important about their

discussion, the lessons learned, and the new questions they might have about change. The facilitator and scribe should record this information on a flipchart sheet.

Important points about change

•
•
•

Lessons learned

•
•
•

New questions

•
•
•

Break – *10 minutes*

Step 2: Reflecting on Performance Accountability – *40 minutes*

In this step the group will discuss the article on performance accountability written by Juliet Merrifield, who is a leading researcher in the field of adult education. Begin by asking each participant's reaction to the article.

After hearing everyone's comments, post a flipchart sheet with the following quotes.

Quotes

> ***"I would like to suggest that developing performance accountability is not just technically challenging but also challenges our values."***
>
> ***"What is counted becomes what counts."***
>
> ***"Two kinds of capacity—to perform and to be accountable—are linked."***
>
> ***"In [programs], mutual accountability would engage members of the organization in creating a common vision, determining goals and customer expectations, and designing effective means of monitoring processes and results."***

Discuss each of the quotes. Have participants interpret and share their reactions to each quote. Remember that Merrifield outlines four impor-

tant topics in considering accountability:

1. *agreement on performance*
2. *capacity to be accountable*
3. *tools for measuring accountability, and*
4. *mutual accountability*

During the discussion, the facilitator should encourage participants to focus on and get clear about (1) the implications of these four topics to their overall program and (2) what each of the quotes might mean in terms of their overall program. It's important for this group to focus the implications of these topics at the administrative level.

Several questions can be asked about each of the quote:

"I would like to suggest that developing performance accountability is not just technically challenging but also challenges our values."

- What are the organization's values about accountability?
- What would it take to change the organization's values?

"What is counted becomes what counts."

- Think about the Documentation Matrix. What is counted in your program?
- Do you see ways that what is counted affects how you do your work?
- Do people "teach to the test" and, if so, is that a problem?

"Two kinds of capacity —to perform and to be accountable—are linked."

- How are these two capacities different? [Capacity to perform involves having the resources to meet your goals—time, trained staff, etc. Capacity to be accountable involves the collecting and reporting of data that measure performance, e.g., reliable testing, accurate reporting.]

"In ABE, mutual accountability would engage members of the organization in creating a common vision, determining goals and customer expectations, and designing effective means of monitoring processes and results."

- What opportunities are currently in place for members of the orga-

nization to engage in visioning, determining goals and customer expectations?

- What might get in the way of mutual accountability?

It is important to document the outcome of this discussion for use in future planning.

Step 3: Identifying Program Changes – *45 minutes*

In this step the group will list program changes that would lead to a more systematic approach to program improvements. The facilitator reminds participants that this is the last session before moving on to the planning phase and that much of the documentation from this phase will guide the planning for program changes. The facilitator and the participants can decide the most useful approach to this step. The group might choose one or the other option, a combination of both, or create another approach.

Option 1. If the program has gone through the Baldrige National Quality Program, then ask participants to think about the seven Education Criteria for Performance Excellence and how each one might relate to, be enhanced by, or addressed through the five quality EFF Program Practices. The facilitators can document this discussion's outcomes using an EFF and Baldrige matrix draw on a flipchart sheet. See the example of the matrix on the next page. Consider the session notes and documentation generated throughout this reflective process to complete the matrix.

Option 2. If the program has not participated in or is not currently participating in the Baldrige National Quality Program, then have participants consider the session notes and documentation generated throughout this reflective process.

Make a list of program changes to be made. Next, have participants prioritize the list.

The final part of the step is to think about a timeframe for the planning phase and to identify staff and stakeholders who will participate. Use a flipchart sheet to list potential participants.

Handout 2.21

HANDOUT 2.21

Education Criteria for Performance Excellence and EFF Program Practice

Baldrige Criteria / EFF Quality Program Practice	Purposeful and transparent	Contextualized Approach	Constructivist Approach	Assessment Based on Cognitive Science	Systematic Approach to Program Improvement
Leadership	Program leaders must understand the organizational purposes and goals.	How can students build leadership skills through contextualized teaching and learning?			
Strategic Planning		Our program must be thoughtful and strategic when planning to implement instruction that is contextualized.			
Customers	How do our students understand the program's purposes/goals and how do understand student's purposes and goals?				
Information and Analysis	What information do we need to collect and understand?				
Human Resources					
Process Management					
Results					

Step 4: Wrapping-Up – *15 minutes*

Wrap up this session by restating the goals and objectives for this session and the goals and objectives for this phase of the project. Check in with participants to see if they feel the goals were met. Invite participants to share comments and reactions to this reflective phase of the process.

✻

Information to Save From Session Five

- **Important Points About Program's Experience With Change**
- **Notes from Discussion on Program Performance Accountability**
- **List of Program Changes that Lead to a More Systematic Approach to Program Improvements**
- **Timeframe for Planning Phase and List of Potential Participants**

Overview of Phases 3 and 4

The *EFF Handbook for Program Improvement* is a tool based on Equipped for the Future to guide an organization in an examination of its adult education program quality and in a process of planning and implementing change. Phase 1 helps program administrators get ready for this process. Phase 2 is a set of activities based on the EFF Quality Model in which the program quality team assesses various aspects of their program. In Phase 3 the team prioritizes the possible changes identified in Phase 2 and makes plans to implement one or more of these changes. In Phase 4 the program implements the planned changes, and the team documents and evaluates this implementation.

The EFF Standards help structure the processes in this handbook. The facilitators of the program improvement process were asked to review the *Cooperate with Others, Plan,* and *Reflect and Evaluate* Standards as part of their preparation for this process. The *Solve Problems and Make Decisions* and *Plan* Standards frame the steps taken in Phases 2-4. Review the chart below.

Standard	Components of Standards	Program Improvement Phase
Solve Problems and Make Decisions	Anticipate or identify problems	Phase 2
	Use information from diverse sources to arrive at a clearer understanding of the problem and its root causes	Phase 2
	Generate alternative solutions	Phase 2
	Evaluate strengths and weaknesses of alternatives, including potential risks & benefits & short- and long-term consequences	Phase 3
	Select alternative that is most appropriate to goal, context, and available resources	Phase 3
	Establish criteria for evaluating effectiveness of solution or decision	Phase 4
Plan	Set and prioritize goals	Phase 2
	Develop an organized approach of activities and objectives	Phase 3
	Actively carry out the plan	Phase 4
	Monitor the plan's progress while considering any need to adjust the plan	Phase 4
	Evaluate its effectiveness in achieving the goals	Phase 4

PHASE 3: Planning for Program Improvement

Planning for change is a critical step in program improvement. In Phase 2 the program improvement team listed program goals. You identified problems or areas of practice that you wanted to improve. You used a variety of activities and sources of information to understand your program. You generated alternative solutions captured in "Changes to Make" lists.

In Phase 3 you will be addressing three components from the *Solve Problems* and *Plan* Standards:

- *Evaluate strengths and weaknesses of alternatives, including potential risks and benefits and short- and long-term consequences.*
- *Select alternative that is most appropriate to goal, context, and available resources.*
- *Develop an organized approach of activities and objectives.*

We will discuss each of these components of performance and how they support a thorough planning process. The program improvement team will prioritize your

Handout 3.1

HANDOUT 3.1

Steps in Phases 3 and 4

From EFF Standards *Solve Problems and Make Decisions* and *Plan*

PHASE 3

- **Evaluate strengths and weaknesses of alternatives.**
  - — revisit the initial reasons for engaging in quality improvement
  - — revisit the organizational and program goals
  - — prioritize the possible changes
  - — consider the political, partnership, personnel, and financial realities of the organization
- **Select alternative that is most appropriate to goal, context, and available resources.**
  - — decide which program practice(s) to address and which changes to make
  - — think about how the plan will be administered and the necessary funds
- **Develop an organized approach of activities and objectives.**
  - — determine what actions will be necessary to achieve these changes
  - — think of all the people and organizations that need to be involved
  - — outline the plan's specific activities, responsibilities, a timeline for implementing the changes, and criteria for evaluation

PHASE 4

- **Actively carry out the plan.**
  - — identify the responsibilities of team members
  - — give someone the responsibility for making sure these supporting activities take place
  - — be certain everyone knows their role
  - — use your timeline to stay on track
- **Monitor the plan's progress while considering any need to adjust the plan.**
  - — hold regular team meetings
  - — document of the implementation of the plan
  - — provide regular opportunities for review
  - — record observations of unexpected occurrences
- **Establish criteria for evaluating effectiveness of solution or decision.**
  - — examine the documentation you have collected
  - — identify the indicators of progress
- **Evaluate its effectiveness in achieving the goals.**
  - — collect data
  - — analyze your data

goals and then evaluate the alternatives of your "Changes to Make" lists. You will select the alternative(s) you want to implement and develop a plan of objectives and activities to implement the chosen alternatives. The change(s) might involve one or all: staff, procedures, teaching and learning.

Preparing for Phase 3

To get ready for Phase 3, the team leader(s) will need to organize information and schedule meetings. All of the "Changes to Make Lists," and other documentation generated from Phase 1 and 2 activities should be organized, by EFF Program Practices, in a three-hole binder or folder. The number of meetings necessary for Phase 3 will be determined by the team; however, suggested are at least two, 2-hour planning meetings to be scheduled with the program improvement team.

Evaluate Strengths and Weaknesses of Alternatives

The team will start by revisiting the initial reasons for engaging in quality improvement from Phase 1 (don't be surprised if your initial reasons have shifted) and by reviewing all of the "Changes to Make Lists" from Phase 2. It will also be useful to revisit the organizational and program goals identified in Session 1 of Phase 2. For example, one program goal might be to prepare students for good jobs, so that when they leave your program they are able to get living wage employment. Another goal might be to support your students to be more active as parents and family members in the education of their children. As a team, reaffirm these goals and determine which are priorities for you now. Use the Prioritization Activity in the Resource Appendix for help with this step.

An important aspect of planning is analyzing the forces affecting the program's ability to achieve its goals and objectives. In organizational development terms, this is often referred to as "force field" analysis. For the program improvement team this means taking time to consider the political, partnership, personnel, and financial realities of the organization. To analyze forces affecting your program, the team might brainstorm a list of forces working "for" and "against" your goals. The key question is "What

forces will affect our efforts to make planned changes, and how do we address them?" The points uncovered in this brainstorm will help guide the development of strategies to achieve goals.

Select Changes That Are Most Appropriate to Goal, Context, and Available Resources

In Phase 2 you listed possible "Changes to Make" for each EFF Program Practice. These changes are things that your team identified that could help you align your program components:

- so that they will be more purposeful and transparent
- so that teaching and learning are better aligned with learner and program goals and contexts, are designed to build expertise, and are assessed based on performance
- so that you can document your work to be better accountable to internal and external stakeholders.

Your list of "Changes to Make" may have included different approaches to recruitment, intake, orientation, curriculum and instruction, assessment, and program improvement. You will probably not want or be able to implement all these changes at one time. You will need to prioritize the possible changes and make decisions about which are most important in supporting your program goals and which are possible in your current program context.

Whatever decisions are made should be reached by consensus to ensure that there is unity among team members and that change process can move smoothly. When making program or organizational changes, consensus building is a useful tool. Refer to the Steps in Consensus Decision-Making in the Resources Appendix.

RESOURCES

Steps in Consensus Decision–Making

- **Clarify the problem or question being addressed.**
- **Determine the criteria for a good solution** (e.g., cost, scale, scope, acceptance).
- **Ensure that everyone agrees on the criteria.**
- **Brainstorm a range of alternative solutions.**
- **Generate a thorough list of alternatives.**
  Do not evaluate the alternatives as they are being generated—just list them.
- **Ensure that the ideas are written as they are visible to everyone.**
- **Take a straw poll to check for the possibility of early agreement.**
- **If there is only a little disagreement, determine the source of the disagreement.**
- **Evaluate alternatives, according to the criteria.**
- **Rule out alternatives that do not meet criteria or that on further reflection are rejected by the group.**
- **Determine if any alternatives require further research.**
  If so, come up with a plan for carrying out research.
- **Make a decision.**
- **Test ways to combine or modify alternatives to meet the interests of as many people in the group as possible.**
- **Select one or more alternatives.**

As a team and with the program goals in mind, decide which program practice(s) to address and which changes to make. It will be important for the team to start small and select changes to make that are doable. For example, you might decide to work only on EFF Program Practice One—changes to make the organization's approach to education more purposeful and transparent, so that students and potential students will know that you prepare program graduates to get living wage jobs. Alternatively, the team might decide to make only one change under each program practice.

It will also be important to consider sustainability and funding as you make your choice. To ensure the long-term sustainability of your plan for improvement, the team will need to think about how the plan will be administered and where the necessary funds will come from in both the short-term and long-term.

Develop an Organized Approach of Activities and Objectives

Once you have decided which changes to make, determine what actions will be necessary to achieve these changes. To do this might require some additional research and background reading. For example you might want to change how you do assessment in your program so that your assessment is more authentic and learner centered, yet meets the requirements of the National Reporting System. Or you may decide to ask teachers to use the EFF Teaching/Learning Cycle to more closely connect learner goals to instruc-

The following links offer helpful information on program improvement. Team member tasks can include checking out these sites for useful information.

www.nifl.gov/lincs/collections/eff/eff.html
The National Institute for Literacy site offers specialized information on high quality literacy practices and materials for use in adult education and literacy programs. The EFF special collection includes downloadable versions of most EFF publications including masters of many EFF tools.

www.quality.nist.gov/Education_Criteria.htm
A link of the National Institute of Standards and Technology, this site offers the information on the Baldrige National Quality Program, which has developed education, health, and business criteria for organizational self-assessment and action planning.

www.aelweb.vcu.edu/publications/Planning Guide/planningguide2002.pdf
Look for the professional Development Planning Guide, which outlines four EFF-specific professional development workshops.

www.sabes.org/resources/adventures/vol13/13rosenthal.htm.
This volume of Adventures in Assessment features several articles that address issues of program accountability and assessment that is learner centered and authentic.

tion. Other organizations have gone down the path that your team is taking and there are benefits to reading about and gathering information on the experiences of others.

Before moving to the final step of crafting a plan, consider how stakeholders, staff and others who are critical to success are involved in the plan. As a team think of all the people and organizations that need to be involved.

The final step in the planning phase is to outline the plan's specific activities, responsibilities, a timeline for implementing the changes, and criteria for evaluation. While there is much more about evaluation in Phase 4, it will, however, be important for the team to consider evaluation criteria and how the team will know that it has achieved its goals and objectives.

The team can design its own planning grid or use and/or adapt the one below.

Make sure that appropriate staff and partners have a copy of the plan with a timeline for accomplishing the activities and that everyone is on board with the changes to make. You are now ready to move on to Phase 4.

Objectives (based on Changes to Make)	Activities	Specific Tasks	Who is Responsible?	Timeframe	Criteria for Evaluation
1.					
2.					
3.					

Phase 4: Implementing, Documenting and Evaluating Program Changes

Program improvement is an ongoing cycle of setting goals, reflecting, planning, implementing, evaluating, and reflecting. In Phases 1-3 of this handbook you reflected on your adult education program, set goals, and made plans. In Phase 4 you will implement your plan, document what you do and the results, and use your documentation to evaluate what you have done.

In Phase 4 you will be addressing four components from the *Solve Problems* and *Plan* Standards:

- *Actively carry out the plan.*
- *Monitor the plan's progress while considering any need to adjust the plan.*
- *Establish criteria for evaluating effectiveness of solution or decision.*
- *Evaluate its effectiveness in achieving the goals.*

We discuss these separately, but often they overlap in practice, as do implementation, documentation, and evaluation.

As in Phase 3, this section provides suggestions to use as you address each component and suggestions for additional resources.

Actively Carry Out the Plan

In Phase 3 you developed a plan. In Phase 4 you will implement this plan, following the timeline that you have developed. You may be using a new intake procedure that helps students have clearer expectations and goals. You may have decided to encourage teachers to use the EFF role maps to plan with students learning activities that use authentic materials and

contexts. You may have planned to use the EFF Standards to better align student goals, instruction, and assessment. Or you may have decided on some other change based on your work in Phase 2.

If you have not already done so as part of planning, identify the responsibilities of team members in this phase. Determine who will monitor implementation, who is responsible for documentation and evaluation.

Whatever primary changes you have planned, you will also have planned a variety of supporting steps that you will take; for example, providing training for intake personnel and teachers or restructuring your schedule to provide teachers more planning time. Implementation includes both the primary change and the supporting activities or changes. Give someone the responsibility for making sure these supporting activities take place.

Be certain everyone knows their role in the implementation, whether major or minor.

Use your timeline to stay on track. Make sure that everyone who might be affected is aware of the plan and knows the timeline. This includes students.

Monitor the Plan's Progress While Considering Any Need to Adjust the Plan

Many EFF projects have found regular team meetings to be an important part of implementation. Having a regular time to check in with each other means that team members will be more likely to keep up to date on their part of the implementation. But more importantly, team meetings give people the opportunity to share their experiences, support each other, and to identify adjustments that may be needed.

As you begin implementation, you may want to reconsider the make-up of your team. While most or all of the people involved in Phases 2 and 3 could continue to be on the team in Phase 4, you may want to add other staff who have a major role in implementation. One teacher may have been a member of the original quality team, but all your teachers could be involved in implementation. Consider how extensive their role will be.

Will they be involved in documentation and evaluation as well as implementation? They may need and want to be part of the quality team. Or, you may want to continue with the original quality team members and have the implementation team meet separately to reflect on the implementation work.

Monitoring also involves documentation of the implementation of the plan and any supporting activities. This documentation does not need to be elaborate, but does need to be consistent. In designing your documentation you may want to refer to the questions you considered in Session 4 of Phase 2. This could help you avoid redundant documentation. These questions are:

- ***What information will be documented?***
- ***By whom?***
- ***Using what method?***
- ***How often?***
- ***Who will use it?***
- ***For what purpose?***

In this component you are considering documentation of implementation. You are documenting to determine if you are meeting your objectives in the plan. You want to be able to answer the question, *"Did we do what we meant to do?"*

This documentation will be carried out primarily by those implementing the plan. The documentation method should be as time and effort efficient as possible. It may be as simple as keeping files of completed activities or a log of the various activities undertaken by team members. It might be a checklist of the activities in the plan with space for dates and comments, or you may take photographs or record student projects.

Whatever the method, there need to be regular opportunities for review – maybe at team meetings—to assure that people are consistent in using whatever approach you decide on. If there are serious problems with keeping up with documentation, this may be an indication that the methods you have chosen are too cumbersome or do not match people's work styles. You may want to adjust them.

