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> Volume 3 (2002) > Full Chapters >
Professionalization and Certification for
Teachers in Adult Basic Education

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**Professionalization and Certification for
Teachers in Adult Basic Education**

Volume 3: Chapter Six

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Many factors have converged over the past decade to steadily accelerate the drive for professionalization in the field of adult literacy. In a number of states, professional development support and infrastructures have become well established, and efforts to codify these efforts in systems of certification are under way (Belzer, Drennon, & Smith,

2001; National Institute for Literacy, 2000). The U.S. Department of Education's development of a National Reporting System (NRS) and the accountability requirements contained in Title II (the Adult and Family Literacy Act) of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998 have reinforced this trend. By the first quarter of 2000, dozens of states were initiating and implementing standards and accountability systems to better monitor the effectiveness of adult basic education (ABE) programs. Programs will be held to higher standards for student outcomes and to stronger indicators of program quality. One such indicator is the existence of ongoing staff development processes and program planning processes (Office of Vocational and Adult Education, 1992).

Legislative mandates are not the only nor perhaps even the main force sustaining professionalization efforts, however.

ABE professional organizations, researchers, and service providers have long debated, advocated, and experimented with models for certification (Galbraith & Gilley, 1986). The National Literacy Summit convened more than twenty-five meetings across the country, bringing together instructors, tutors, service providers, learners, businesspeople, and policymakers to inform the priorities of its national action agenda. From the Margins to the Mainstream: An Action Agenda for Literacy, the report from the National Literacy Summit (2000), includes a number of proposals aimed at creating a comprehensive, high-quality delivery system for adult learners by improving the quality of instruction available to them. This action agenda asks all states to "establish a certification process for instructional staff based on standards that value both academic knowledge and life experience" and "to include alternative [teacher] assessment

methods such as portfolios."

What kinds of professionalization efforts are being advocated? Webb (1997) answers this question succinctly: "Many states are seeking to establish standards or criteria that distinguish adult educators as professionals and that reflect what these educators need to know to successfully teach adults." The rationale is to advance professionalism in a mostly part-time field in a way that distinguishes it from K-12. Many believe that K-12 standards for professionalism do not necessarily translate into ABE standards.

Yet there is a definition of the term professionalization that can be applied not only to both K-12 and ABE but to numerous other professions, from medicine to law. Essentially, professionalization is the movement in any field toward some standards of educational preparation and competency.

Professionalization is a movement to apply the following measures (Shanahan, Meehan, & Mogge, 1994, p. 1):

- Use education or training to improve the quality of practice.
- Standardize professional responses.
- Better define a collection of persons as representing a field of endeavor.
- Enhance communication within that field.

Shanahan, Meehan, and Mogge (1994) define professionalization as "the process of using education and certification to enhance the quality of performance of those within an occupational field" (p. iii). Certification is defined by Galbraith and Gilley (1985) as "the process by which a professional organization or an independent external agency recognizes the competence of individual practitioners" (p. 12). These definitions reflect our understanding of the two terms as we use them in this chapter.

In reviewing processes of certification across professions, Galbraith and Gilley (1986) concluded that the primary

purpose was to promote professional competencies of members. Secondary purposes included promoting professionalism and public prestige through the identification of an agreed-upon body of knowledge, a set of competencies, and a regulatory mechanism that evaluates proficiency of practitioners before they can achieve professional status. The restrictive nature of regulatory mechanisms (self-imposed by the professional community) communicates the importance of the knowledge and competencies, as well as defining and stabilizing group membership as unique and distinct. The motives for certification are many, including the desire for self-improvement, increased status, and control of access to and level of competency in the profession. There is also concern that requirements will be imposed on the field by state and federal legislators if it does not take action itself. Certification helps practitioners by

providing a structure that clearly communicates the expectations of the profession, allowing practitioners to measure themselves and develop plans of self-improvement against established standards.

Galbraith and Gilley (1985, 1986) emphasized the importance of a program of certification being developed voluntarily by a professional organization (as opposed to being mandated by legislative bodies) that represents the interests and needs of the profession (as opposed to the interests of political bodies), and they predicate their program model on this distinction. In the absence of a single, strong national organization speaking and representing the profession of adult literacy educators, state-level professional organizations, coalitions, and advocacy groups, often working in tandem with the state agencies that administer ABE, have taken on the role of moving and shaping

certification programs and processes.