In addition to monitoring the implementation of your plan, you want to be able to capture (document) *What else happened?* Journals are one way to record observations of unexpected occurrences, as well as a way to reflect personally on how a plan is working. You might keep a computer (or paper) file where you note ideas or new occurrences, even if you do not keep a regular journal. This might be expected of all team members, or could be one person's responsibility. Another way to answer "what else happened?" is to include questions in regular team meetings that give people the opportunity to reflect on this. You will need to document this conversation in some way, with notes, audio tape, etc.

Establish Criteria for Evaluating Effectiveness of Solution or Decision

In the planning process in Phase 3 you clarified your goals and objectives for implementing these particular changes. You determined the activities that would help you achieve these objectives and you identified your criteria for success—how you would know that your objectives have been met.

Evaluation builds on this planning to address two questions:

- ***What are the results of this implementation? Did we meet our objectives?***
- ***What was the impact? Did our results move us toward our goals?***

These questions are followed by "What next?" as your program takes part in a process of continuous improvement.

The first step in determining the effectiveness of a plan or decision is to determine if the plan was carried out. You should be able to use your plan to examine the documentation you have collected as you monitor the implementation of the project. Have you met those criteria? Have you done what you planned to do?

Ongoing evaluation while a project is being implemented is sometimes called *formative evaluation.* We are not suggesting a formal formative evaluation, but as you monitor implementation you may want to refer to the

questions for formative evaluation in the Resource Appendix "Overview of Evaluation Prototypes."

Once you have determined what has happened, you will evaluate the results: Has the implemented change moved you toward your goals as an organization? To answer this question you need to identify the indicators of progress. What goal or goal did you expect that the change you implemented would impact? What indicators would tell you that you have made progress toward that goal? What was the situation regarding that goal before you began the implementation? What is it now?

Here is an example of establishing criteria for effectiveness in regard to a goal:

> If an organization has as one of its goals to help prepare people for community college training programs and has determined that students having clear learning goals means they are more likely to be better prepared, the organization may have determined as an objective to implement a student goal-setting process based on the Role Maps and Standards of EFF. After they implemented this EFF goal-setting process (which they determined had happened by ongoing monitoring and documentation—formative evaluation), they wanted to evaluate the impact of this goal-setting. They identified as their criteria of success:
>
> - Students are able to describe their learning goals
> - Enrollment in community college training programs by their students increased
> - Completion of these programs on the part of their students increased.

So the indicators that this program used to determine the success of implementing EFF-based goal-setting were students' abilities to describe their learning goals and increase in community college enrollment and completion. This kind of evaluation that looks at the results of a program or implementation is often called a summative evaluation. In a s*ummative evaluation* you are looking at outcomes of a program or process and evaluating the impact of your program or process.

The United Way of America website has examples of possible outcomes and indicators for various programs.
http://national.unitedway.org.outcomes/resources/mpo/examples.cfm

Evaluate Its Effectiveness in Achieving the Goals

Once you have identified your indicators of progress or effectiveness, in order to evaluate effectiveness you will need to collect data to give you information on these criteria. Your evaluation will be most powerful if you have baseline data as well as data collected after a change is implemented. If your indicators include an increase or decrease in some factors, a baseline is essential. In the example above, the program might have interviewed students regarding their learning goals before the EFF goal-setting process was put in place and again after. They needed to have collected data on community college enrollment and program completion by students from their program both before and after the EFF implementation.

There are a wide variety of ways to collect and analyze data for evaluation. Because you will be evaluating one aspect of your program—the implementation of a particular change—the process should not be too elaborate. By identifying the criteria you will use to determine effectiveness and collecting baseline data on these criteria, the evaluation should be reasonably simple and efficient. Chapters Five and Six of *Taking Stock: A Practical Guide to Evaluating Your Own Programs* describe a variety of methods. Download from the Community Partnerships for Adult Learning website at **http://c-pal.net/build/assess/how.html**. There are a variety of other evaluation resources as this site, but *Taking Stock* is most accessible.

After you have collected data on the outcomes of your implementation, you need to analyze your data to determine if the implementation was successful in moving you toward your program goals. Without a more elaborate evaluation than we are discussing here, it will probably not be possible to say with certainty that one change led to particular outcomes. But by examining your data and comparing them to your baseline data you should have a pretty good indication of whether you are moving in the direction you want to go.

After you complete your analysis, you will probably want to use your evaluation as part of your program improvement efforts and, possibly, to report to external stakeholders. Create a simple report describing what you have done and the results.

Appendix A: Resources for Facilitators

Resource List

Stages of Team Development

Prioritzing

Steps in Consensus Decision Making

Overview of Evaluation Prototypes

Facilitation Guide

Reference Materials

Resource List

Baldrige National Quality Program
National Institute of Standards and Technology
100 Bureau Drive Stop 1020
Gaithersburg, MD 20899-1020
Phone: 301-975-2036
Fax: 301-948.-3716
Website: www.quality.nist.gov

Center for Literacy Studies
University of Tennessee
600 Henley Street
Knoxville, TN 37996-2135
Phone: 865-974-6610
Fax: 865-974-3857
Website: www.cls.coe.utk.edu

National Institute for Literacy
1775 I Street, NW; Suite 730
Washington, DC 20006-2401
Phone: 202-233-2025
Fax: 202-233-2050
Website: www.nifl.gov

National Institute for Literacy EFF Special Collection
www.nifl.gov/linc/collections/eff/eff.html

The National Urban League
120 Wall Street
New York, NY 10005
Phone: 212-558-5300
Fax: 212-344-5332
Website: www.nul.org

To learn more about the implementation of EFF in your program or state, contact Diane Gardner, EFF Training and Technical Assistance Center Coordinator at **dgardner@utk.edu** or 865-974-9949.

For general information about obtaining EFF materials, training or technical assistance, contact Ginny Bleazey at the EFF Center for Training and Technical Assistance at **bleazey@utk.edu** or 865-974-8426.

To learn more about the EFF assessment field research/development, contact Brenda Bell, Field Director of the EFF Assessment Consortium at **bsbell@utk.edu** or 865-974-6654.

If you have technical questions about the development of the EFF Assessment Framework, contact Regie Stites, Technical Director of the EFF Assessment Consortium at **regie.stites@sri.com** or 650-859-3768.

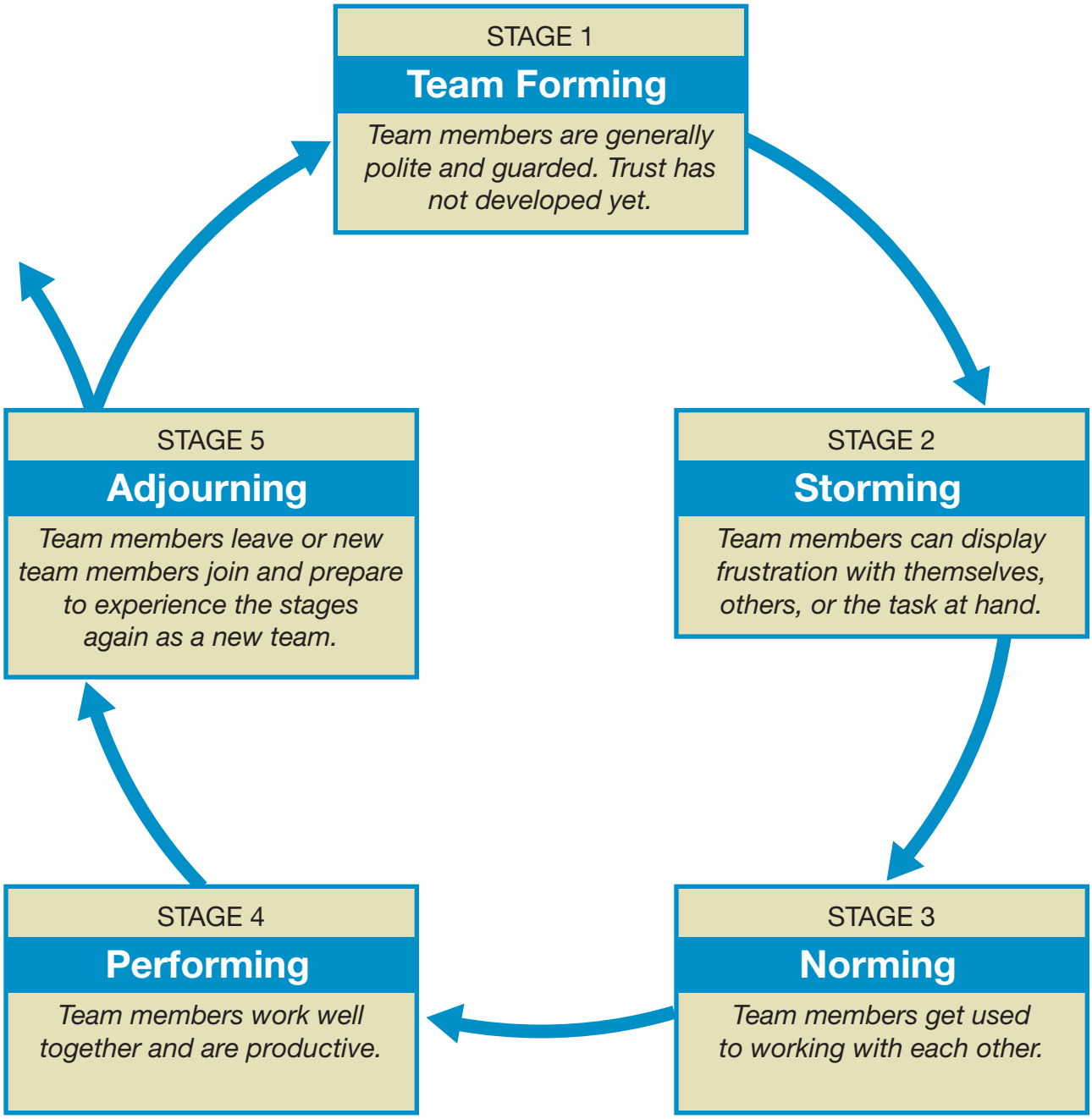
To learn more about the National Urban League's collaboration with EFF, please contact Janet Zobel, Director, Program and Affliliate Development at **jzobel@NUL.org** or 212-558-5350.

If you have questions about EFF as it relates to policy and legislation, please contact Sondra Stein, National Director of EFF at **Sondra_Stein@nifl.gov** or 202-233-2041.

You may also want to examine the following Baldrige Materials:
- Getting Started with the Baldrige National Quality Program
- E-Baldrige Self-Assessment and Action Planning, **www.quality.nist.gov**
- Are We Making Progress?

You can contact the Baldrige National Quality Program and the National EFF Center for these and other educational materials. The addresses are listed above.

Stages of Team Development



Prioritizing

In organizational and group work, there comes a time when the group has to prioritize goals, events, strategies, etc. The following activity is a quick approach for prioritizing.

The Dot Activity

Goal: To engage group members in a process to identify priorities.

Required Materials: Medium size self-adhesive sticky dots, markers, flipchart and pad

Time: 10 to 20 minutes

Step 1.
Start with a list of topics, statements, issues, etc. This may be a brainstormed list or generated from another activity. Using bold makers, write the list on a flip chart sheet(s). When writing the list on the flip chart sheet, make sure enough space if left in the margins for sticky dots and/or other hand written notes.

Step 2.
Distribute self-adhesive sticky dots to group members. Decide how many dots each person should receive based on the number of items on the list and the number of people in the group. For example, if you have 5 items on the list and you want to identify the top three choices, each person might get three sticky dots. If you have a large group and you want to identify the top three, then each person might get one or two sticky dots. Each dot represents one vote.

Step 3.
Review the list with group members by giving some background and/or explanation on each item.

Step 4.
Now ask group members to place their sticky dots by the items they feel are most important or a priority.

Step 5.
Once all of the dots have been placed on the list, count the number of dots for each item, and make a new prioritized list, with the items getting the most dots at the top.

A word of caution – sometimes, the items that get the most dots are not necessarily the best choices. This activity is useful to a group as a first step in a broader conversation about a particular decision, solution, plan, etc. Once the larger list is prioritized, then, the group might have a follow-up conversation about the strengths, weaknesses, support for and against any one item.

Steps in Consensus Decision–Making

- **Clarify the problem or question being addressed.**
- **Determine the criteria for a good solution** (e.g., cost, scale, scope, acceptance).
- **Ensure that everyone agrees on the criteria.**
- **Brainstorm a range of alternative solutions.**
- **Generate a thorough list of alternatives.**
  Do not evaluate the alternatives as they are being generated—just list them.
- **Ensure that the ideas are written as they are visible to everyone.**
- **Take a straw poll to check for the possibility of early agreement.**
- **If there is only a little disagreement, determine the source of the disagreement.**
- **Evaluate alternatives, according to the criteria.**
- **Rule out alternatives that do not meet criteria or that on further reflection are rejected by the group.**
- **Determine if any alternatives require further research.**
  If so, come up with a plan for carrying out research.
- **Make a decision.**
- **Test ways to combine or modify alternatives to meet the interests of as many people in the group as possible.**
- **Select one or more alternatives.**

Overview of Evaluation Prototypes

Planning Evaluation

A *Planning Evaluation* assesses the understanding of project goals, objectives strategies and timelines.

It addresses the following types of questions:

- Why was the project developed? What is the problem or need it is attempting to address?
- Who are the stakeholders? Who are the people involved in the project? Who are the people interested in the project who may not be involved?
- What do the stakeholders want to know? What questions are most important to which stakeholders? What questions are secondary in importance? Where do concerns coincide? Where are they in conflict?
- Who are the participants to be served?
- What are the activities and strategies that will involve the participants? What is the intervention? How will participants benefit? What are the expected outcomes?
- Where will the program be located (educational level, geographical area)?
- How many months of the school year or calendar year will the program operate? When will the program begin and end?
- How much does it cost? What is the budget for the program? What human, material and institutional resources are needed? How much is needed for evaluation? for dissemination?
- What are the measurable outcomes? What is the expected impact for the project in the short run? the longer run?
- What arrangements have been made for data collection? What are the understandings regarding record keeping, responding to surveys and participation in testing?

Formative Evaluation

A *Formative Evaluation* assesses ongoing project activities. It consists of two types: *Implementation Evaluation* and *Progress Evaluation.*

Implementation Evaluation

An *Implementation Evaluation* assesses whether the project is being conducted as planned. It addresses the following types of questions:

- Were the appropriate participants selected and involved in the planned activities?
- Do the activities and strategies match those described in the plan? If not, are the changes in activities justified and described?
- Were the appropriate staff members hired, and trained, and are they working in accordance with the proposed plan? Were the appropriate materials and equipment obtained?
- Were activities conducted according to the proposed timeline? by appropriate personnel?
- Was a management plan developed and followed?

Progress Evaluation

A *Progress Evaluation* assesses the progress made by the participates in meeting the project goals. It addresses the following types of questions:

- Are the participants moving toward the anticipated goals of the project?
- Which of the activities and strategies are aiding the participants to move toward the goals.

Summative Evaluation

A *Summative Evaluation* assesses project success—the extent to which the completed project has met its goals. It addresses the following types of questions:

- Was the project successful?
- Did the project meet the overall goal(s)?
- Did the participants benefit from the project?
- What components were the most effective?
- Were the results worth the project's cost?
- Is this project replicable and transportable?

From the *EHR/NSF Evaluation Handbook*

http://www.ehr.nsf.gov/rec/programs/evaluation/handbook

Facilitation Guide

Key Facilitation Skills

Reflecting – feeding back the content and feeling of the message.
"Let me see if I'm hearing you correctly…"

Clarifying – restating an idea or thought to make it more clear.
"What I believe you are saying is…"

Summarizing – stating concisely the main thoughts.
"It sounds to me as if we have been talking about a few major themes…"

Shifting focus – moving from one speaker or topic to another.
"Thank you, John. Do you have anything to add, Jane?"

"We've been focusing on views 1 and 2. Does anyone have strong feeling about the other views?"

Using silence – allowing time and space for reflection by pausing between comments.

Using non-verbal and verbal signals – combining body language and speech to communicate—for example, using eye contact to encourage or discourage behaviors in the group. Be aware of cultural differences.

Neutrality is important here, so that we don't encourage some people more than others.

From Study Circle Resource Center, P.O. Box 203, Pomfret, CT 06258
Phone: 860-928-2616 Fax: 860-928-3713 Email: scrc@neca.com

Facilitation Guide

Tips for Effective Discussion Facilitation

Be prepared.
The facilitator does not need to be an expert on the topic being discussed, but should be prepared for the discussion. This means understanding the subject, being familiar with the discussion materials, thinking ahead of time about the directions in which the discussion might go, and preparing questions to help further the discussion.

Set a relaxed and open tone.
- Welcome everyone and create a friendly and relaxed atmosphere.
- Well-placed humor is always welcome, and helps to build the group's connections.

Establish clear ground rules.
At the beginning of the study circle, help the group establish its own ground rules by asking the participants to suggest ways for the group to behave. Here are some ground rules that are tried and true:
- Everyone gets a fair hearing.
- Seek first to understand, then to be understood.
- One person speaks at a time.
- Share "air time."
- Conflict is not personalized. Don't label, stereotype, or call people names.
- Speak for yourself, not for others.
- What is said in this group stays here, unless everyone agrees to change that.

Monitor and assist the group process.
- Keep track of how the group members are participating—who has spoken, who hasn't spoken, and whose points haven't been heard.
- Consider splitting up into smaller groups to examine a variety of viewpoints or to give people a chance to talk more easily about their personal connection to the issue.
- When deciding whether to intervene, lean toward non-intervention.
- Don't talk after each comment or answer every question; allow participants to respond directly to each other.
- Allow time for pauses and silence. People need time to reflect and respond.
- Don't let anyone dominate; try to involve everyone.
- Remember: a study circle is not a debate, but a group dialogue. If participants forget this, don't hesitate to ask the group to help re-establish the ground rules.

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Help the group grapple with the content.

- Make sure the group considers a wide range of views. Ask the group to think about the advantages and disadvantages of different ways of looking at an issue or solving a problem.
- Ask participants to think about the concerns and values that underlie their beliefs and the opinions of others.
- Help the discussion along by clarifying, paraphrasing, and summarizing the discussion.
- Help participants to identify "common ground," but don't try to force con

Use probing comments and open-ended questions which don't lead to yes or no answers. *This will result in a more productive discussion. Some useful questions include:*

- What seems to be the key point here?
- What is the crux of your disagreement?
- What would you say to support (or challenge) that point?
- Please give an example or describe a personal experience to illustrate that point.
- Could you help us understand the reasons behind your opinion?
- What experiences or beliefs might lead a person to support that point of view?
- What do you think people who hold that opinion care deeply about?
- What would be a strong case against what you just said?
- What do you find most persuasive about that point of view?
- What is it about that position that you just cannot live with?
- What have we missed that we need to talk about?
- What information supports that point of view?

Reserve adequate time for closing the discussion.

- Ask the group for last comments and thoughts about the subject.
- Thank everyone for their contributions.
- Provide some time for the group to evaluate the study circle process.

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Facilitation Guide

Suggestions for Dealing With Typical Challenges

Most study circles go smoothly because participants are there voluntarily and have a stake in the program. But there are challenges in any group process. What follows are some of the most common difficulties that study circle leaders encounter, along with some possible ways to deal with those difficulties.

PROBLEM:	POSSIBLE RESPONSES:
Certain participants don't day anything, seem shy.	Try to draw out quiet participants, but don't put them on the spot. Make eye contact—it reminds them that you'd like to hear from them. Look for nonverbal cues that indicate participants are ready to speak. Frequently, people will feel more comfortable in later sessions of a study circle program and will begin to participate. When someone comes forward with a brief comment after staying in the background for most of the study circle, you can encourage him or her by conveying genuine interest and asking for more information. And it's always helpful to talk with people informally before and after the session.
PROBLEM:	POSSIBLE RESPONSES:
An aggressive or talkative person dominates the discussion.	As the facilitator, it is your responsibility to handle domineering participants. Once it becomes clear what this person is doing, you ***must*** intervene and set limits. Start by limiting your eye contact with the speaker. Remind the group that everyone is invited to participate; "Let's hear from some folks who haven't had a chance to speak yet." If necessary, you can speak to the person by name. "Charlie, we've heard from you; now let's hear what Barbara has to say." Be careful to manage your comments and tone of voice—you are trying to make a point without offending the speaker.
PROBLEM:	POSSIBLE RESPONSES:
Lack of focus, not moving forward, participants wander off the topic.	Responding to this takes judgement and intuition. It is the facilitator's role to help move the discussion along. But it is not always clear which way it is going. Keep an eye on the participants to see how engaged they are, and if you are in doubt, check it out with the group. "We're a little off topic right now. Would you like to stay with this, or move on to the next question?" If a participant goes into a lengthy digression, you may have to say, "We are wandering off the subject, and I'd like to give other a chance to speak."

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PROBLEM:

Someone puts forth information which you know to be false. Or participants get hung us in a dispute about facts but no one present knows the answer.

POSSIBLE RESPONSES:

Ask, "Has anyone heard of conflicting information?" If no one offers a correction, offer one yourself. And if no one knows the facts, and the point is not essential, put it aside and move on. If the point is central to the discussion, encourage members to look up the information before the next meeting. Remind the group that experts often disagree.

PROBLEM:

Lack of interest, no excitement, no one wants to talk, only a few participating.

POSSIBLE RESPONSES:

This rarely happens in study circles, but it may occur if the facilitator talks too much or does not give participants enough time to respond to questions. People need time to think, reflect, and get ready to speak up. It may help to pose a question and go around the circle until everyone has a chance to respond. Occasionally, you might have a lack of excitement in the discussion because the group seems to be in agreement and isn't coming to grips with the tensions inherent in the issue. In this case, the leader's job is to try to bring other views into the discussion, especially if no one in the group holds them. "Do you know people who hold other views? What would they say about our conversation?"

PROBLEM:

Tension or open conflict in the group. Perhaps two participants lock horns and argue. Or, one participant gets angry and confronts another.

POSSIBLE RESPONSES:

If there is tension, address it directly. Remind participants that disagreement and conflict of ideas is what a study circle is all about. Explain that, for conflict of ideas to be productive, it must be focused on the issue: it is acceptable to challenge someone's ideas, but personal attacks are not acceptable. You must interrupt personal attacks, name-calling, or put-downs as soon as they occur. You will be better able to do so if you have established ground rules that disallow such behaviors and that encourage tolerance for all views. Don't hesitate to appeal to the group for help; if group members bought into the ground rules, they will support you. As a last resort, consider taking a break to change the energy in the room. You can take the opportunity to talk one-on-one with the participants in question.

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Appendix B: Session Handouts

2.1 Introduction to EFF

2.2 The Equipped for the Future Content Framework

2.3 EXAMPLE: Goals and Broad Areas of Responsibilities

2.4 Goals Grid

2.5 A Purposeful and Transparent Approach to Education: Background and Case in Point 2

2.6 EFF Research to Practice Note 1

2.7 A Contextualized Approach to Curriculum and Instruction: Background and Case in Point 3

2.8 EFF Research to Practice Note 2

2.9 EFF Research to Practice Note 3

2.10 Constructivist Learning

2.11 EFF Teaching and Learning Cycle

2.12 EFF Teaching and Learning Cycle Grid

2.13 Assessment in the EFF Classroom

2.14 Assessment, Accountability and Program Improvement: Background and Case in Point 4

2.15 Questions on Assessment

2.16 Current Approach to Assessment

2.17 Traditional Versus EFF Approaches to Assessment

2.18 Article by Juliet Merrifield

2.19 Accountability, Change and Quality: Background and Case in Point 5

2.20 Questions About Change

2.21 Education Criteria for Performance Excellence and EFF Program Practice

3.1 Steps in Phases 3 and 4

HANDOUT 2.1

Introduction to EFF

In the initial session of this program improvement process, team members are introduced to EFF as a standards-based framework for guiding the delivery of quality adult basic skills education. A quality program is one in which the organization's purposes and goals are clear, so that students and community members can understand how a program or organization contributes to the students' goals and to the broader community's goals.

EFF was initiated in 1993 in response to **National Educational Goal 6**:

> **Every adult American will be literate and possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibility of citizenship.**

By clearly defining what adults need to know to achieve this goal, EFF makes it possible for the adult literacy system to focus on measurable standards so that we can determine progress toward achieving Goal 6.

In research with adult students, EFF has identified **Four Purposes for Learning**

- to gain access to information and resources to orient themselves in the world,
- to give voice to ideas and opinions with the confidence that they will be heard,
- to take independent action to solve problems and make decisions, and
- to keep learning to build a bridge to the future in a rapidly changing world.

EFF helps organizations enable adults to achieve these four purposes in their roles as citizens, workers, and family members by providing

- a clear set of **16 Content Standards** that describe what adults need to know and be able to do
- a framework and tools that teachers and programs can use to link curriculum, instruction and assessment
- an assessment framework that can be used to support program improvement and accountability.

The book, *Equipped for the Future Content Standards: What Adults Need to Know and Be Able to Do in the 21st Century* (Stein, 2000) summarizes EFF history and goals, defines the key elements of EFF, defines the EFF Content Standards, and gives examples of how the EFF Framework has been used.

The five EFF Program Practices reflect the theoretical foundations of EFF. These practices are explained in *Results That Matter: An Approach to Program Quality Using Equipped for the Future* (Bingman and Stein, 2001). See the Contacts list in the Appendix for ordering information.

HANDOUT 2.2

The Equipped for the Future Content Framework

Four Purposes	Role Maps	Common Activities	Content Standards
To gain ACCESS	Citizens and Community Members	• Gather, analyze and use information • Manage Resources • Work within the big picture	**Communication Skills** • Read With Understanding • Convey Ideas in Writing • Speak So Others Can Understand • Listen Actively
To give VOICE	Parents and Family Members	• Work together • Provide leadership • Guide and support others	**Decision-Making Skills** • Solve Problems and Make Decisions • Plan • Use Math to Solve Problems and Communicate
To take INDEPENDENT ACTION	Workers	• Seek guidance and support from others • Develop and express sense of self • Respect others and value diversity	**Interpersonal Skills** • Cooperate With Others • Guide Others • Advocate and Influence • Resolve Conflict and Negotiate
To build a BRIDGE TO THE FUTURE		• Exercise rights and responsibilities • Create and pursue vision and goals • Use technology and other tools to accomplish goals • Keep pace with change	**Lifelong Learning Skills** • Take Responsibility for Learning • Learn Through Research • Reflect and eEvaluate • Use Information and Communication Technology

HANDOUT 2.3

EXAMPLE: Goals and Broad Areas of Responsibility

My personal goal is to create a small, home-based arts business that I can work and operate in my spare time. When I looked at the **Worker Role Map**, I located my goal under the **Broad Area of Responsibility**—"Plan and Direct Personal and Professional Growth." When I looked closer at the Plan and Direct Personal and Professional Growth" section of the Role Map, I found the following **Key Activities**:

- Balance and support work, career, and personal needs.
- Pursue work activities that provide personal satisfaction and meaning.
- Plan, renew, and pursue personal and career goals.
- Learn new skills.

So, these are four key activities that I need to "perform" so that I'm prepared as a small, home-based business "worker."

HANDOUT 2.4

Goals Grid

GOALS		
Students	**Staff**	**Program**

HANDOUT 2.5

A Purposeful and Transparent Approach to Education: Background and Case in Point 2

Background:

A quality program is one in which the organization's purposes and goals are clear. It is important for students and community members to understand how a program or organization relates and contributes to the student's goals and to the broader community's goals. Intake and orientation processes that are purposeful and transparent contribute to program quality by helping students to clarify what they need to learn in order to meet their goals.

Educational theory and research says that learning is most effective when it is purposeful, when it connects to the attitudes, knowledge, skills, and behaviors that students need and want to fulfill their goals, and when it helps them become competent in their many adult roles. The purposes of the teaching and learning activities should be clear or transparent to the learner, teacher, and program. For additional background information on a purposeful and transparent approach to education, see EFF Research to Practice Note 1 in the Appendix. Administrators of an adult education program using EFF and wanting to improve program quality should consider the question:

How will this agency develop a purposeful and transparent approach to education?

One way in which a program is purposeful and transparent is when its program goals are clear and understandable. In this session, the team members review promotional and other organizational materials and reflect on current intake and orientation processes to identify changes that would make these processes more purposeful, transparent, and useful.

Case in Point:

An eleven-year-old community based organization, The Pierce CommunityBuild Adult Education Center serves mostly young (18 to 25), low-income adults. The program offers students an opportunity to obtain a GED, learn a building trade, and gain valuable life skills such as budgeting and civics. Most of the students come to the program to get their GED, and they become frustrated when instruction is not tied directly to GED preparation.

The program has decided that it needs to present a clearer picture to potential students about the program's purposes and that it has to get a clearer picture from students about their learning purposes and their life goals. In fact, all the processes connected to the teaching and learning (intake, placement testing,

goal setting, selecting instructional content, and on-going assessment) need to be clear and understandable—they need to be transparent. Both teachers and students need to understand the program's processes, instructional approach, and expected outcomes.

Ms. Franklin, the program teacher, says, "When something is transparent, you can see through it." She recently heard about the EFF Content Standards Framework at a conference. She was reminded that adults need to exercise their rights and responsibilities as family members, workers, and community members, and that EFF had identified four specific purposes for which adults say they seek education:

1. To access information
2. To voice their own ideas and opinions
3. To take independent action to solve problems, and
4. To create a bridge to the future.

Ms. Franklin wondered how these purposes compared with what students say when they come to the CommunityBuild program. So, Ms. Franklin had her class do a writing assignment in which students identified their individual purposes and compared them to the four EFF purposes. Many of the students wanted to be able to "take independent action to solve problems."

The insights revealed in the writing activity were useful to both Ms. Franklin and to Mr. Johns, the educational coordinator. They were able to identify a range of student purposes and goals that they could then review in light of the program's purposes and goals.

EFF RESEARCH TO PRACTICE NOTE **1**

EFF Research Principle: A Purposeful and Transparent Approach to Teaching and Learning

By Marilyn K. Gillespie

What Do We Mean by a Purposeful and Transparent Approach?

The first key research principle underlying the Equipped for the Future system reform initiative emphasizes its purposeful approach to teaching and learning. Purposeful learning is integral to every step of the teaching and learning process. The first step in EFF-based instruction involves asking learners to examine their broad purposes for learning in relationship to their roles as workers, as parents and family members, and as citizens and community members. The **EFF Role Maps** and the **Common Activities** that encompass all three roles provide a common language to talk about these broader "big-picture" purposes. From this base, adults can identify more specific goals that will allow them to achieve those purposes. The **EFF Content Standards** provide a guide to the knowledge, skills, and learning strategies that learners will need to reach the goals. Teachers and learners then decide together on specific learning activities that will enable learners to strengthen their knowledge and skills in the EFF Standard or Standards that are most critical to achievement of their goals. This intentional and purpose-driven approach to planning creates the conditions for teachers to make explicit both what will be learned and what good performance will look like. In this way, the process and goals of learning are transparent to everyone involved.

Since the tools that make up the EFF Framework were developed through a broad national consensus-building process involving hundreds of adult learners, they connect individual learner goals to the broader, more fundamental purposes of the larger community. These include our National Goal for Literacy and Lifelong Learning, that ***every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.***

This *Research to Practice Note* summarizes the growing body of research that supports a purposeful and transparent approach to learning, including findings that demonstrate that:

- **Learning itself is a purposeful, goal-directed activity. An ongoing goal-setting process is integral to effective learning.**
- **Purposeful and transparent learning builds on learners' prior knowledge and experiences to construct new knowledge.**
- **Purposeful and transparent learning also means that learners monitor and assess their own progress. Metacognitive strategies help them to be mindful of what is being learned and what good performance looks like.**

The EFF publication *Results That Matter: An EFF Approach to Quality* presents five key principles that reflect the theoretical foundations of EFF. Program practices that support these principles provide guideposts by which programs, teachers, students, and their communities can assess their implementation of the EFF Framework. They help practitioners to better answer the questions "What does it mean to practice EFF?" and "What does EFF implementation look like in action?" These *Research to Practice Notes* will help you to:

- identify the research basis for the principles;
- learn key concepts and terms associated with the principles;
- see examples of how other programs have implemented the program practices;
- reflect on how you and your program can implement the program practices.

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How Cognitive Science Informs EFF

Researchers have recently made great progress in understanding how people think and learn. In the last few years, there has been an extraordinary growth in scientific work on the mind and brain. We now have ways to study not only the ***products*** of thinking and learning but also the ***processes*** by which people acquire new information, such as the neural processes that occur during thought and learning and the process through which people develop competence and expertise. The multidisciplinary group of researchers who have conducted this work have coined a term for the study of thinking and learning: ***cognitive science***. Cognitive science research represents one of the key conceptual underpinnings of the EFF Framework for teaching, learning, and assessment and provides the research basis for the constructivist theory of learning. For teachers who would like to read more about cognitive science research, the National Academy of Sciences has produced three publications that synthesize this work and its implications for education: *How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience, and School*, by Bransford, Brown, and Cocking (1999); *How People Learn: Bridging Research and Practice*, by Donovan, Bransford, and Pellegrino (1999); and *Knowing What Students Know: The Science and Design of Educational Assessment*, by Pellegrino, Chudowsky, and Glaser (2001).

What Research Says about Purposeful and Transparent Learning

Learning is a purposeful, goal-directed activity.

Within the field of **cognitive science**, meaning is understood as something we impose on the world, rather than something that exists independently of ourselves. Beginning with Piaget, numerous researchers have demonstrated that human beings are, by nature, active problem solvers who seek out learning in order to make meaning of the world around them (Piaget, 1970; Bruner, 1986; Fosnot, 1992; Wenger, 1998). We undertake learning activities "not merely as ends in themselves but as means for achieving larger objectives and goals that have meaning in the community" (Scribner, 1987). Learning is a process of constructing new knowledge on the basis of our current knowledge to meet our socially determined purposes for learning (Glaser, 1992; Duffy & Jonassen, 1992).

Goal setting and persistence. In light of this research, more attention is now being given to involving students in setting their own goals for learning. Within adult education, the role of goal setting has been underscored by recent research on what helps adult literacy and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) learners to persist in adult education programs. As they followed adult learners over time, Comings, Parrella, and Soricone (2000) found that adults who were able to identify more clearly their purposes for learning, such as "help my children" or "get a better job," were much more likely to persist than those who either mentioned no specific purpose or simply said they were doing it for themselves. According to these researchers, learners who establish concrete goals and are given the opportunity to see that they are making measurable progress toward them are more able to persist in their efforts (and stay in programs) long enough to reach them.

Purposeful learning in the EFF Content Framework. Programs using EFF build on these research findings by helping learners to identify their purposes and goals for learning at multiple stages in the teaching and learning cycle. Like most programs, they ask learners to name their goals during initial program intake, but this is only the beginning of a more extensive goal-setting process. Students are introduced to the EFF Framework, including the four **Purposes for Learning**, the Role Maps, and the Common Activities. These provide a common language to help learners create a detailed "big picture" of their underlying purposes for learning. For example, students who name "getting my GED" are encouraged to look beyond passing the test to examine the goals it will help them to reach. If their goals are within the worker role, they may explore the need for postsecondary job training and then use the EFF Standards Wheel to determine that they need to develop skills in the Content Standards *Plan* and *Learn Through Research* to get into and succeed in community college. In a group learning situation, the group members work to reach a consensus on shared priorities. Together with their teacher, they then plan learning activities

For reflection…

- *What kind of goal setting takes place within your program?*
- *How are your students involved in setting the goals and activities they will work on?*

that will help them work on those goals. At this stage, learners also become involved in the identification of what good performance related to their goals will look like. In this manner, activities become learner driven, transparent, and purposeful.

Purposeful learning builds on learners' prior knowledge.
Cognitive research has shown that learning is not simply a process of "knowledge acquisition" but an active process of "knowledge construction" in which learners use their prior knowledge and experience to shape meaning and construct new knowledge (Lambert & Walker, 1995). (See *Research to Practice Note 2* for more details on constructivist teaching and learning.) Teachers need to activate the **prior knowledge** of learners by helping them to articulate what they already know about a given topic and build on these ideas in ways that help students achieve a more expert understanding. For example, research with children has shown that when many young students are taught that the earth is round, they often do not fully grasp this new information. Many hold onto a **mental model** of the earth as flat by imagining a round earth to be shaped like a pancake (Vosniadou & Brewer, 1989). Only when teachers directly address learners' prior knowledge of the earth as being flat are they able to help students develop a more complete understanding of the shape of the earth. If teachers do not involve learners in naming and analyzing those prior conceptions, research shows that students may fail to grasp the new concepts or may learn them for a test but revert to their preconceptions outside the classroom (Donovan, Bransford, & Pellegrino, 1999).