To advance professionalization for teachers of adult literacy, with their particular needs and concerns, Webb (1997) proposes action in the following areas:

- Promote professional growth that is "valid and distinct" to ABE and is recognized or affirmed by school boards, employers of adult educators, and the local community.
- Develop teaching certificates that are tied directly to ABE curricula and learner needs.
- Establish criteria to distinguish a "professional" adult literacy educator from a volunteer in a field in which the vast majority of practitioners are part-time and many are volunteers.
- Examine the impact of certification standards on teacher performance in the classroom, with concern for balancing the need to establish and maintain professional standards with the need to avoid screening out good but noncredentialed teachers.

When Shanahan, Meehan, and Mogge (1994) reviewed the issue of professionalization, they characterized previous discussions and debates as controversial, negative, and heated,

marked more by discord than unity. A key point of disagreement was whether or under what conditions certification could be considered necessary or desirable. They found only two points of consensus: the desire to improve the quality of teaching and the recognition of how difficult it would be to establish a process to improve it. The fieldwork we conducted for this report has led us to a more optimistic forecast. Although some unresolved concerns remain and recent changes in federal legislation have left the field somewhat uneasy, a common desire for consensus appears to be emerging. In this chapter, we identify and discuss the forces at work in this more positive atmosphere and review the concerns that continue to arise when the processes of teacher professionalization and certification are implemented.

WHAT ABE CAN LEARN FROM THE K-12 EXPERIENCE

Adult basic education has long been in

the shadow of the K-12 education system, sharing or adapting its curriculum and standards, classrooms, means of assessment, resources, and teachers. In a survey of over four hundred full-time and part-time adult basic educators, Sabatini and colleagues (2000) found that only 20 percent had taught solely in adult literacy, with most beginning their careers as elementary or secondary school teachers. To professionalize their field, adult literacy educators must step out from the shadow of the K-12 system and recognize themselves as an allied but unique professional community. In doing so, however, it would be wise to learn from the successes and failures of the K-12 system. Of particular interest to the field is the attention now being paid to the quality of K-12 teachers and teacher preparation programs. A new emphasis on higher student achievement, demands for greater accountability, and research demonstrating the importance of teacher

quality on student achievement
(American Federation of Teachers, 2000)
have all raised the stakes for K-12
teachers.

A reform model has emerged as a driving force in the K-12 arena: what the learner needs to know is expressed in the form of content and curriculum standards, which in turn inform teaching competencies, which in turn inform teacher certification and professional development. Content standards also form the basis for the development of student achievement and outcome assessments—a key accountability tool for evaluating teacher, program, and school effectiveness. Reviewing this model as it works in the K-12 arena is useful for evaluating the extent to which adult literacy educators may or may not want to adopt K-12 initiatives.

Content Standards

Content standards are increasingly the

driving force behind efforts to reform teacher standards, certification, professional development, and accountability in the K-12 system.

Learners, teachers, schools, and school systems are held accountable for learner outcomes based on assessments aligned with content standards. These standards indicate what is of value to learn and to know. They provide a framework for the content and pedagogical knowledge a teacher is expected to have mastered.

K-12 standards typically have credibility among K-12 teachers because they are developed and issued by consortia of national councils, boards of teachers, and content experts—that is, the professional organizations of the teaching profession (for example, National Council for the Social Studies, 1994; National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, 2000; National Research Council, 1996).

Content standards are also used as a foundation for the development of

teaching standards or competencies (for the purposes of this chapter, we consider the terms teaching standards and competencies to be interchangeable; the former tends to be the term used in K-12 education, the latter the term used in ABE). For example, the National Committee on Science Education uses the phrase "professional development standards" to describe its expectations of science teachers, describing them as a "vision for the development of professional knowledge and skill among teachers" (National Research Council, 1996, p. 4). Teaching standards or competencies form the basis for developing indicators and assessments of teaching quality, just as content standards form the basis for student outcome assessments. When teaching standards are adopted, evidence of proficiency need not be indirectly certified in the form of completed coursework or a score on a standardized exam but rather through a competency-

based system using performance assessments (for example, National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Certification).

Certification

States offer many levels and types of certification, specifying the grade levels, subjects, and conditions under which a teacher may teach. Early childhood (ages one to five), elementary, middle, secondary, and special education are typical certification types. Many states have requirements for professional development to maintain initial and second-stage certificate validity. States offer separate certifications for teachers, administrators, and other support specialists such as librarians, counselors, and reading specialists.