Goal setting and self-assessment. Within the EFF teaching and learning cycle, once learners' goals have been established, they begin a process of self-assessment in relation to the EFF Content Standard they have decided to work on. They may first use brainstorming or other techniques to name and validate, as individuals and as a group, what they already know. This process helps them to begin to examine and revise their existing mental models of the subject matter. For example, learners who think writing is mostly about "spelling all the words right" may learn that spelling is only one part of a much larger writing "process."

For reflection…

- *How could you use the EFF Framework to begin to work with students with limited literacy skills?*
- *In what ways do you find out about the prior knowledge of learners you teach? How might you use the EFF Framework to help to draw on and address their prior knowledge?*

Purposeful and transparent learning means that learners monitor and assess their own progress.
A purposeful and transparent approach to teaching and learning requires that learners have a clear understanding of the purposes for each learning activity and monitor their own progress. For example, the Standard *Listen Actively* includes monitoring comprehension and integrating information from listening with prior

In *Other People's Words: The Cycle of Low Literacy* (1995), Purcell-Gates chronicles the story of what can happen when literacy learning is divorced from broader purposes and everyday roles. Jenny, a white urban Appalachian mother, came to Purcell-Gates for help with literacy for herself and her son. At 31, she and her husband had created a full life for themselves, but one in which literacy played very little part. When Purcell-Gates met her, Jenny had been attending adult education classes off and on for four years. She showed Purcell-Gates her books, which contained short reading passages, comprehension questions, and fill-in-the-blank exercises. Although she was able to read workbooks written at the fourth-grade reading level, she had transferred none of this knowledge to her everyday life. She had never written anything on her own, for her own purposes, besides her name, a few notations on the calendar, and her address. When Purcell-Gates suggested to Jenny that she write in a journal and read her own writing, "She looked at me with an expression of stunned awareness. 'Why, I ain't never read my own words before!' she exclaimed softly…'That's all I ever really did was copy stuff, you know, from a book.'"

I found I had to be much more keenly aware of where my learners began and then where they are now. I felt much more in touch with what my learners needed (time to reflect or for the peer leadership that occurred) and felt more like it was a respected classroom. I've always been unsure of what student-centered is, and then this summer's group really showed me how the balance needs to happen between teacher and learner. This process also has made me understand how important it is to know where the learner begins through observation or through learner assessment. I used their strengths to plan and incorporate discussions where before I wouldn't have been as aware of the process the learners were going through, and I worried more about how I was doing rather than how they were progressing.

—Jennifer Ladd, Atkinson, Maine

This task was successful because the students inspired it. They were invested in this activity [writing to request funds for community service]. They were hopeful we would see results. They could see the value in learning to write a business letter, and most of them felt they would be able to write letters on their own in the future… The students would pepper me with questions about our project. They wanted to know if I'd sent the letters or if I'd heard any response. They were talking about it every day.

—Joanna Elizondo, Seattle, Washington

For reflection…

- *Think about your own metacognitive processes. What kinds of strategies do you use to monitor and assess your own learning as a teacher?*
- *Look at the Components of Performance for several EFF Standards. How is metacognitive awareness built into the language of the components?*

knowledge to address the listening purpose. One way teachers help learners to do this is by improving their awareness of metacognitive processes of learning.

The importance of metacognitive awareness. Metacognition refers to our capacity to be aware of our own thinking processes and to monitor and control our thinking relative to the cognitive tasks we are performing (Greeno, Resnick, & Collins, 1997). For example, you are using your metacognitive skills when you monitor your understanding while you are reading, when you go back and reread passages you don't understand, and when you decide when and under what conditions to consult a dictionary. Cognitive research has demonstrated that most experts have strong metacognitive skills in relation to their field of expertise. They make "mental notes" when they need more information. They observe whether what they are learning is consistent with what they already know, and they monitor what they are learning to see whether it meets their purposes (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 1999).

Metacognitive strategies can be taught. Since metacognition often takes the form of an internal dialogue, until recently it was assumed that individuals simply had to develop this capability on their own. Today, however, new research tools are available that allow researchers to closely monitor what experts do and think as they work. It is now clear that the kinds of metacognitive skills that experts in a given subject area use can be identified. New approaches to teaching these metacognitive strategies to novices are being developed every day (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 1999).

The EFF Framework is designed to help students develop their metacognitive awareness by making the metacognitive aspects of learning transparent. Metacognitive skills associated with "good performance" are written into the Components of Performance for the EFF Standards. Students begin their work on a Standard by identifying what they already know about the topic. Next, they closely examine what good performance looks like. They develop their own learning checklists so they can plan and monitor their understanding as they are practicing new skills. They also learn how to evaluate how well they are performing in relation to the Standard through the use of scoring guides they help to develop, teacher interviews, portfolios, and other learner-centered assessment tools. (See *Research to Practice Note 2* for more information about metacognitive strategies.)

Program Practices That Support Purposeful Teaching and Learning

Results That Matter: An Approach to Program Quality Using Equipped for the Future (Bingman & Stein, 2001) provides a vision for program-level system reform (referred to as the EFF Quality Model). The EFF Quality Model identifies Program Practices that reflect the theoretical foundations of EFF and provides a guidepost by which administrators, teachers, students, and communities can assess their implementation of the EFF Framework. As you reflect on the examples below, think about how your program might answer the questions "What does it mean to practice EFF?" and "What does EFF implementation look like in action?"

EXAMPLE 1: Students use the EFF Framework to clarify their purposes for learning and to identify strengths and gaps in the skills and knowledge necessary to achieve their purposes and goals.

During their intake process, adult ESOL learners often identify goals related to communicating in their family and community life. A common concern is using English when one "goes to the doctor." Alysan Croydan, a teacher from the Refugee Women's Alliance of Seattle, Washington, describes how the EFF Framework helped her to delve more deeply to understand students' specific needs related to obtaining medical care.

After Alysan's students expressed the need to improve their ability to make appointments with doctors, they began working on the EFF Standard *Speak So Others Can Understand* by practicing dialogues in English. After they finished the activity, Alysan was surprised when many students continued to name making appointments with doctors as their goal. Using the EFF Framework, she asked them to reflect on what was still difficult about making an appointment. It became clear that the real issue was not just making an appointment, but finding a time that would fit their work and childcare schedules. Going beyond the scripted dialogues, she began teaching them how to negotiate an appointment time and troubleshoot scheduling problems.

This activity might lead Alysan and her students toward work on other EFF Standards. For example, they might use the EFF Standard *Solve Problems and Make Decisions* to improve their skills related to addressing scheduling problems. The Components of Performance for this Standard guide students to anticipate or identify problems; use information from diverse sources to arrive at a clearer understanding of the problem and its root causes; generate alternative solutions; and select an alternative that is most appropriate to goal, context, and available resources. Depending on their needs, the students might decide to move on to another EFF Standard, such as *Advocate and Influence*, in order to work with their employers to allow for time off for doctor visits.

A close investigation of students' complex purposes for learning using the EFF Standards not only helped Alysan to better understand their needs, but also helped to clarify what needed to be learned. As what they needed to learn became clear, they were better able to judge their own progress toward reaching their goals.

For reflection…

Look at the Components of Performance for each of the EFF Standards.

- *What is the common thread of purposeful learning in each one?*
- *How do the other components in each Standard build on the initial naming of a real-life purpose or goal?*

EXAMPLE 2: Teachers use the EFF Framework to structure a goal-setting/ needs-assessment dialogue with students.

Gail Hemsoth of Lane Community College in Eugene, Oregon, teaches adults in a local welfare to work program. After a discussion of the EFF Standards, these students decided that they wanted to think more about how to develop skills related to the Standard *Speak So Others Can Understand*. With Gail's help in simplifying the language, they looked over the Components of Performance for this Standard: Determine the purpose for communicating; Organize and relay information to effectively serve the purpose, context, and listener; Pay attention to conventions of oral English communication, including grammar, word choice, register, pace, and gesture in order to minimize barriers to listener's comprehension; and Use multiple strategies to monitor the effectiveness of the communication. Then they worked in small groups to brainstorm examples of tasks from their own lives where they needed to use these skills. Overnight, Gail compiled the task examples from all the groups and the next day asked the groups to rank the tasks in order of difficulty. When they finished, each learner established his or her own goals related to the Standard. For example, one woman was going to be starting a job soon in which she would have to give presentations on domestic violence. Another woman wanted to speak more confidently at job interviews.

Once the group became clear on their own personal goals, they began thinking about how they could plan a common activity that would allow them all to work together on the Standard. All the students recognized that they needed more practice in speaking in front of a group. They decided that since almost everyone also needed to spend more time identifying jobs that would interest them, they would combine these two goals by researching interesting jobs and then making a presentation about what they learned to the whole class.

Together they discussed what a good oral presentation to the class would look like. They discussed how to tailor their talk to their audience, how they would know if they were being understood, and whether or not to use the overhead projector or handouts. Then they created a checklist that the audience would use to evaluate the presentation. After everyone was done, they reflected individually and as a group about what they had learned and what they would do next in order to become more expert at speaking-related tasks.

For reflection…

- *How might the experiences of learners in Gail's program have been different if she had simply assigned them the task of making presentations about jobs on the first day of class rather than asking them to decide on the activity?*
- *How do you help learners to come to consensus about learning activities they can work on together?*

EXAMPLE 3: Teachers use EFF as a common language to discuss how their instructional practice supports attainment of student goals and purposes.

Program administrator Jane Knight of Knox County Adult Literacy Program in Knoxville, Tennessee, describes how she and the teachers in her program used the framework as a common language to solve problems. Over Christmas break, Jane was able to set aside four weeks for the team to learn about EFF and create an action plan. At first, teachers felt a bit overwhelmed and worried about what changes would be required, but over time they learned to use the EFF tools and became more confident. Bringing on new teachers, however, was sometimes harder. For example, in one class, made up of ex-offenders, there had been a lot of teacher turnover. The students came to Jane with a list of complaints they felt the new teacher, who had been in the class for only four days, had not solved. Jane and another teacher experienced with EFF decided to visit the class. They

encouraged the students to use the Standard *Solve Problems and Make Decisions* to work on their concerns. Students began to speak up about how difficult it was for them to make it to the bus on time because they had to take their children to school. If they missed the bus, the next one did not come until an hour later. As ex-offenders, these learners were required to report their attendance to the court system. Being late resulted in a penalty. As they worked together to generate alternatives, the students were able to see how, if everyone compromised a little, an effective solution could be found. This was a pivotal event for the students, the new teacher, and the program. The students began to see that they were part of a programwide community with their own set of responsibilities. The new teacher was able to see how EFF worked in action. Growing out of this experience, the program decided to hold monthly Town Meetings where the students and staff could discuss programwide issues.

For reflection…

- *How could your program use EFF as a common language to plan and discuss your educational practices?*

Glossary

Cognitive science: The study of thinking and learning, currently being contributed to by researchers in a wide variety of disciplinary and multidisciplinary fields from developmental psychology to medicine. (See Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 1999.)

Common Activities: The term EFF uses to refer to those activities that adults perform in all three roles (worker, family member, community member). The EFF team identified the 13 Common Activities by looking across the Broad Areas of Responsibility, the Key Activities, and the Role Indicators for each Role Map. (See Stein, 2000, p. 14; Merrifield, 2000, pp. 33-34.)

Content Standards: The term used in a variety of fields to describe what individuals need to know and be able to do for a particular purpose. In EFF, the 16 Content Standards identify what adults need to know and be able to do in order to meet their goals for learning and to be effective in their adult roles. Each EFF Content Standard consists of the title of the standard and the Components of Performance for that standard. (See *EFF Standards*, Stein, 2000, pp. 19-20.)

EFF Quality Model: A vision of what system reform at the program level looks like using EFF Standards. The EFF tools, foundational theory and research, expected program practices, and predicted short- and long-term outcomes are presented and explained in the publication *Results That Matter: An Approach to Program Quality Using Equipped for the Future* (Bingman & Stein, 2001). Ordering and downloading information can be found at http://www.nifl.gov/lincs/collections/eff/eff_publications.html.

Mental model: An individual's existing understanding and interpretation of a given concept, which is formed and reformed on the basis of experiences, beliefs, values, sociocultural histories, and prior perceptions (Lambert & Walker, 1995, p. 1). Our mental models (or schemas) affect how we interpret new concepts and events.

Metacognition: The capacity to reflect on one's own thinking (Greeno, Resnick, & Collins, 1997, p. 19). Metacognitive strategies include monitoring our thinking and understanding while we work, checking to see if what we are learning is consistent with what we already know, and making analogies that will help our understanding (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 1999).

National Education Goal 6: One of the National Education Goals identified by the 50 governors and President George Bush at an education summit in 1989 and later enacted by Congress as part of the Goals 2000 Act. Goal 6 is the only goal directly related to adult learning and is often referred to as the Adult Literacy and Lifelong Learning Goal. A congressional mandate to measure progress toward Goal 6 was the impetus for the development of EFF. (See Stein, 2000, pp. 5-7.)

Prior knowledge: The knowledge one already has about a given topic. Prior knowledge may include accurate as well as inaccurate preconceptions about how the world works. Activating learners' prior knowledge about a topic and involving them in revising or building on it is an essential step in effective learning. (See Hartman, 2001.)

Purposeful approach to education: Teaching and learning that is designed specifically around the goals and purposes of students in their real-life roles as family members, community

members, and workers. A purposeful approach assumes intentionality, explicitness, and transparency in the learning environment. The EFF Standards contribute to purposeful learning because they make explicit and transparent the skills adults need to meet their goals and purposes. (See Bingman & Stein, 2001; Merrifield, 2000, p. 9.)

Purposes for Learning: The four fundamental purposes that adults offer as reasons for furthering their literacy education. The four Purposes for Learning are (1) Access and Orientation, (2) Voice, (3) Independent Action, and (4) Bridge to the Future. These purposes drive learning across the different contexts of adult life and capture the social and cultural significance of learners' specific, individual goals (Merrifield, 2000, pp. 13-17). (See Stein, 1995; Stein, 2000, pp. 5-6.)

Role Map: A publicly agreed to, explicit, consensus depiction of the adult roles of worker, parent/family member, and citizen/community member. For each adult role, the Role Map provides definitions of the Broad Areas of Responsibility, Key Activities, and Role Indicators, which describe, not prescribe, effective performance in the role. (See Stein, 2000, pp. 8-13.)

Transparent approach: An approach to teaching and learning in which the goals and purposes of learning, what will be learned, and what good performance looks like are clear and explicit to students, teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders. The EFF Standards are important in this approach because they clearly define the skills adults need to meet their goals and purposes.

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HANDOUT 2.7

A Contextualized Approach to Curriculum and Instruction: Background and Case in Point 3

Background:

In effective adult teaching and learning environments, research shows that attention to context—the environments, conditions, and circumstances in which learners exist—helps students apply knowledge, skills and processes across contexts, and that the learning context itself contributes to the learning process. For additional background information, see EFF Research to Practice Note 3. Understanding learners' contexts is important for identifying EFF Standards that would help learners achieve their goals. It is also important to understand the many contexts of learners' lives when focusing and designing the learning activity. Learning activities that directly connect to learners' lives are more effective.

Building expertise is a complex developmental process in which new knowledge is built on prior knowledge. Students need cognitve and metacognitive strategies to learn and apply new information. For additional information on building expertise, see EFF Research to Practice Note 2. The EFF framework, particularly the EFF Standards and the Teaching/Learning Cycle, gives teachers a structure for designing learning activities that address the issues arising from the contexts of students' real lives while also building strategies and basic skills.

Administrators can support contextualized teaching and learning by clarifying both their programs and students' contexts. Awareness of these contexts might mean that administrators foster alignment of program goals with student goals and student contexts, budget for materials relevant to the teaching and learning contexts of students and the program, plan and support staff development activities that focus on contextualized curriculum development, and design and monitor assessment and evaluation processes based on contextualized instruction.

Administrators can play an important role in supporting activities that extend learning to different contexts outside of the program. To do this, it might mean that administrators also network with and disseminate program goals and activities to community partners such as employers, other educational institutions, community-based organizations, and social service agencies.

The question for the team:

> **How will this agency help students build expertise through a contextualized approach to curriculum and instruction?**

Case in Point:

Kenesshia, one of Ms. Franklin's GED students, has recently moved into her own apartment. She has been working on math skills in preparation for the GED test. Ms. Franklin is interested in knowing how Kenesshia is applying the math she is studying in class to her new situation, managing her own apartment and finances. One day Ms. Franklin asked Kenesshia how things were going with the apartment.

Kenesshia, despondent, said, "I have a problem; I don't have any nice furniture. The apartment looks so empty." When Ms. Franklin asked what she was planning to do about the problem, Kenesshia responded that she was thinking about visiting the new rent-to-own store in her neighborhood. Ms. Franklin suggested to Kenesshia that she "research" the situation before making any decisions and commitments.

Ms. Franklin knew that Kenesshia could use both the *Use Math to Solve Problems* and the *Plan* Standard to help her make a decision about getting furniture from the rent-to-own store. She asked Kenesshia if she would give a report to the class on what she discovered when researching the rent-to-own plans.

Ms. Franklin and the rest of the class were stunned by the report Kenesshia gave on the rent-to-own plans. "It's a rip-off," said Kenesshia. When Kenesshia figured out the cost of renting a living room set, she realized she would have paid for it three times over. The television and stereo set would have cost her four times as much through the rent-to-own plan. Then Kenesshia talked about the math skills she used to analyze the rent-to-own situation. She gave a long list that included whole number math, fractions, and even some algebra. Ms. Franklin and the rest of the students were proud of Kenesshia, thanked her for her report, and brainstormed with her some alternatives for getting new furniture.

Ms. Franklin and Kenesshia could align and assess the learning based on the Standards' components and how well Kenesshia could transfer skills to other contexts and in other roles.

EFF Research Principle: An Approach to Teaching and Learning That Builds Expertise

By Marilyn K. Gillespie

What Do We Mean by an Approach That Builds Expertise?

The conceptual framework for Equipped for the Future (EFF) is based in part on a theory of knowing and learning known as constructivism. This theory conceives of learning as an active process of knowledge construction. Learners use their prior knowledge and experience to shape meaning and acquire new knowledge.