Closely linked to certification is a state's process for evaluating and approving teacher preparation programs. The purpose of such approval or accreditation

is to ensure a common curriculum framework and professional standards so that the state's teacher education programs produce graduates who meet the state's certification requirements. Most states use the standards developed by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) (ERIC Digest, 1986).

The preparation of teachers as professionals is routinely the culmination of an undergraduate, four-year program that includes seven steps: (1) liberal arts and sciences course requirements, (2) entry standards for acceptance into teacher education programs, (3) courses in pedagogy, (4) academic subject major (for most), (5) clinical experience, (6) exit and licensure requirements, and (7) an induction period (American Federation of Teachers, 2000). Initial K-12 teacher certification requirements typically include the following:

- Graduation from an accredited higher education

institution that has a state-approved teacher education program. This includes a minimum grade-point average on coursework and successful completion of a field-based clinical experience. Some states accept completion of out-of-state teacher preparation programs approved by the NCATE.

- Review of college transcripts and other evidence to ensure that specific coursework and other state requirements have been met.
- Satisfactory scores on licensing exams. Currently, forty states require basic skills exams, thirty require subject-matter exams, and twenty-five require "knowledge of teaching" exams. There are nineteen general knowledge exams and thirteen assessments of teaching performance. Only six states require no examination for initial teacher certification.

In most cases, certification must be renewed or updated regularly. There are typically requirements for periodic maintenance activities to ensure that teachers keep current (such as completion of additional coursework or in-service activities) and that higher levels of proficiency be attained within a specified time (such as earning an M.A.). Completion of requirements in an area of

specialization may be a requirement or an option, leading in some states to what is known as a certificate endorsement. Endorsements are typically add-ons to, not substitutes for, certification. For instance, a secondary education teacher might have endorsements in specific subject areas. Adding an endorsement to an existing certification type is one way to introduce change and flexibility to a certification process that is well established, highly specific, and not otherwise susceptible to change by outsiders.

State-funded K-12 school systems and some state community college systems (California, North Carolina, and Iowa at present) have regulations that include certifications in hiring requirements. Non-state-funded educational entities, such as private K-12 schools, while not governed by these regulations, in many cases choose to require certifications when making hiring decisions.

Alternative systems exist to certify individuals with expertise or experience who have not completed a four-year program. Emergency waivers are issued when the demand for teachers exceeds the supply.

Governance and Stakeholders

Governance and stakeholders in the K-12 system are consistent across states and include state legislatures, state departments of education, local school boards, professional education organizations, teachers' unions, school administrators, teachers, and families. The state legislature writes laws for educational policies that may specify regulations regarding content standards, state assessments of learner outcomes, and certification requirements. A state department of education or affiliated agency administers state policies concerning certification of teachers and accrediting of teacher preparation programs, often via a licensing board or

council. National or state professional organizations and teaching unions may advocate and influence certification rules and regulations. Local school boards govern local school systems, although they are bound by state rules when hiring teachers.

Teacher Training and Professional Development

Accountability and incentives are key words in K-12 teaching today.

Increasingly, districts, schools, and teachers are being held accountable for the learning outcomes of their students.² When students perform poorly, attention is often directed at the quality of the teaching. The suggested remedy is to improve the quality and accountability of teacher preparation programs and professional development opportunities, requiring new and more rigorous teacher examinations and creating more direct measures of specific teaching proficiencies. However, raising the

standards for initial teaching certification is especially difficult given the forecast of significant K-12 teacher shortages projected nationwide. Mandatory requirements for maintaining certification remain the primary mechanism for enhancing teacher competency.

Merit-based systems that reward teachers for student outcomes are a less punitive approach to accountability often advocated by legislators and administrators, but how merit is to be measured and the system implemented raises many complex issues with regard to the structure of teachers' contracts. Hence, teacher union support or resistance is critical to the adoption of merit-based systems. Incentives to engage in professional development or to enhance certification levels are another mechanism for improving teacher quality. Incentives may take the form of salary increases, release time, or

recognition, but, again, most changes must be negotiated as part of teacher contract discussions.

The basis for K-12 certification via completion of an accredited teacher preparation program is the assumption that higher education courses (including clinical field experience) ensure a minimal standard of teacher quality and accountability. However, research has shown that even successful completion of a course of study-the "seat-time" model-is no guarantee that any theoretical knowledge and skills learned will translate into teaching competency in practice (McAninch, 1993). The only time a candidate teacher is authentically engaged in the professional practice of teaching is in the field-based clinical experience, and the quality of these experiences varies greatly from program to program. The same criticisms apply to in-service professional development used for maintenance of credentials. In

general, critics have questioned the relevance, transfer, and applicability to increased competency of participation in graduate courses, workshops, or conferences.

One response to the criticism of the seat-time model has been to require licensing exams to ensure a minimal competency level. The requirement of licensing exams at all is a consequence of the fact that satisfactory completion of an accredited preparation program is not a sufficient guarantee that every candidate teacher will possess even the minimal basic skills, much less sufficient professional competency.

The completion of an accredited program of coursework and satisfactory performance on exams are still only indirect measures of teaching competency. Another alternative has been the development of teaching standards and competency-based

credentialing systems, such as that developed by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBTPS). The movement of a number of states to accept NBTPS credentials, which are based on performance assessments, can be viewed as a more general response to the inadequacies of a seat-time or "seat-time plus exams" model.

The goal of improving K-12 teacher preparation and in-service professional development has received heightened attention in recent years (American Federation of Teachers, 2000). A U.S. Department of Education (2000) report identified a number of barriers to the improvement of teaching, including the following:

- Lack of rigor in many teacher education programs
- Lack of a set of standard qualifications for entering the profession
- Lack of accountability by higher education institutions for preparing teachers
- Little collaboration between institutions of higher

education and K-12 educators

- Lack of consensus on a core curriculum
- Inadequate field experiences that come too late, are too short in duration, and are not focused on teachers' greatest needs
- Little incorporation of state K-12 student content and performance standards in teacher education core curricula
- Low and inappropriate standards for teacher certification that do not substantiate an ability to perform in the classroom (for example, certifying teachers via a norm-referenced exam with low cut scores)
- Complicated and restrictive state licensure systems

In short, the K-12 preparation system is far from ideal. This list of barriers to effective teacher preparation illustrates some of the specific pitfalls that an adult certification system might wish to avoid or to address.

WHAT IS THE ABE EXPERIENCE?

Despite its fallibility, the reform model that is driving change in the K-12 system does provide a framework for considering an ABE teaching certification system. Does the model of

content standards aligned with outcome assessments, informing teaching standards, which in turn inform certification and professional development, fit the ABE experience? Is there an equivalent ABE system on the horizon? In this section, we address these questions and draw comparisons with the K-12 reform experience where helpful, but the focus is on the unique concerns of ABE.

Content Standards

Until recently, standards in ABE programs have typically been defined by the assessment instruments used. Adult secondary education students, for example, are most often preparing to take the tests of General Educational Development (GED), which are based on five high school subject areas. Although the new GED will be aligned with the new secondary-level content standards, a GED teacher continues to need a broad understanding of each subject, not

necessarily a deep understanding of any one.³ In some states and programs, student outcomes are assessed by means of a traditional basic skills test, such as the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE), with subtests in categories such as vocabulary, reading comprehension, and mathematics.

The context of ABE content standards is changing, and the changes have implications for teacher standards and certification. Publication of the 1991 report by the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) served to jump-start the process of examining the extent to which ABE programs prepared learners to meet the expectations of the workplace. The SCANS Report acknowledged the importance of reading, writing, and arithmetic and mathematics as three of five "Basic Skills" (the others are listening and speaking). In addition, a person must be able to use these skills in

meaningful contexts. Proficiency in all the Foundation Skills (which include the Basic Skills plus Thinking Skills and Personal Qualities) is necessary to develop and demonstrate workplace competencies. The SCANS Report pointed to the kinds of tasks adults have to perform in the workplace and defined levels of proficiency and performance benchmarks.

Because the SCANS Report was developed in adult workplace contexts and defined the competencies expected of adults, the ABE community embraced the concepts, the language, and the expanded set of competencies. The scope of ABE content began to be defined by how skills were to be used in adult settings other than a school setting.

A number of states have developed or are in the process of developing content standards for ABE learners and have correlated assessment instruments with

these new standards (Kutner, Webb, & Matheson, 1996). In several instances, these standards are aligned with those in the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS). CASAS tests are based on critical competencies and skill areas drawn from the workplace, community, and family. At the secondary education level, Pennsylvania is experimenting with methods for validating a diploma project as a credential option for learners. Learners need to demonstrate secondary-level performance capabilities to trained assessors.