Within this approach, learning is viewed as a process of activating our prior knowledge related to a topic we want to learn about; questioning, interpreting, analyzing, and processing new information and concepts in light of our past experiences; using this information and our thinking processes to monitor, develop, and alter our understanding; and integrating our current experiences with our past experiences (see Fosnot, 1992; Lambert & Walker, 1995; Mayer, 1998; Larochelle, Bednarz, & Garrison, 1998; Duffy & Jonassen, 1992; Brooks & Brooks, 1993; Cromley, 2000). Work in this area is closely linked to cognitive science research related to the development of expertise (see Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 1999; Glaser, 1992).

This *Research to Practice Note* will describe how research findings related to constructivism have been applied to the development of the EFF Framework and the **EFF Continuum of Performance**, a multi-dimensional developmental description of performance that serves as a foundation for EFF-based instruction and assessment of learner progress. Among the key findings addressed are the following:

- **Acquiring expertise is a complex developmental process in which new knowledge is built on prior knowledge.**
- **To develop expertise, learners need a richly structured knowledge base. They need to learn cognitive and metacognitive strategies for using and applying new information.**
- **Scaffolding instruction helps learners to develop their fluency, independence, and range of performance as they move along a developmental continuum from novice to expert.**

The EFF publication *Results That Matter: An EFF Approach to Quality* presents five key principles that reflect the theoretical foundations of EFF. Program practices that support these principles provide guideposts by which programs, teachers, students, and their communities can assess their implementation of the EFF Framework. They help practitioners to better answer the questions "What does it mean to practice EFF?" and "What does EFF implementation look like in action?" These *Research to Practice Notes* will help you to:

- identify the research basis for the principles;
- learn key concepts and terms associated with the principles;
- see examples of how other programs have implemented the program practices;
- reflect on how you and your program can implement the program practices.

Research Findings on Building Expertise

Building expertise is a complex developmental process.

Most of us were taught in accordance with a "knowledge acquisition" model of learning (Mayer, 1998). In school, we were required to accumulate knowledge about a subject in separate "bits" of information. The order in which we learned

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> Rather than seeing learning as the rote acquisition of knowledge, researchers have come to see learning as a process of sense-making. Learners do not simply absorb, passively receive, or record objective knowledge that is "out there." They actively construct and interpret knowledge by integrating new information and experiences into what they already know.
>
> —Mayer (1998)

these facts was tightly sequenced into a hierarchy of behavioral objectives. After enough drills or practices, we were tested to ensure we had mastered these objectives before we proceeded to the next objectives (Shepard, 2000).

Toward a model of "knowledge construction." Although learning content knowledge is important to developing expertise, new cognitive research has revealed that it is not enough to fully prepare learners to use that knowledge in the real world. Over the past two decades, research studies have closely examined how experts in a growing number of fields (including math, science, music, reading, and history) learn and apply what they have learned. There is now strong evidence that experts do not just know *more* facts. They are not "smarter," nor do they necessarily have better memories than other people. Rather, they have developed a more complex, richly structured knowledge base related to their field. (For a review of research on the development of expertise, see Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 1999; Donovan, Bransford, & Pellegrino, 1999; and Pellegrino, Chudowsky, & Glaser, 2001.)

How experts acquire and use knowledge. Experts with a strong knowledge base are able to (1) extract a level of meaning from content information that is not apparent to novices by structuring what they know into meaningful patterns and relationships, (2) organize their knowledge around core concepts and big ideas, (3) apply cognitive strategies to select and remember information that is relevant and eliminate what is unimportant, and (4) use metacognitive strategies to "conditionalize" their knowledge by knowing when certain concepts are useful and fluently retrieving the information necessary to solve a problem at hand. This complex knowledge base extends experts' ability to use what they know and to transfer knowledge from one problem or context to another (von Glasersfeld, 1987).

Adult performance along a developmental continuum. The EFF Assessment Consortium has drawn on this understanding of the development of expertise to define and develop a continuum of performance that shows how adults grow and learn throughout their lives, constructing new knowledge, skills, and abilities that allow them to respond flexibly to change. The **EFF Continuum of Performance** enables us to see how competence in a Standard develops along multiple dimensions as learners move from the novice to the expert level. Four key **Dimensions of Performance** distinguish performance along this developmental continuum for each of the EFF Standards: the **Knowledge Base, Fluency, Independence,** and **Range** dimensions. Understanding these Dimensions of Performance helps teachers to plan instruction, as well as to determine *how well* students are able to use the skills and knowledge associated with each Standard.

For reflection…

- *Can you think of areas in your life as a parent, family member, worker, or community member where you might be considered an expert?*
- *What kinds of knowledge, skills, and strategies have you developed over time?*
- *How do you organize what you know around "big-picture" ideas?*
- *How did you become more fluent and independent in performing this role?*

A richly structured knowledge base includes knowing how to use and apply cognitive and metacognitive strategies.
Our knowledge of what strategies are and how they work in the development of expertise comes out of a strand of cognitive research called information processing (Hartman, 2001; Pressley & Woloshyn, 1995; Greeno, Resnick, & Collins, 1997). This research on how the brain processes information has shown that new content knowledge we acquire is first stored in our short-term memory. However, our short-term memory has only a limited capacity to hold information. We have to process this information in some way or it will fade quickly. Learning strategies are defined as any behavior, thought, or action that allows learners to process information so that it can more efficiently be stored in and later retrieved from long-term memory (Weinstein & Hume, 1998).

Since I began developing performance tasks for EFF, I look at the student's learning process differently…I am much more observant because I have to describe the strategies that students use to apply their knowledge to complete the task. I have learned to watch more carefully and then work to put my observations into words.
—Nancy Gepke, Tacoma, Washington

Experts as good strategy users. Until recently, we have known little about how these strategic processes work since they are often used automatically and unconsciously by experts. However, through closely monitored research asking experts to "think aloud" as they work, we have begun to see how powerfully learning strategies influence expert learning. We now know that these strategies can be explicitly identified and taught to more novice learners (Pressley & Woloshyn, 1995).

Cognitive and metacognitive strategies. Learning strategies can be divided into two basic types. Cognitive strategies help us to remember and organize content information. For example, when we read, we might apply a cognitive strategy to skim the title, pictures, and headings of a text to get the gist of what we will read. We might take notes to help us remember the main points. A good reader will also know when it is possible to skip over sections of text and when it is important to read every word carefully. When learning a large number of facts, a good strategic learner will "study smarter" by working to understand the "big picture" and then dividing the facts into categories through a classification scheme, diagram, or outline.

Metacognitive strategies. Metacognitive strategies consist of knowledge about strategies and about one's own thinking processes. They are the "executive managers" of knowledge and include planning, monitoring, evaluating, and revising one's own thinking (Hartman, 2001). Good metacognitive strategy users engage in an ongoing process of identifying what their prior knowledge of a topic is, what they don't know, and what they need to learn. Metacognitive strategies enable learners to plan and self-regulate their work and to judge under what conditions to apply which cognitive strategies.

Strategy acquisition and EFF. Each of the EFF Content Standards identifies strategies as key components of using the Standard to carry out tasks in everyday life. In addition, cognitive and metacognitive strategies are also being explicitly identified and described as an integral part of the Knowledge Base dimension of the EFF Performance Continuum for each Standard. What the

For reflection…

- *How does your program currently emphasize "knowledge construction" as well as "knowledge acquisition"?*
- *What are some ways your program includes the teaching of cognitive and metacognitive strategies as part of instruction?*
- *Where can you go to get more information about learning strategies and how to teach them?*

strategies are changes as one moves along the developmental continuum from novice toward expert. For example, within the Standard *Read With Understanding*, at the novice level a reader might be expected only to be able to restate what was read. As readers move along the continuum, higher-order processing skills such as synthesis and analysis are required.

DIMENSIONS OF PERFORMANCE	Assessing Learner Performance: *EFF Assessment Consortium (2002) EFF/NRS Data Collection Project Interim Report*
Knowledge Base *What do learners know?*	1. What vocabulary do learners have related to the skill? Related to the subject area? 2. What content knowledge do learners have related to the skill? Related to the subject area? 3. What strategies do learners have for organizing and applying content knowledge? • Can learners recognize or create new relationships or connections? • Can learners identify information that is important to the task/problem? • Understand when information or concepts apply?
Fluency	How fluently can learners perform? • How much effort is required? • How consistently do learners start and finish, getting to the desired outcome? • How well are barriers controlled or overcome?
Independence	How independently can learners perform? • How much help is needed from others? • How much initiative is shown in getting started? • How often do learners generate their own strategies to complete the task?
Range	1. What kinds of tasks do learners carry out? • How complex is the task? • How many different kinds of tasks can learners perform? 2. In what contexts can learners perform? • In what kinds of contexts? • In how many different situations can learners perform?

Scaffolding helps learners to develop their fluency, independence, and range of performance as they move from novice to expert.

Teaching to the zone of proximal development. In addition to developing learners' knowledge base, teachers using an EFF approach also work with learners to develop their fluency, independence, and range of performance. In helping learners to move along the continuum in relationship to these dimensions, EFF teachers have drawn on the work of another thinker whose work is closely associated with constructivist theory: the Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky (Vygotsky, 1978; Dixon-Krauss, 1996; Wertsch, 1991). Vygotsky found that new capabilities in a novice learner are first developed during collaboration with teachers or more competent peers and then internalized to become part of the individual's **mental model** of the world. Vygotsky called the distance between what an individual can accomplish independently and what he or she can accomplish with the help of someone who is more competent the **zone of proximal development**. The role of education, he believed, is to provide learners with experiences that are within their zone of

proximal development—with tasks that are slightly above their level of independent functioning yet can be accomplished with sensitive guidance.

Scaffolding instruction. Vygotsky viewed the social environment as a necessary scaffold or support system that allows a learner to move forward and continue to build new competencies, just as scaffolding is used by a painter to reach parts of a house that would otherwise be out of reach (Berk & Winsler, 1995). In the process of jointly performing a task, the teacher or a more skilled peer can point out links between the task and ones the learner already knows, helping the learner to stretch his or her understanding into the next development level. Within EFF classrooms that use this approach, the teacher's role is to first structure the task and the learning environment so that the demands on the learner are at an appropriately challenging level and then to continually adjust the amount of intervention and the range of tasks to the learner's level of independence and fluency. In this way, teachers can use the developmental continuum as a guide for learning and instruction.

For reflection…

- *In what ways does your program design activities to scaffold instruction?*
- *How might scaffolding be applied in a classroom of multi-level learners?*

Building Expertise in Your Program

Results That Matter: An Approach to Program Quality Using Equipped for the Future (Bingman & Stein, 2001) provides a vision for program-level system reform (referred to as the EFF Quality Model). The **EFF Quality Model** identifies Program Practices that reflect the theoretical foundations of EFF and provides a guidepost by which administrators, teachers, students, and communities can assess their implementation of the EFF Framework. As you reflect on the examples below, think about how your program might answer the questions "What does it mean to practice EFF?" and "What does EFF implementation look like in action?"

EXAMPLE 1:
Teachers and students use the EFF Framework to examine prior knowledge, to construct new knowledge in light of their past experiences, and to use this information and their thinking processes to monitor, develop, and alter their understanding.

Jenny Bolte is a teacher in a worksite-based program in Virginia. One of her students, a carpenter's helper named Donnie, initially came to the program to work on his reading skills. Before learning how to use the EFF Framework, Jenny might simply have tested Donnie to find out his reading level and then found workplace literacy materials he could read, accompanied by comprehension questions he could answer. Instead, Jenny started off by introducing Donnie to the Worker Role Map and Common Activities. The language of the Worker Role Map helped Donnie begin to talk about a pressing and immediate problem he was facing. His supervisor wanted him to go for a promotion to First-Class Carpenter. Donnie was not sure if he wanted to do so or not. He didn't know what was involved and wasn't sure whether his skills were up to the task.

Jenny introduced Donnie to the EFF Content Standards. It became clear to both of them that the Standard *Learn Through Research* might give Donnie the tools to help him make a decision about the promotion. The first component of the Standard

Learn through Research
- Pose a question to be answered or make a prediction about objects or events.
- Use multiple lines of inquiry to collect information.
- Organize, evaluate, analyze, and interpret.

helped him to think about what he already knew about being a First-Class Carpenter and what he needed to find out. The second component encouraged him to use multiple lines of inquiry to collect information. He decided first to talk with people at work. Jenny recommended Duke West, the HR Maintenance Training Coordinator. Donnie agreed. "Who else?" she questioned. After some thinking, he said, "How about Sid?" They decided his co-worker Sid would be a "good one to ask" as well. Jenny suggested they also try to get a copy of the training manual for the job so they could analyze what kinds of reading and writing the job required. Once all the information was collected, Jenny would help Donnie with the third component: organizing, evaluating, analyzing, and interpreting what he had learned in order to make his decision about whether to go for the job.

In her work with Donnie, Jenny used a constructivist approach to teaching and learning that allowed Donnie to use his prior knowledge to construct new knowledge related to a real-world purpose. Instead of using a textbook, they had arrived at the content for instruction through an interaction between the EFF Framework and Donnie's understanding of his immediate needs. Since what Donnie wanted to learn was rooted in a real-life context, a much wider repertoire of skills came into play. To complete this task, Donnie needed to develop his reading and writing skills, but he was doing so in light of real-world needs and applications. His reading material was the training manual for his job. His writing tasks included drafting and revising questions for interviews and making a "pros and cons" chart to analyze his findings. When they were done, Jenny would help Donnie reflect on what he had accomplished: to look more closely at the knowledge, skills, and learning strategies he had used to complete this task; to think about how he might transfer what he had learned to other parts of his life; and to determine what he wanted to learn next.

For reflection…

- *How is Jenny's approach to teaching and learning similar to or different from your own?*
- *How might Donnie have changed his view of himself as a learner as a result of this experience?*
- *What kinds of program practices support or hinder a constructivist approach to instruction?*

EXAMPLE 2:
Teachers and students use the EFF Framework to identify, reflect on, and revise their own mental models of adult role performance.

Many adult learners come to the classroom with existing mental models of themselves that create a barrier to learning. An example can be seen in the story Marty Duncan told of her work with E. W., who came to a Vermont literacy program a year after having lost her husband of 30 years. For years, E. W. had depended on her husband for assistance with reading and had held a lifelong belief that her own "thick-headedness" was the reason she hadn't learned how to read. She lacked content knowledge with respect to reading, but she also was not able to use what she did know because she lacked strategies for when and how to apply her knowledge of reading. Marty scaffolded E. W.'s learning by connecting reading and writing to something she already knew about: grocery lists. At the same time, she also helped E. W. to examine her knowledge of herself as a learner and to develop metacognitive strategies for overcoming her internal barriers to comprehension. Slowly, as E. W. learned how to reflect on her success at remembering what she learned, she also became a more independent learner more and more willing to suggest next steps. By focusing on reading skills *along with* metacognitive strategies to revise and monitor her own learning, E. W. was able to overcome her internal barriers to learning.

For reflection…

- *How might the learning outcomes for E. W. have been different if Marty had focused on reading skills alone, without building in a process for her to identify and revise her mental model of herself as a learner?*
- *How have you worked with students who have been able to change their mental models of adult role performance? What kinds of teaching and learning made this change possible?*

EXAMPLE 3: Teachers use the EFF Framework to help learners develop their fluency, independence, and range of performance as they move from novice to expert.

EFF Trainer Andy Nash describes an EFF classroom in Chula Vista, California, where a group of adult English language learners expressed a need to find out more about affordable eye care. Their teacher, Judy Wurtz, turned to two Standards, *Learn Through Research* and *Speak So Others Can Understand*, to guide the development of these skills in a project where students researched available low-cost eye exams and glasses.

Since these students had limited English language skills, the teacher broke the learning activities down into a series of discrete steps. She used guided language scripts and worksheets to scaffold each step. For example, in the first step, the learners practiced using the yellow pages and then worked in teams to find telephone numbers of eye care centers in a phone book. Next, the learners developed and practiced scripts for what to say when they phoned the eye care center. They then made phone calls. Judy helped learners to develop a simple chart to keep track of the information they got from the calls. The class even attended a community event where they made contact with an agency participating in a national project to provide eye care for students. As they worked together, Judy was helping her students to gain the independence and fluency they needed to perform this task on their own. That many succeeded is evidenced by Judy's report in her teaching log that eight students received eye appointments and most of them got glasses. As a next step, Judy might consider having learners think about expanding their range of performance by using similar skills to make other kinds of appointments in their roles as parents, family members, workers, or citizens.

For reflection…

- *This teacher used a performance-based approach to teaching ESOL learners. How might the use of performance-based instruction help your students to develop their fluency, independence, and range of performance on tasks they need for everyday life?*

Glossary

Cognitive strategies: Any behavior, thought, or action a learner engages in during learning that is intended to influence the acquisition, storage in memory, integration, or availability for future use of new knowledge and skills. (See Weinstein & Hume, 1998, p. 12; Pressley & Woloshyn, 1995.)

Constructivism: A theory of learning and knowing that holds that learning is an active process of knowledge construction in which learners build on prior knowledge and experience to shape meaning and construct new knowledge. (See Lambert & Walker, 1995.)

Continuum of Performance: A multidimensional, developmental description of performance on an EFF Standard ranging from the novice level to the expert level. The continuum is built around the four Dimensions of Performance, and performance levels are defined by identifying key features of performance at various points along the continuum. (See Stein, 2000, pp. 58-59.)

Dimensions of Performance: The theoretical foundation, based in cognitive science, on which the EFF Continuum of Performance for each skill is built. The Dimensions of Performance identify developmental differences in performance on the EFF Standards related to four areas: (1) structure of the knowledge base, (2) fluency of performance, (3) independence of performance, and (4) range of conditions for performance. (See Stein, 2000, pp. 59-60; Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 1999.)

- **Structure of the knowledge base:** The organization and application of knowledge, skills, and strategies evidenced in performance.
- **Fluency of performance:** The ease, fluidity, and/or automaticity evidenced in performance.
- **Independence of performance:** The degree of initiative and self-reliance evidenced in performance.
- **Range of conditions for performance:** The degree to which tasks and task contexts are familiar or unfamiliar to the learner, the extent to which tasks are structured ("scaffolded") or unstructured, and the complexity of tasks.

Metacognitive strategies: Metacognitive strategies consist of knowledge *about* strategies and about one's own thinking processes. They are the "executive managers" of knowledge and include planning, monitoring, evaluating, and revising one's own thinking. (See Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 1999; Hartman, 2001.)

Performance task: A learning activity with embedded assessment that meets learners' purposes and addresses all compo-

nents of an EFF Standard. It informs all steps of the instructional planning, teaching, and assessment cycle. It addresses a real-world activity and can be analyzed according to the Dimensions of Performance. (See Ananda, 2000; McGuire, 2000.)