In the K-12 arena, the expressed needs of learners are not typically part of the content standards development process. In developing content standards for adult learners, however, learner needs are an important starting point. The National Institute for Literacy's Equipped for the Future (EFF) initiative is to date the most comprehensive alternative

approach to adult learning content standards. The EFF project applied a broad-based, consensus-building process, including surveys and focus groups of adult learners, to determine learners' goals and needs. The respondents identified four purposes for learning: to gain access to information to help them orient themselves in the world; to develop a voice—that is, to be able to express ideas and opinions with confidence; to take independent action to solve problems and make decisions on their own; and to build a bridge to the future in learning how to learn and keep up with a changing world (National Institute for Literacy, 1995). It was then determined what sorts of skills students would need to meet these ends. These included communication skills (in which one finds reading and writing), decision-making skills (in which one finds math concepts), interpersonal skills, and lifelong learning skills. In the EFF framework, adult skills are enlisted in the

service of empowering learners, giving them the wherewithal to fulfill their roles as workers, family members, and community members. EFF standards can be characterized as a statement of what is valued in ABE instruction: what learners should know and be able to do.

Integration of EFF standards with the National Reporting System—for example, establishing valid assessments or functional descriptive statements corresponding to the functional levels of the NRS—is an idea endorsed in the National Literacy Summit action agenda (2000). As yet, however, no performance assessments aligned with EFF standards have been constructed; neither have any EFF standards been accepted as national standards (although a process for doing so is under way).

Consequently, a unified approach to measuring adult achievement outcomes does not yet exist. The National Reporting System for Adult Education is

a project that has developed core outcome measures that meet the requirements of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 as well as state accountability requirements (Condelli, 2000). Students' educational gains are measured according to the degree to which they have advanced in educational functioning level. There are four levels of basic education, two of secondary education, and six levels of English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). To move to a new level, students must have mastered a certain set of skills and competencies in multiple literacy areas (for example, reading, numeracy, speaking). The descriptors for the skills and competencies required at each level can be aligned with standardized assessment instruments (tests or performance assessments). Outcomes are assessed by such measures as whether students have obtained employment, entered another program to further their education, or received a secondary

school diploma or passed the GED tests.

The functional level descriptors of the NRS define achievement in a way that accommodates the diversity of ABE delivery systems and is compatible across related ABE and training programs. The NRS measures, standardizes, and codifies the use of a variety of assessment instruments for the purpose of aggregating student gains data. When ABE outcomes are based on assessment-driven standards such as these, however, it is not clear what relationship or implication K-12 standards have for the preparation or professionalization of adult educators. The functioning levels are guideposts that point the way for what teachers of adults must be able to do for learners. High-quality teachers should know how to move learners from one level to the next, whether it is in the context of preparing students for jobs, for higher education, or to pass the GED tests. The

specifics of those teacher competencies are less well defined.

As in K-12, the better the articulation of adult content standards and their relationship to accountability systems, the better these standards are able to serve as a foundation for teaching standards and competencies. A significant issue that must be addressed by the ABE community is the extent to which a customer-driven set of standards such as EFF can be aligned with the kinds of content standards that are driving K-12 curriculum, assessment, and teacher standards, given the increased emphasis K-12 teacher preparation programs are placing on these standards. The relevance of K-12 certification would seem to hinge on the value placed by the ABE community on the teaching competencies that are derived from K-12 content standards.

Teacher Certification:

To Be or Not to Be K-12-Certified

A range of possibilities is open to states as they consider how best to certify or credential adult literacy educators, from accepting any level of K-12 certification to creating a unique and separate certification for adult teachers. The current requirements (or lack thereof) for ABE teacher certification in the fifty states are listed in Table 6.1. This information is based on a report by Kutner et al. (1996) and a needs analysis conducted by the National Adult Education Professional Development Consortium (forthcoming). Seventeen states require that anyone hired to teach ABE full- or part-time be a certified K-12 teacher. At least four states provide waivers for special circumstances. Nine others require some form of adult certification. In three states, teacher certification and an adult certification or other requirements are requisite; in Washington State the requirement is either regular teacher

certification or an adult teacher certification.

Four states do not require teacher certification, but the hiring practices or system administration of local educational agencies ensures that most adult educators are certified teachers. Four other states do not require teacher certification in part because administration is through institutions of higher education that have their own hiring guidelines. Even in states with no required certification, voluntary or optional certification or credentialing may exist and be encouraged. For example, hiring preferences or compensation levels may be influenced by whether the candidate has completed a state-accredited teacher preparation program or holds state teacher certification.

Sabatini et al. (2000) conducted a survey targeting full-time and part-time adult

educators who spend a majority of their time teaching adults. Fewer than twenty of over four hundred respondents (less than 5 percent) possessed a degree in ABE. More than 80 percent had prior educational experience spread across elementary, secondary, community college, and training work. While 37 percent had been teaching adults for five years or fewer, 63 percent had been teaching adults for more than five years. About two-thirds were certified as elementary or secondary teachers, with about 40 percent indicating that the certification was required by the program or state.

At first glance, one might expect K-12 certification types in ABE to mirror those applied in K-12 education—that is,

- Elementary-level reading, writing, and mathematics certifications would apply to teachers of basic-level adult learners.
- Secondary education certifications and endorsements would apply to teachers of adult secondary education and preparation for the GED

credential.

- Special education certification would apply to teachers of adults with special learning needs.
- Specializations in ESOL would apply to teachers of adult ESOL.

But the arrangement is not that simple. In the same survey (Sabatini et al., 2000), K-12 certification level was not a strong predictor of primary adult teaching assignment. That is, elementary teachers were only slightly more likely to teach basic-level adult students than teachers with other certification levels; secondary teachers were only slightly more likely to teach adult secondary or GED students.

Our search of the literature did not produce any research documenting the extent to which K-12 teacher preparation programs benefit adult educators. Teacher preparation programs that specialize in ABE are not common, though many schools and departments offer some coursework specific to ABE. In most states there is a university with a

higher education program or department that offers M.A., M.Ed., Ed.D., or Ph.D. degrees in adult education (Evans & Sherman, 1999), but this is not necessarily synonymous with a focus on teacher preparation in ABE. Such graduate programs may include ABE, training, and human development, and their target audiences are administrators, researchers, trainers, and future higher education instructors; these programs do not necessarily prepare enrollees to teach adults basic skills. Even if more teacher preparation programs in ABE were available, so few states have been able to support adult literacy educators full time and offer them a stable career path (Arkansas being an exception) that demand for new graduate programs is unlikely. This seems especially true given the current and projected shortage of qualified K-12 teachers.

In the absence of an infrastructure supporting the flow of ABE teachers

directly from traditional teacher preparation programs, the most common approach to certification for instructors hired as adult educators has taken the form of in-service requirements. Graduate-level courses are sanctioned by many of the states requiring or promoting an ABE certification or endorsement (for example, Arkansas and California).

There remain two problems with this approach. First, many states, especially large or rural states, are unable to give all adult educators access to higher education courses (for example, Mississippi, Minnesota, and Kansas). Second, as in the K-12 setting, the field questions how well the learning that takes place in a strictly seat-time, course-based system can be translated into the practical competencies of teaching adults. As a result, many states are implementing alternative approaches through which adult teachers can acquire

the skills to meet teaching competencies.

On one hand, it is not unreasonable to suggest that being a professional teacher is a strong prerequisite for becoming a proficient adult basic educator. On the other, it has been argued that the presence of nontraditional teachers, including individuals who may not have completed a four-year undergraduate program or volunteers whose responsibilities evolve over time, is a strength of the current ABE service system because it increases local community participation and diversity. Any process that systematically screens out or discourages such individuals might prove controversial or unacceptable to many established providers (Perin, 1998; Webb, 1997).

As is the case with reforms of K-12 certification systems toward more direct assessment of teacher competencies via performance assessments such as

portfolios, ABE certification processes are becoming increasingly innovative and flexible in their approach. A variety of professional development activities- such as professional presentations, action research, self-study, and institutes and conferences, with performance validated via portfolios, rÈsumÈs, awards, and video cases-are being considered as means toward certification. Several states are developing flexible, tiered certification or parallel credentialing processes that allow teachers to design a course of study that is directly relevant to the needs of ABE programs and teachers. At the heart of this approach are teacher standards and competencies.

Teaching Competencies and Competency-Based Systems

Teaching competencies articulate what adult educators should know and be able to do. They can be used as a framework for developing needs assessments and training materials or activities.

Performance indicators, measures, and assessment instruments can be developed to assess teacher competencies directly. A competency-based training and accountability system can be employed to provide flexibility at the program or state level, overcoming some criticisms of the seat-time teacher certification model. For example, performance assessments can be used to enhance and document the competencies of those adult educators already hired and working in the field.