Scaffolding: The structure and supports a teacher or more knowledgeable helper provides to allow a learner to perform a task he or she cannot yet perform independently. (See Vygotsky, 1978; Dixon-Krauss, 1996; Wertsch, 1991.)

Zone of proximal development: The distance between what an individual can accomplish independently and what he or she can accomplish with the help of someone who is more competent. This concept was first developed by Vygotsky (1978), who saw the role of education as to provide learners with experiences that are within their zone of proximal development—with tasks that are slightly above their level of independent functioning yet can be accomplished with sensitive guidance. (See also Dixon-Krauss, 1996; Wertsch, 1991; Berk & Winsler, 1995.)

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EFF RESEARCH TO PRACTICE NOTE 3

EFF Research Principle: A Contextualized Approach to Curriculum and Instruction

By Marilyn K. Gillespie

What Do We Mean by a Contextualized Approach?

A third key concept underlying Equipped for the Future (EFF) relates to its contextualized approach to curriculum and instruction. Instead of first teaching skills and knowledge separated from their context and hoping that learners will *end up* knowing how to transfer what they have learned to life outside the classroom, EFF teachers start with real-life contexts and weave these contexts into every stage of the teaching and learning process. Instruction and assessment are aimed directly at the skills and knowledge adults need to perform tasks they have identified as important and meaningful to them "right now" in their everyday lives. The focus is on the *application* rather than on the possession of basic skills and knowledge (Merrifield, 2000).

The contextualized approach to instruction draws on the same body of cognitive research described in *Research to Practice Notes 1* and *2*. Of key importance for this principle is research on the transfer of learning. Research shows that learning transfers from one context to another more effectively when the learner understands not only the facts but also the "big picture"—the underlying principles, patterns, and relationships—that is acquired through the application of knowledge (Glaser, 1992; Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 1999; Greeno, Resnick, & Collins, 1997). This contextualized approach is also based on the recognition that the development of expertise requires that a learner develop not only content but also procedural knowledge, such as the metacognitive awareness of when and how to apply what has been learned. This kind of knowledge can be acquired only through practice (Pressley & Woloshyn, 1995; Hartman, 2001).

A contextualized approach to instruction also stresses the social nature of real-world activities (Wenger, 1998; Lave & Wenger, 1991), the value of building a learning community within the classroom, and the importance of incidental learning that takes place when knowledge and skills are acquired within a social context. For example, when the skill of "filling out forms" grows out of an immediate real-world need of immigrant learners and is addressed in a community of learners, issues such as understanding the conditions under which filling out forms is necessary, when and how to call in an "expert" such as a lawyer, and the benefits and drawbacks of asking family members for assistance become part of the curriculum. This *Research to Practice Note* focuses on the following key assumptions:

- **Effective learning requires not only the acquisition but also the *active application* of knowledge, skills, and processes.**
- **To encourage transfer to other contexts, effective learning requires the acquisition of a complex knowledge base including content knowledge, skills, and cognitive and metacognitive strategies.**
- **Learning is a function not only of the activity itself but also of the context and culture in which it takes place.**

The EFF publication *Results That Matter: An EFF Approach to Quality* presents five key principles that reflect the theoretical foundations of EFF. Program practices that support these principles provide guideposts by which programs, teachers, students, and their communities can assess their implementation of the EFF Framework. They help practitioners to better answer the questions "What does it mean to practice EFF?" and "What does EFF implementation look like in action?" These *Research to Practice Notes* will help you to:

- identify the research basis for the principles;
- learn key concepts and terms associated with the principles;
- see examples of how other programs have implemented the program practices;
- reflect on how you and your program can implement the program practices.

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Designs for Learning Environments

The authors of *How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience, and School* (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 1999) identified the following as key components that work together to make up a contextualized and mutually supportive learning system:

■ **Learner-centered environments.** Effective learning begins with what learners bring to the environment; this includes cultural practices and beliefs, as well as knowledge of academic content. Evidence shows that learners use their current knowledge to construct new knowledge and what they know and believe at the moment affects how they interpret new information.

■ **Knowledge-centered environments.** The ability to think and solve problems requires that knowledge of a subject area be accessible and linked to current understanding. Designs for subject area study should help students learn with understanding instead of promoting the acquisition of disconnected sets of facts and skills.

■ **Assessment-centered environments.** Students' thinking must be made visible, and feedback must be provided on an ongoing basis to give them the opportunity to revise and improve the quality of their thinking and understanding. The kinds of assessment chosen should reflect their learning goals.

■ **Community-centered environments.** The learning environment should promote a sense of community. Classroom norms should encourage students to learn from one another and support one another's improvement. Learning in school should be connected with outside learning activities.

What Research Says about Contextualized Learning

Effective learning requires not only the acquisition but the *active application* of knowledge, skills, and processes.

In recent years, an accumulating body of research evidence has demonstrated that the acquisition of content-related knowledge and skills alone is not sufficient for the development of expertise. To move from novice to expert levels of performance or competence, learners need to acquire both content knowledge and procedural knowledge related to when and how to apply what has been learned. (Procedural knowledge, including cognitive and metacognitive strategies, is described in *Research to Practice Note 2.*) Since procedural knowledge deals with the processing and application of skills, it can be learned only through action. For example, to develop procedural knowledge related to science, students need to simulate the kinds of activities real scientists do. To learn math, students need to think and act like mathematicians (von Glasersfeld, 1987; Glaser, 1992; Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 1999). These same principles apply to workforce education, where nationwide studies (Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills, 1991; Carnevale & Porro, 1994) have confirmed that acquiring job-related content and basic academic skills is not enough to prepare adults and youth to be effective on the job. Just as important are interpersonal, decision-making, and planning skills and the knowledge of when and how to apply these skills within the social context of the workplace. These skills require instructional approaches that focus on cooperative learning, apprenticeship models, and teamwork (Grubb, 1997; Kerka, 1997; National Association of Manufacturers, 2001).

Within adult education, the concept of contextualized learning is not new. Sticht (1997) describes how as early as the 1940s, the armed forces had begun to contextualize instruction to reflect the everyday life experiences of soldiers. Functional context instruction (Sticht et al., 1974), instruction based on learners' immediate needs and "life skills" (Knowles, 1980), and the importance of teaching for transfer (Mikulecky, Albers, & Peers, 1994) have been advocated by adult educators since the early 1970s.

The EFF development team drew on this knowledge base to develop its field research process (Stein, 2000). Adult learners, teachers, program directors, and content experts from around the United States engaged in an intensive process of mapping what adults commonly need to know and do to be effective in everyday

life. The EFF Role Maps, Common Activities, and Content Standards that grew out of this process provide teachers with the tools through which to help learners identify their broad purposes and immediate needs. Once these needs have been identified, teachers can work backwards to determine the knowledge, skills, and strategies learners need to accomplish the tasks. Only then do they reach the step of developing learning activities.

For reflection…

- *Think about a situation where you had a chance to learn through the active application of knowledge and skills. What difference did it make to what and how you learned?*

To encourage transfer to other contexts, effective learning requires acquiring a knowledge base of content knowledge, skills, and strategies.

To prepare adults for the future requires making sure that learning will transfer from one setting to another. The process of adapting what one has learned in one context to new problems and settings in another is known as the **transfer of learning**. Many approaches to instruction may look the same if learners are simply tested on the facts they have memorized. But approaches can differ considerably in how they foster learning transfer (Donovan, Bransford, & Pellegrino, 1999). Research has shown that knowledge learned only at the level of rote memory rarely transfers. Transfer is most likely to occur when the learner knows and understands both the facts and the "big picture"—the underlying principles that can be applied to problems in new contexts. This understanding requires acquiring a deeper knowledge base of the basic patterns, relationships, and principles related to the information. For example, the fact that a learner has memorized the parts of a typical business memo and how to punctuate sentences does not mean he will know how to use this information on the job. To do so requires that he understand the various purposes for writing memos at his workplace and how to organize and tailor what is written for different kinds of audiences. This process is also enhanced by the explicit identification and development of cognitive and metacognitive strategies.

How the EFF approach encourages transfer. The EFF Role Maps and Common Activities are important tools for promoting transfer. Using EFF, learners begin an instructional cycle by thinking about what they need to know and be able to do within and across their key life roles, such as within the family, at work, and in the community. In selecting a task to work on within one of those roles, they are guided to first look at the "big-picture" issues. For example, if they name writing memos at work as a goal, they are encouraged to examine why, to whom, and in what contexts they need to send memos before moving on to decide on a learning activity that will allow them to practice the basic skills associated with memo writing. While they are learning, they reflect on and monitor the cognitive and metacognitive skills

Students develop flexible understanding of when, where, why, and how to use their knowledge to solve new problems if they learn how to extract underlying themes and principles from their learning exercises. Understanding how and when to put knowledge to use—known as conditions of applicability—is an important characteristic of expertise.

—Bransford, Brown, & Cocking (1999)

Learners are not always able to readily identify what they are learning when using a contextual approach. Teachers use the EFF skills wheel posted in the classroom to help students identify what they have learned. Following activities, learners discuss what they have learned and how they can apply it in the various roles that they play. This approach has been particularly useful in helping learners solve difficulties in their lives. The teachers have been able to use the skills wheel to help break the challenge into manageable pieces and prioritize. In this way, learners have been able to experience increased success in resolving personal difficulties while identifying skills they possess and need to develop.

—Robin Stanton, Tacoma, Washington

For reflection…

- *Think of a situation where you have transferred knowledge or a skill learned in one context to a new context. What helped you to do so?*
- *How do you help your learners transfer what they have learned? How could you use the EFF Framework to encourage transfer of learning?*

I used to plan so that a specific learning activity would take up the hour and a half that I spent with a student; a full circle, beginning to end. I felt that this was to the student's advantage—the preview, presentation of new concepts or materials, and then closure…[Now] I like to think of activities less as a series of closed circles and more as an educational spiral. I can link one week's lessons to the next simply by considering student work as moving toward "independent action" or attaining greater "voice." With overarching views such as that, I can begin to think of my work with students as fitting a continuum of learning, which is the way I like to view attainment of literacy in general.

—Jim Carabell, Burlington, Vermont

As a family literacy program, we taught GED competencies in the context of parenting. This approach seems to make a lot of sense, since competencies break down learning into manageable chunks. Learners saw success. What they didn't see was the big picture: How these individual successes "fit" in terms of broader roles…The switch to standards-based education meant focusing on the skills, rather than the specific context…Our curriculum spirals around the skills, revisiting them within new contexts in each of the three roles. We now measure student achievement in the ability to transfer skills learned in one role to another: the ability to apply skills across contexts.

—Jane Meyer, Canton, Ohio

they are using. Once the activity is completed, learners are often asked to go back again to the Role Maps to investigate how what they have learned might transfer to other roles they play in life. For example, learners might be asked to brainstorm how what they have learned about memo writing could apply to sending notes to a child's teacher or to work they do in the community.

Learning is a function not only of the activity itself but also of the context and culture in which it takes place. Lave and Wenger (1991) point out that because our lives are social, so are our experiences and the processes by which we come to understand them. Their research has shown that, far from being a trivial matter, the social nature of learning is a central aspect of education (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Learning always takes place within a specific social context. The classroom, the teacher, the culture of the school, and the broader community influence how people construct their definition of education and what it can do for them (Street, 1999). They learn to develop an identity within the community at the same time as they master new knowledge and skills. In teacher-directed classrooms where there is little interaction among students, students may come to see learning as something imposed by an "expert" rather than learning to see themselves as lifelong learners who construct knowledge for themselves. Within EFF-based classrooms, the aim is to design a learning environment that is simultaneously community centered, learner centered, and knowledge centered (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 1999; see "Designs for Learning Environments" on page 2). In these contexts, learners are encouraged to work as a collaborative team to identify and solve problems—just as scientists, mechanics, nurses, musicians, citizen group members, and parents do in everyday life. It is through these kinds of collaborative experiences that adults can come to see that learning is a process of continually transforming and being transformed by social experience (Gee, 1999).

Curriculum development as an iterative process. Planning for contextualized learning requires that teachers make a fundamental shift in their understanding of what it means to plan curricula and instruction. Instead of mapping out all the prerequisite knowledge and skills students need and planning lessons *before* discovering learners' immediate needs (Nelson & Hammerman, 1996), teachers begin with tasks learners need immediately in their daily lives and then "back into" the knowledge, skills, and strategies required to perform those tasks. This does not mean that basic skills are not covered, but they are addressed in an iterative rather than a sequential manner. These same processes

apply to curriculum development in which skills are cycled and recycled across a series of tasks. This approach allows EFF teachers to avoid the common problem of teaching a curriculum that is "a mile wide and an inch deep" (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 1999) and allows learners to develop a deeper understanding of the "big-picture" ideas and real-life applications.

For reflection…

- *What approach do you take to curriculum planning? How can an iterative planning approach help you to contextualize instruction?*

Putting Contextualized Learning to Work in Your Program

Results That Matter: An Approach to Program Quality Using Equipped for the Future (Bingman & Stein, 2001) provides a vision for program-level system reform (referred to as the EFF Quality Model). The **EFF Quality Model** identifies Program Practices that reflect the theoretical foundations of EFF and provides a guidepost by which administrators, teachers, students, and communities can assess their implementation of the EFF Framework. As you reflect on the examples below, think about how your program might answer the questions "What does it mean to practice EFF?" and "What does EFF implementation look like in action?"

EXAMPLE 1:
Teachers and students use the EFF Framework to construct contextualized learning opportunities that focus on the development and practice of skills the students need to carry out activities and accomplish purposes in their lives.

Karen Hippert, an ABE teacher and EFF field researcher in Ohio, describes how the idea for a learning activity arose out of a class discussion about planning for a class trip. Karen and her students had been working together for some time and decided they would like to take a trip together. Karen knew that many of her students wanted to improve their math skills but often found math hard, boring, and disconnected from their everyday lives. She used the opportunity of the class trip to suggest to the group that they plan ahead to figure out how much the trip would cost. This was a foreign concept for all the students in her class. None of them had ever applied their math skills to advance planning. Yet Karen knew that financial planning was a "big-picture" concept related to mathematical problem solving in many contexts.

Karen looked at the Standard *Use Math to Solve Problems and Communicate*. The Components of Performance for the Standard helped guide her in planning the activity: Understand, interpret, and work with pictures, numbers, and symbolic information; Apply knowledge of mathematical concepts and procedures to figure out how to answer a question, solve a problem, make a prediction, or carry out a task that has a mathematical dimension; Define and select data to be used in solving the problem; Determine the degree of precision required by the situation; Solve the problem using appropriate quantitative procedures and verify that the results are reasonable; and Communicate the results using a variety of mathematical representations, including graphs, charts, tables, and algebraic models.

With this as a guide, Karen and her students developed the activity. They began by learning how to use a mileage chart. They applied their knowledge of multiplication and division to figuring out the mileage for their trip. They also spent some time looking at when and where estimation might be a better strategy to get at an answer

For reflection…

- *How was what these students learned different from what they might have learned by simply solving problems related to calculating mileage in a math book?*
- *What might Karen do next to help learners see how the skills they had learned might apply to other kinds of planning?*

quickly. Next they learned how to read and make their own graphs and charts to compare information related to different modes of travel and vehicles. Many were surprised at what they found out about the relative costs of different kinds of travel.

As they completed the activity, Karen asked them to think about how what they had learned might transfer to other contexts. *Suddenly*, Karen observed, *it dawned on them that they could use math for all kinds of planning.* By contextualizing instruction in a real-life application, Karen's students had broken through to a new understanding of the importance of math.

EXAMPLE 2:
Teachers use the EFF Framework to integrate "found lessons" that arise from in-class or out-of-class student needs into an overall learning plan.

Jim Carabell (1999) describes how he helped one of his students to see how important and meaningful learning activities can be "found" in the events of everyday life. One day, after beginning a math lesson with Tammy, a 22-year-old single Vermont parent working toward her GED, she mentioned that a state trooper might interrupt their lesson that day. She told Jim how she was in the process of trying to untangle herself from the complications of buying a $500 car from her brother, who, through a series of events, didn't hold the title. Jim stopped what he was doing and began helping Tammy to fill out the papers she had received from the trooper at the police barracks. Together they wrote an explanatory letter to the DMV, made a couple of informational phone calls, and copied and mailed the key information to the DMV. At the end of their time together, Jim was able to show Tammy how much she had learned through this "unintentional" lesson. Tammy saw that she had achieved some of her broader purposes for learning. She had learned to gain access to information, give voice to her opinions, and act independently. What's more, she had worked in some detail on three EFF Standards: *Convey Ideas in Writing*, *Learn through Research*, and *Solve Problems and Make Decisions.* As Tammy considered how she might use these writing, research, and problem-solving skills in other parts of her life, such as in her role as a parent, she expanded her mental model of learning and became aware that her time with Jim had indeed not been wasted.

For reflection…

- *Can you think of a situation where you were able to turn a real-life situation into a "found lesson"?*
- *In what other ways can teachers use the EFF Framework to place "found lessons" into a meaningful context for adult learners?*

EXAMPLE 3:
Students use the EFF Framework to identify skills learned and practiced through real-world learning activities.

Although in many programs teachers and learners decide to work on a single standard together, in other cases a contextualized learning activity can be designed to allow learners to address different standards while working on the same activity. For example, when learners at the Canton, Ohio, Even Start Program decided to set up a family math night for their elementary school, they divided into committees based on their learning goals. Octavia, who had set a math goal, volunteered to be on the budget committee. Rosa, who had a writing goal, served on the committee that wrote a proposal to the principal requesting permission to do the project. Lou, who wanted to improve her computer skills, helped create a flyer to advertise the program. After the project was over, the program provided learners with a form to help them reflect on what they could do now that they could not do before. Octavia noted that although she already knew how to add, subtract, and multiply decimals, she had not known how to use those skills to prepare a formal budget. Already she had used what she had

For reflection…

- *How did the context and culture in which this activity took place help learners to see how they could transfer what they had learned?*

learned to develop a personal budget at home. Rosa wrote that this had been the first time she had written anything that would be read by someone as important as a principal. She realized that she had good ideas she could express through writing. Learning in a real-life context had made it easier for these students to see how they could transfer what they had learned to other contexts. (Meyer, 1999)

Glossary

Cognitive strategies: Any behavior, thought, or action a learner engages in during learning that is intended to influence the acquisition, storage in memory, integration, or availability for future use of new knowledge and skills. (See Weinstein & Hume, 1998, p. 12; Pressley & Woloshyn, 1995.)

Common Activities: The term EFF uses to refer to those activities that adults perform in all three roles (worker, family member, community member). The EFF team identified the 13 Common Activities by looking across the Broad Areas of Responsibility, the Key Activities, and the Role Indicators for each Role Map. (See Stein, 2000, p. 14; Merrifield, 2000, pp. 33-34.)

Constructivism: A theory of learning and knowing that holds that learning is an active process of knowledge construction in which learners build on prior knowledge and experience to shape meaning and construct new knowledge. (See Lambert & Walker, 1995.)

Content Standards: The term used in a variety of fields to describe what individuals need to know and be able to do for a particular purpose. In EFF, the 16 Content Standards identify what adults need to know and be able to do in order to meet their goals for learning and to be effective in their adult roles. Each EFF Content Standard consists of the title of the standard and the Components of Performance for that standard. (See *EFF Standards*, Stein, 2000, pp. 19-20.)

EFF Quality Model: A vision of what system reform at the program level looks like using EFF Standards. The EFF tools, foundational theory and research, expected program practices, and predicted short- and long-term outcomes are presented and explained in the publication *Results That Matter: An Approach to Program Quality Using Equipped for the Future* (Bingman & Stein, 2001). Ordering and downloading information can be found at http://www.nifl.gov/lincs/collections/eff/eff_publications.html.

Iterative: A term used in research to refer to the repetition of a cycle of processes with an eye toward moving ever more closely toward desired results. In EFF, the term is used to describe how EFF has progressively refined the concepts and components of EFF through research, feedback from customers (learners, practitioners, stakeholders, and policy-makers), incorporation of research developments in related areas, and further feedback from customers. (See Merrifield, 2000, pp. 4, 7-8.)

Metacognitive strategies: Metacognitive strategies consist of knowledge *about* strategies and about one's own thinking processes. They are the "executive managers" of knowledge and include planning, monitoring, evaluating, and revising one's own thinking. (See Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 1999; Hartman, 2001.)

Role Map: A publicly agreed to, explicit, consensus depiction of the adult roles of worker, parent/family member, and citizen/community member. For each adult role, the Role Map provides definitions of the Broad Areas of Responsibility, Key Activities, and Role Indicators, which describe, not *prescribe*, effective performance in the role. (See Stein, 2000, pp. 8-13.)

Transfer of learning: The ability to extend or adapt what has been learned in one context to new problems and settings. Research has shown that when a subject is learned in *multiple* contexts, with opportunities to abstract general principles, transfer to new situations is increased. (See Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 1999; Stein, 2000, p. 20.)

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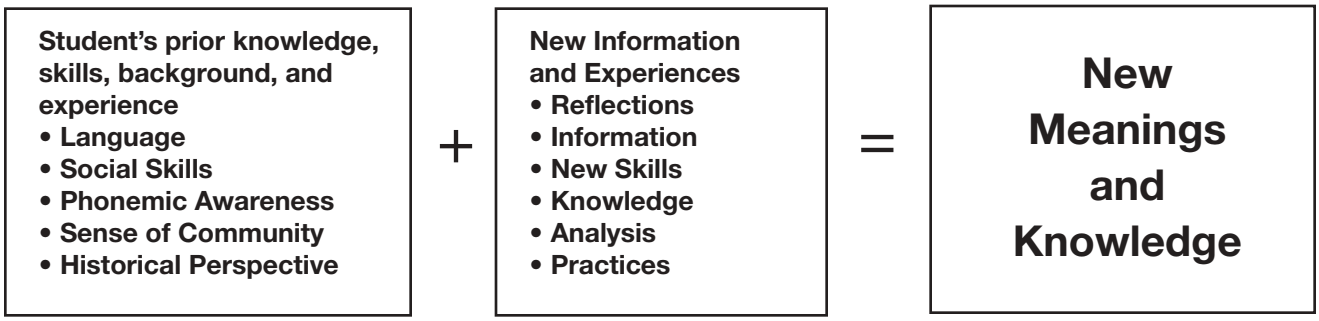
HANDOUT 2.10

Constructivist Learning

Building Expertise

Constructivism, in educational theory and practice, means that learning is a process of constructing new meanings in which prior knowledge and experiences are the basic building blocks for building expertise. Constructivism is a theory of learning and of knowing. For additional background information, see *EFF Research to Practice Note 2* in the Appendix. From conception, the human brain accumulates and stores knowledge, information, and skills which become the basic building blocks for understanding and making sense of the world. As knowledge and experience are added, a person gains new understanding and perspective. A teacher who approaches teaching and learning from a constructivist standpoint starts by finding out what learners already know and have experienced that relates to a topic or idea and helps the students build on that knowledge and experience to gain new concepts, information, and skills. The teaching and learning process is interactive and dynamic. Review the chart below which illustrates a constructivist learning process.

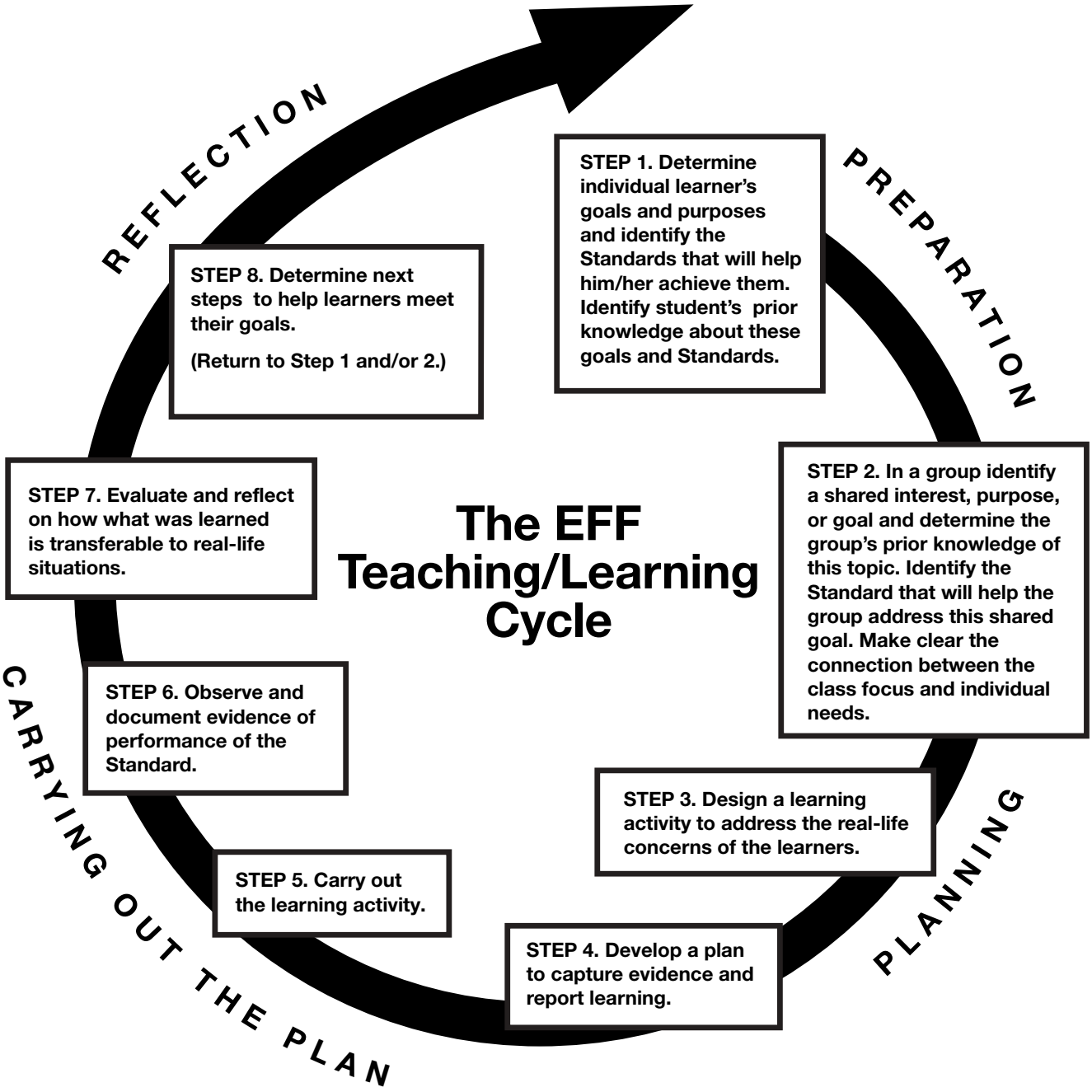
Constructivist Learning Process



Constructivist teaching and learning is a process of discovery. It is one in which teachers and students use the EFF framework to identify, reflect on, and revise their own mental models of adult role performance. For example, the EFF Standards show the various components of a particular skill. The students and teacher can review those components of performance and decide what's already known about the skill and what needs to be learned or improved. This review and reflection process is the first step in constructivist teaching and learning.

HANDOUT 2.11

EFF Teaching and Learning Cycle



HANDOUT 2.12

EFF Teaching and Learning Cycle Grid

EFF Teaching/Learning Cycle Steps	Implications for Administrators	Changes or Program Improvements
1. Determine individual learner's goals and purposes and identify the Standards that will help him/her achieve them. Identify student's prior knowledge about these goals and Standards.	*For example:* Students complete an interest survey.	*For example:* Discuss student goals at intake and share with teachers who will use to plan with students.
2. In a group identify a shared interest, purpose or goal and determine the group's prior knowledge of this topic. Identify the Standard that will help the group address this shared goal. Make clear the connection between the class focus and individuals' needs.		
3. Design a learning activity to address the real-life concerns of the learner(s).		
4. Develop a plan to capture evidence and report learning.		
5. Carry out the learning activity.		
6. Observe and document evidence of performance of the Standard.		
7. Evaluate and reflect on how what was learned is transferable to real-life situations?		
8. Determine next steps to help learners meet their goals. *(Return to Step 1 and/or 2)*		

HANDOUT 2.13

Active, Purposeful and Contextual: Assessment in the EFF Classroom

—by Joan Benz

I am an instructor of adult basic skills and GED at the Bethel Family Learning Center in Eugene, Oregon. Over the last two years I have been involved with teaching and assessing using the Equipped for the Future (EFF) Framework. EFF, an initiative of the National Institute for Literacy, was developed to answer the complex question: What do adults need to know and be able to do in order to carry out their roles and responsibilities as workers, parents and family members, and citizens and community members? (NIFL, *Equipped for the Future Content Standards*, 2000). EFF Standards have been identified through a careful research process that began with adult learners and has included administrators, practitioners, tutors, and policy makers as well as experts from adult education, literacy, workforce development, and other stakeholder systems.

The 16 EFF Standards represent the core skills needed for effective adult performance in the three major adult roles in today's rapidly changing world and are a new definition of literacy for the 21st century. The EFF Standards Framework includes:

- Four purposes of learning defined by adult students: *Access to Information, Voice, Independent Action, and Building a Bridge to the Future.*
- Role maps that define what effective adults need to know and do to carry out their responsibilities. The three role maps are worker, parent/family, and citizen/community member.
- Common activities that cross all three roles.
- 16 standards that support effective performance in the three roles to achieve the four purposes.

EFF is very exciting to use in class because it is based on input from adult learners and therefore is very meaningful to my students. Learning in an EFF classroom is active, purposeful, and contextual. Students are very much in control of their own learning.

Classroom activities are developed around performance tasks. Performance tasks are real-life activities that allow students to demonstrate performance of one or more of the EFF Standards. An example of a performance task would be a group of activities that students would do to be able to convey ideas in writing (an EFF Standard) in a letter to their child's teacher. Learning activities would address components of performance or skills needed to be able to use the standard for a meaningful purpose. Here are the components of the Standard, *Convey Ideas in Writing*, (NIFL 2000):

- Determine the purpose for communicating.
- Organize and present information to serve the purpose, context, and audience.
- Pay attention to conventions of English language usage, including grammar, spelling, and sentence structure, to minimize barriers to reader's comprehension.
- Seek feedback and revise to enhance the effectiveness of the communication.

A well-structured performance task will address all these components.

There is still a point to consider. How do I know that my students are learning? A paper and pencil test will not capture what these students know and are able to do. The EFF Framework addresses assessment as movement along a continuum of learning. As people learn, they increase their knowledge, fluency, independence, and range in using a skill. EFF refers to these as four dimensions of performance. Each dimension helps describe not only what people know, but also how well they can use what they know (NIFL, 2000).

This is where, for me, instruction and assessment combine. Using the four dimensions of performance allows me to think about what skills are needed to per-

form the task and to look at where student skill levels are related to these dimensions before and after the task.

Knowledge Base
- What vocabulary do learners have related to the skill?
- What content knowledge to the learners have related to the skill?
- What strategies do learners have for organizing and applying content knowledge?

Fluency
- How much effort is required?

Independence
- How much help is needed from others?

Range
- In how many different contexts can learners perform?
- How many different tasks can the learner do using the skill?

One way I learned to better understand these dimensions of performance was to think about something I was learning: in my case it was learning to swing dance.

When I first started out I really didn't have much of a knowledge base—just what was in the catalog. As I learned, I picked up vocabulary (basic step, loop pass, etc.) and got better at organizing what I was learning by being able to put these steps together. Fluency was a big problem when starting out. I had to count and concentrate on each step. As I got better, some of the steps became automatic. At first I had a hard time learning from watching and needed the instructor to demonstrate the steps by being my partner. My independence grew as I gained confidence and didn't need as much "hands on" support. My range of performance is still limited. I haven't danced anywhere other than the classroom. My goal is to be able to dance (and enjoy it) at my son's wedding next summer. I have a ways to go, but I can see that I am learning and improving.

This is a lot of information for a short article, and I have to say that I certainly don't have all the components working together smoothly in my classroom yet. However, using EFF as a framework for assessment and instruction has allowed me to become a more intentional and informed instructor and learner.

The late Joan Benz was an instructor of adult basic skills and GED at the Bethel Family Learning Center in Eugene, Oregon. EFF is an initiative of the National Institute for Literacy. For more information about EFF, visit **www.nifl.gov/lincs/collections/eff/eff.html**

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HANDOUT 2.14

Assessment, Accountability and Program Improvement: Background and Case in Point 4

Background:

In a quality program, assessment and instruction are aligned. Administrators need to know how student assessment is currently done and what needs to happen to move towards an approach that is grounded in cognitive science research on the development of expertise. In order to support the alignment of instruction and assessment, the quality improvement team reviews current assessment practices and compares them with assessment practices based on the EFF Framework. The team also reviews what and how the program collects data and documents student progress in order to identify changes that would improve organizational performance and outcomes.

The question for the team is:

> **How will this agency align assessment with student and program goals and document student progress and change?**

Case in Point:

Students enrolling in the Pierce CommunityBuild Adult Education Center first take a test to determine their reading and math levels. Based on the results of the test, students are placed either in the low-level class or the high-level class. At the end of the quarter, students are re-tested to see if their skills in reading and math have increased. Test data goes to the local community college because they provide some funding to the CommunityBuild Center. The test results help to inform how the community college allocates its resources to various community based organizations like CommunityBuild.

Ms. Franklin teaches the low-level classes and has observed how test results affect the attitudes of many students. Some of the students feel shamed by the test results and become discouraged. After seeing their low scores, some students feel that they have too much to learn and that they will never be able to earn a GED.

Ms. Franklin has been experimenting with the EFF Framework, selecting a Standard that will help the group of students address a real life goal. Recently, the class reviewed the Standard, *Take Responsibility for Learning*. This Standard was relevant to the students' attitudes about learning since they all wanted to take responsibility for their learning. Ms Franklin explained that there are several dimensions on which students need to perform in order to master a standard: the knowledge base, the fluency, the independence, and the range. The class had a lively discussion defining what these dimensions of performance mean to them.

Ms. Franklin had each student create a matrix that listed all of the Standard's components in the vertical column and the four dimensions of performance in the horizontal row. They each selected a particular skill that they wanted to master and did an initial assessment of their knowledge, fluency, independence and range. After three weeks

they created the same matrix to reflect on their progress. The students embraced this way of assessing their progress and felt that it more accurately measured and reflected their learning and abilities. Here is an example of the matrix.

Take Responsibility for Learning	Knowledge	Fluency	Independence	Range
1. Establish learning goals…				
2. Identify own strengths…				
3. Become familiar with a range of learning strategies…				
4. Identify and use strategies appropriate to goals…				
5. Monitor progress toward goals…				
6. Test out new learning in real-life applications.				

HANDOUT 2.15

Questions on Assessment

What kinds of learning are measured?(skills, competencies, etc.)

How is learning measured?

What evidence is gathered to evaluate performance?

How is this evidence used?

Is the learning scored? If so, how?

What is the student's role in the assessment process?

How does assessment connect to instruction?

How does assessment connect to curriculum and content standards?

How does assessment connect to education theory and research?

How are assessment results documented?

HANDOUT 2.16

Current Approach to Assessment

Questions	Current Approach
What kinds of learning are measured? (i.e. skills, competencies, etc.)	
How is learning measured?	
What evidence is gathered to evaluate performance?	
How is this evidence used?	
Is the learning scored? If so, how?	
What is the student's role in the assessment process?	
How does assessment connect to instruction?	
How does assessment connect to curriculum and content standards?	

HANDOUT 2.17

Traditional Versus EFF Approaches to Assessment

	Current Approach	EFF Approach
Construct (what is measured)	Discrete knowledge, skills, or competencies	Integrated knowledge, skills, strategies, and abilities
Task format (how it is measured)	Questions or problems posed in isolation or with a small amount of supporting context, tasks (test items) usually of short duration, and typically require recall and analysis	Task situated in activity that closely mirrors real-world activity, may take place over an extended period of time, and can involve creativity, strategic thinking, and problem-solving
Response format (evidence used to evaluate performance)	Selected response or short, written response, usually collected at one time	Constructed response, oral, written, graphic, and/or behavioral response or performance that may be collected over a period of time (as in a portfolio)
Scoring format	Scored as right or wrong or on a one-dimensional scale (assigned a letter or number grade)	Scored with a rubric that identifies dimensions of performance and qualitative differences in levels of performance
Role of student	Student are not told what the questions will be before the test and typically do not assess their own performance	Students know in advance the nature of the task and how their performance on the task will be evaluated and can self-assess and monitor their own performance
Connection to instruction	Separate from instruction but tests discrete skills or knowledge that are the objects of instruction	Embedded in instructional and learning activities or on-demand tasks that have the same structure as instructional and learning activities
Connection to curriculum and content standards	Assessed knowledge, skills, and abilities may be poorly or incompletely aligned with curriculum and content standards	Assessed knowledge, skills, and abilities are aligned with standards and standards-based curricular content
Connection to theory and research	Content and structure of assessments may be related to skill hierarchies but are typically not derived from a theory of learning, development, or expert performance	Content and structure of the assessments are derived from analyses of adult learner performance, cognitive science models of developing expertise, and adult learning theory

HANDOUT 2.18

Performance Accountability: For What? To Whom? And How?

—by Juliet Merrifield

In everyday life, accountability means responsibility; it means being answerable to someone else for one's actions. We cannot, however, use the term without specifying accountability to whom and for what. In adult basic education (ABE), how we answer the question "to whom" depends a lot on our position in the system. Teachers may answer that they feel answer accountable to their students. Program directors may that they are accountable to their funders and staff as well as to students. State adult education offices may feel accountable to the governor, the legislature, to other state agencies, to workforce development boards, as well as to taxpayers. In addition, no clear consensus exists about "for what" adult education is accountable. Where does the balance lie between providing services and delivering results? Is the main purpose increased literacy proficiency, or are more diffuse social outcomes the emphasis? Until recently, the focus has been on providing services, with little emphasis on the results or the impact of those services. In the last few years, a number of policy initiatives at state and federal levels have begun to shift the emphasis to delivering results, with services seen as the means to an end. But what the "end" should be is by no means clear.

I would like to suggest that developing performance accountability is not just technically challenging but also challenges our values. The key issues do not have purely technical solutions. They require agreement on what is important to us, on what we want out of adult education. If they are to be resolved, they require involvement by the ABE field as a whole.

Adult basic education is facing serious demands from policy-makers and funders to be accountable for its performance. The 1998 Workforce Investment Act (WIA) requires that each state report on performance measures. The emphasis on results shifts attention from simple delivery of services to the outcomes of learning: learning gains measured on standardized tests or social and economic outcomes such as getting a job, getting off welfare, and children's school success. The key issues in the development of performance accountability in adult education are:

- What does good performance mean?
- Do programs have the capacity to be accountable?
- Are the tools commonly used for measuring and documenting performance adequate and useful?
- Are accountability relationships in place to link ABE into a coherent system?

Good Performance

Accountability systems work best if stakeholders — those who have an interest in the outcomes of the system—agree on what success looks like. For adult basic educators, the heart of the matter is our concept of literacy. That concept has shifted over time from reading and writing text to functioning in society, from a simple dichotomy of illiterate/literate to multiliteracies. Brian Street characterizes two broad conceptual notions of literacy. The autonomous model conceives of literacy as a discrete and fixed set of skills, transferable from one context to another. The ideological model conceives of literacy as practices that are sensitive to social context and inherently associated with issues of power and access (Street, 1984).

Much recent research on multi-literacies suggests that there are multiple purposes for literacy and multiple goals and expectations for literacy education (Heath, 1983; Barton, 1994; Street, 1984,1995; Lankshear, 1997; New London Group, 1996). In such an understanding, notions of success must also be multiple. A

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single definition of success—gaining the GED, for example, or getting a job—excludes learners who have different purposes.

Definitions of success should be negotiated among all the stakeholders, learners, and practitioners as well as policymakers and funders. Although the legislative goals of the Workforce Investment Act reflect a majority among lawmakers, other stakeholders—including policy makers, program managers, teachers and students—may focus on other purposes for adult education and look to other measures of good performance.

Next Steps: Agree on Performance

Practitioners can play a role in defining performance within their own states. The WIA requires that each state develop a plan of the performance measures it will use to track results, including but not limited to those required by the Act. Whether explicitly or implicitly, these measures will define what counts for the field. The challenge is to come to an agreement on performance that includes the full diversity of learner and societal purposes. Lessons from the literature and experience in education and other fields suggest states should:

- Invest time and energy in agreeing on what performance means;
- Involve stakeholders and seek consensus;
- Reflect newer understandings of literacy and connect performance with real life; and
- Acknowledge a variety of outcomes as acceptable performance, as a way of including the full diversity of learners and programs.

Capacity to be Accountable

Adult education is trying to develop a national accountability system without having developed the capacity of the service delivery system to document and report results (Moore & Stavrianos, 1995). Plenty of evidence documents the lack of valid, reliable, and useful data about performance (Young et al., 1995; GAO, 1995; Condelli, 1994). These studies suggest some of the most basic data are absent, incomplete, or of low quality.

When asked to report numbers, programs will indeed report numbers. But as the GAO report on adult education says, "the data the Department receives are of questionable value" (GAO, 1995, p. 33). This is not surprising, since staff in programs usually do not use the data, rarely see reports based on them, and see no one else placing any real value on them.

Performance accountability requires investment in the ability of local programs to collect, interpret, and use data to monitor how well they are doing. A number of states such as Pennsylvania, Connecticut, and Arkansas have already begun to develop their capacity for accountability. (For an overview of Pennsylvania's program, Keenan's article.) They consistently learned from their experiences that the key is to get buy-in from programs and practitioners from the beginning (Merrifield, 1998). They are also acutely aware of the problems of deciding what is counted, as well as how it is counted.

What is counted becomes what counts. Many examples of the hazards of counting the wrong things exist. A healthcare delivery system emphasizes cutting the numbers of people on a waiting list for surgery, thus ensuring that people with minor needs get served quickest because more operations for varicose veins than for heart bypasses can be performed in one day. The original performance standards of the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA), an education and training program, emphasized the numbers of people placed in jobs within a specific time frame. This ensured that programs recruit clients who were most qualified and therefore easiest to move into jobs quickly and cheaply (GAO, 1989).

Next Steps: Build Capacity

Two kinds of capacity—to perform and to be accountable—are linked (Merrifield, 1998). By instituting a learning organization approach with feedback loops, performance data can help programs improve performance and increase accountability. Building the capacity to perform involves:

- Increasing resources and focusing them on quality rather than quantity;

- Providing staff development and training and technical support;
- Using performance data for continuous improvement. Building the capacity to be accountable involves ensuring that:
- Accountability demands are commensurate with resources and capacity;
- Users of measurement tools are engaged in their development;
- Staff training and support are provided;
- Information is timely;
- Improved performance is rewarded.

A variety of efforts are already underway to build capacity to perform and to be accountable. Teacher inquiry projects have involved individual teachers in examining their practice and identifying ways to change and develop (Smith & Lytle, 1993). Some programs, such as those described elsewhere in this issue, have been working on their capacity to use data for continuous improvement. Some states have begun efforts to build local program capacity for both performance and accountability. The National Accounting and Reporting System (Condelli, 1998), will be providing training and support on how to use newly revised WIA-related performance measures.

Accountability Tools

For accountability purposes, it is crucial that we collect data that are relevant, adequate, and important. To do so, we need tools—indicators and measures—that we believe in and use well. Indicators and measures are approximations of reality, not reality itself. They can be good, bad, and indifferent. An indicator that measures something unrelated to literacy learning—the number of brown-eyed learners, for example—is irrelevant. An indicator that measures something relevant—the prior learning that students bring, for example—but in an inadequate way, is dangerous. An inability to measure something important—affective changes in learners, for example—can be disastrous.

Some of our current accountability tools are inadequate: what we use to measure literacy gains is one example. Standardized tests are widely used. While such tests have their uses for placement purposes, their validity as measures of performance is questionable (Venezky, 1992). "The research literature raises questions about the validity of standardized tests... and local program staff have questioned the appropriateness of using these assessment to measure program results" (GAO, 1995, p. 24). As yet, however, few alternatives to standardized tests exist. Some programs are using various tools, such as portfolios, that allow learners to demonstrate their learning authentically (Literacy South, 1997), but so far these cannot compare learning between learners and across programs. Without external criteria or standards, authentic assessment will not meet the needs of accountability systems.

How we collect data for accountability is also important. Different approaches to data collection and analysis meet different purposes. A complete performance accountability system would include several approaches: monitoring, evaluation, and research would all have a place.

Monitoring can answer ongoing questions about day-today program operations. What kinds of students are being recruited? How long are they staying? What do they say they want from their learning experiences? How satisfied are they with the program? Monitoring is part of everyday management, providing a routine way for program staff to see how well the program is working.

Evaluation can answer particular questions about program operations at particular points of time. How are learners being served? Are they making progress on their learning goals? Is the program meeting quality standards? Evaluation may include a look at program-monitoring data. It may also involve gathering new data to answer specific questions. Surveys or focus groups are useful evaluation techniques.

Research can answer questions about associations, correlations, and meaning, and often takes a broader focus than one program. Research questions might examine: What are the benefits to individuals and society of participation in adult education? Which program designs are associated with different results? What kinds of resources are needed to support specific program designs? Research may be conducted by out-

side researchers or by practitioners themselves (Quigley & Kuhne, 1997).

Each of these accountability technologies illuminates different aspects of reality. They have different strengths and need to be used appropriately. Carrying them out involves scarce resources, so they should be applied carefully and economically to ensure that the data collected are both useful and used.

Next Steps: Develop New Measurement Tools

New approaches and tools for measurement are needed that are linked to performance. Performance assessment tools enable us to assess literacy practices. For accountability purposes, this more authentic assessment of literacy practices demands that we develop external standards or criteria against which individual student learning can be measured, and through which program performance can be assessed. Initiatives in performance assessment in countries such as Britain and Australia may provide useful models for measuring and assessing learning. We should use the full potential of research, evaluation, and monitoring technologies to meet the needs of different stakeholders.

Mutual Accountability

Underlying all the other issues in performance accountability for ABE is the question of accountability relationships. Traditional approaches to accountability echo Taylorist manufacturing systems, in which quality control checks at the end of the production line ensure that widgets meet product specifications and accountability runs only one way. Assessing outcomes at the end of the production process has its place in quality control systems, but increasingly businesses are turning to more participatory approaches to managing work processes and using production data for continuous improvement (Stagg, 1992).

High performance workplaces build in processes at each stage of production to monitor and improve performance. They involve workers in this monitoring. The business world is now utilizing concepts such as the learning organization: one that facilitates the learning of its members to transform itself continuously (Pedler et al, 1991). This approach is seen as a way of responding to changing environments and multiple demands. This kind of learning and transformation has to be shared and internalized: it cannot be imposed from the top (Stein, 1993). Accountability is shared or mutual.

In ABE, mutual accountability would engage members of the organization in creating a common vision, determining goals and customer expectations, and designing effective means of monitoring processes and results. Every member would be both accountable to others and held accountable by them. Learners would hold teachers, for example, accountable for providing learning opportunities that meet their needs. Teachers, in turn, would hold program directors and funders accountable for providing the resources they need to meet learner needs. These might include materials, space, training, pay for lesson planning and assessment.

Spelling out relationships of mutual accountability reveals some that are overlooked in conventional accountability systems. Congress, for example, holds adult education programs accountable for providing effective and efficient services. But Congress should also be held accountable by programs, by learners, and by voters for identifying a social need, passing appropriate guiding legislation, and providing the resources needed to create a strong adult education system.

Learners should hold their teachers accountable. But programs should also hold learners accountable for taking learning seriously and for making an effort to participate fully.

Businesses who expect adult education to provide them with workers equipped with basic skills might be expected in turn to provide jobs for those workers, or to continue a workplace basic skills program when the grant runs out. Mutual accountability would require all the partners to honor their contracts.

An accountability system based in the concept of mutuality has several characteristics:

- It is negotiated between the stakeholders in a process

that engages all the players in clarifying expectations, designing indicators of success, negotiating information flows, and building capacity.
- Each responsibility is matched with an equal, enabling right: the right to a program that meets one's learning needs with the responsibility to take learning seriously, for example.
- Every player knows clearly and agrees to what is expected of them.
- Every player has the capacity to be held and to hold others accountable.
- Efficient and effective information flows enable all players to hold others accountable.

Inequalities of power and uneven access to information prevent the development of mutual accountability. Learners, for example, cannot become real stakeholders in mutual accountability until they have other ways to effect change beyond dropping out. They will only become part of the structure of accountability when they have real power to make choices. Some community- based programs encourage learner participation in management, with learner representatives sitting on boards, and being involved in management decisions about the program. Many state-level adult learner organizations are working to address the inequalities in power and in access to information, and to strengthen the voice of adult learners in the system.

How information flows is also a central issue in mutual accountability. Without adequate access to information, stakeholders cannot hold others accountable. In traditional information flow designs, information is collected at the base and increasingly summarized for the purposes of different levels on the way up: from program to community, state, and national levels. In this simplistic model, information flows only one way: up the system to the state and national levels. Few people have either access to or the ability to use the data.

This model will not fit the needs of an accountability system that takes into account different performances and purposes and has mutuality as an underlying assumption. A more complex information model should allow information to be generated at all levels and to flow around the system, up, down and across it, among and between different players who use it for specific purposes at specific times.

Next Steps: Develop Mutual Accountability

Reforming accountability requires moving from one-way, top- down lines of accountability to a mutual web of accountability relationships. To make this switch, we must:
- Bring the full range of stakeholder groups into the process—including teachers and learners;
- Provide support for stakeholders who have least access to information and power;
- Increase information flows among and between all stakeholders and make the information transparent (accessible to all);
- Develop learning organizations at the program and state levels that would emphasize learning and continuous improvement, shared responsibility, and engagement in monitoring results.

What Next?

To implement performance accountability well requires agreement on good performance, capacity both to perform and be accountable, new tools to measure performance, and a strong system of mutual accountability relationships. In the business world, high performance is associated with extensive changes in organizational practices, including a broadly understood vision and mission, flatter hierarchies with decision-making pushed as close to the shop floor as feasible, and participation at all levels of the organization in monitoring and improving performance. If ABE is to meet society's need for high performance, it too needs to change. But these changes cannot be implemented from the top alone. They will require federal and state government departments to consult with the field and with stakeholders. They need willingness to learn lessons from the past and from other countries. They demand a commitment of resources to building the capacity of the field. Above all, they call for the contributions of all players, practitioners and learners as well as policymakers and researchers.

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HANDOUT 2.19

Accountability, Change and Quality: Background and Case in Point 5

(Adapted from "How Are We Doing?" NCSALL Teaching and Training Materials)

Background:

A systematic approach to continuous program improvement means having clear organizational goals and purposes that align with student goals and national policies. It also means having a process for documenting and monitoring not only student progress and outcomes but every aspect of the organization's performance. Performance accountability, an important aspect of program improvement, is a way of conveying to stakeholders "what" and "how" an organization is doing.

In this session, the quality improvement team builds expertise through a process that examines how organizational changes have occurred in the past, what changes would lead to a higher quality program in the future, and identifies changes that would improve organizational performance and outcomes.

A quality improvement program, such as the Baldrige National Quality Program, offers a framework for approaching quality improvement in an organization. Improvement processes require organizations to have a system for collecting and analyzing data on student progress and using it to review the effectiveness of program components and revise program goals.

The team might ask: **How will this agency take a systematic approach to program improvement?**

Case in Point:

Mr. Johns, the education coordinator at the CommunityBuild Adult Education Center, returned from the state's annual adult basic education conference excited about the possibility of receiving additional funds for the Center's programs. At the conference, he learned about the state's new accountability requirements. To meet the accountability requirements and access the new funds, the Center needs to collect more information on the progress of students.

Mr. Johns spoke to Ms. Franklin about the new requirements, and she flatly stated, "I just don't have time to do more paperwork if I'm to really do my job as a teacher." Mr. Johns understood Ms. Franklin's dilemma. Mr. Johns then spoke with the Center's Director about the possibility of getting new funds for the adult education program. The director wanted to know how the new accountability requirements help to meet the needs of the students.

Mr. Johns was a bit overwhelmed by what he was hearing and decided to raise the issue in the next staff meeting. At that meeting, all of the staff agreed that the organization needed to be strategic in making program changes and that the entire organization needed to determine how to strengthen program processes and outcomes. One staff person summed it up this way, "One person can't do it alone; it takes the whole staff and anyway, it's all about helping students to meet their goals."

HANDOUT 2.20

Questions About Change

What was the change to be made? What was (were) the goal(s) of the change?

What were the concerns or issues to which the change responded?

Who initiated the change?

What was your role in the change process? Who else was involved?

What was the plan for carrying out the change? What was the time frame?

What skills were essential to the change process?

What were the outcomes from the change?

What did you observe about this particular change process?

What could have happened to produce different outcomes?

What important lessons were learned from the change experience?

HANDOUT 2.21

Education Criteria for Performance Excellence and EFF Program Practice

Baldrige Criteria / EFF Quality Program Practice	Purposeful and transparent	Contextualized Approach	Constructivist Approach	Assessment Based on Cognitive Science	Systematic Approach to Program Improvement
Leadership	Program leaders must understand the organizational purposes and goals.	How can students build leadership skills through contextualized teaching and learning?			
Strategic Planning		Our program must be thoughtful and strategic when planning to implement instruction that is contextualized.			
Customers	How do our students understand the program's purposes/goals and how do understand student's purposes and goals?				
Information and Analysis	What information do we need to collect and understand?				
Human Resources					
Process Management					
Results					

HANDOUT 3.1

Steps in Phases 3 and 4

From EFF Standards *Solve Problems and Make Decisions* and *Plan*

PHASE 3

- **Evaluate strengths and weaknesses of alternatives.**
  - — revisit the initial reasons for engaging in quality improvement
  - — revisit the organizational and program goals
  - — prioritize the possible changes
  - — consider the political, partnership, personnel, and financial realities of the organization

- **Select alternative that is most appropriate to goal, context, and available resources.**
  - — decide which program practice(s) to address and which changes to make
  - — think about how the plan will be administered and the necessary funds

- **Develop an organized approach of activities and objectives.**
  - — determine what actions will be necessary to achieve these changes
  - — think of all the people and organizations that need to be involved
  - — outline the plan's specific activities, responsibilities, a timeline for implementing the changes, and criteria for evaluation

PHASE 4

- **Actively carry out the plan.**
  - — identify the responsibilities of team members
  - — give someone the responsibility for making sure these supporting activities take place
  - — be certain everyone knows their role
  - — use your timeline to stay on track

- **Monitor the plan's progress while considering any need to adjust the plan.**
  - — hold regular team meetings
  - — document of the implementation of the plan
  - — provide regular opportunities for review
  - — record observations of unexpected occurrences

- **Establish criteria for evaluating effectiveness of solution or decision.**
  - — examine the documentation you have collected
  - — identify the indicators of progress

- **Evaluate its effectiveness in achieving the goals.**
  - — collect data
  - — analyze your data

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