Identifying and establishing a framework that targets competencies that are valid and distinct to adult educators is therefore a valuable step toward increased professionalization of the field. In the past, this has been an area of contention (Shanahan, Meehan, & Mogge, 1994). Identifying a core curriculum or set of teaching competencies (or standards) that define the profession of teaching has been a

trouble spot for the improvement of K-12 teaching as well (American Federation of Teachers, 2000; U.S. Department of Education, 2000). The inability to define a core set of instructional and pedagogical practices and knowledge that are proven to be effective and fundamental to teaching reinforces the uneven quality of teacher preparation programs and weakens the credibility of teaching as a profession (American Federation of Teachers, 2000).

In the next sections, we describe an initiative toward establishing a framework for ABE professional teaching competencies. A format and process for establishing and using teaching competencies as a basis for certification has been developed by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

PRO-NET'S COMPETENCIES. A SET

OF INSTRUCTOR COMPETENCIES HAS BEEN ARTICULATED AS PART OF THE WORK OF THE BUILDING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIPS FOR ADULT EDUCATORS PROJECT (PRO-NET) FUNDED BY THE DIVISION OF ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY OF THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION. SHERMAN, TIBBETTS, WOODRUFF, AND WIEDLER (1999) COMPILED LISTS OF COMPETENCIES,⁴ THEN USED A MULTISTATE PROCESS TO DEVELOP PERFORMANCE INDICATORS ALIGNED WITH THE COMPETENCIES. THE AUTHORS CONDUCTED A FIELD-BASED PROCESS UTILIZING INPUT FROM MORE THAN THREE HUNDRED ABE INSTRUCTORS AND PROGRAM ADMINISTRATORS AND REVIEWED THE LITERATURE ON INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES IN ABE TO INFORM THE QUALITY OF

THEIR LIST. THE RESULT IS A FRAMEWORK OF THREE THEMES RELATED TO EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION:

- Keeping current in content area and in instructional strategies
- Communicating and collaborating with colleagues and learners to facilitate learning
- Working positively and nonjudgmentally with diverse populations

These themes are further defined in six categories of competency, wherein the teacher

- Maintains knowledge and pursues professional development
- Organizes and delivers instruction
- Manages instructional resources
- Continually assesses and monitors learning
- Manages program responsibilities and enhances program organization
- Provides learner guidance and referral

Within each category are specific competency statements, performance indicators, and recommendations that evidence be collected to assess, evaluate, and train teachers. Table 6.2 shows an

example of a specific competency and corresponding indicators from the category "maintains knowledge and pursues professional development." The authors have not defined the specific evidence that would support the claim that a competency has been achieved, rather recommending that instructors and programmers develop their own evidence based on the content of individual programs.

The competencies are intended for a wide audience and can be used to achieve multiple goals (Sherman et al., 1999). At the state and program levels, the competencies can be used for the following purposes:

- Support and complement state and program performance standards
- Build on existing competencies
- Foster the development of new competencies
- Provide a basis for instructor certification
- Develop guidelines for hiring and recruiting staff
- Provide a basis for an assessment of professional development needs

At the individual level, the authors recommend using the competencies to conduct self- and peer assessment and to prepare for certification.

The PRO-NET group advocates a range of professional development activities, including workshops, conferences, and study groups (Sherman et al., 1999; Webb, 1997). Traditionally, it has been hard to apply measures of accountability to such in-service formats except in terms of participation or seat-time. Specification of competencies can help to ensure a connection is made between training activities. As yet, the PRO-NET group has not taken the step of defining the evidence or attempting to design and validate measures of specific competencies or overall teacher competence. Such a process can be found in National Board Certification.

**A NATIONAL BOARD FOR
TEACHING COMPETENCIES. ONE**

MODEL FOR DEVELOPING
CERTIFICATION BASED ON
PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES
FOR ABE TEACHERS IN A FIELD
THAT HAS NO INFRASTRUCTURE
FOR TEACHER PREPARATION
MIGHT BE THE NATIONAL BOARD
FOR PROFESSIONAL TEACHING
STANDARDS (NBPTS). THE NBPTS
HAS DEVELOPED NUMEROUS
FRAMEWORKS FOR
CERTIFICATION IN EDUCATION.
THERE IS SIGNIFICANT OVERLAP
ACROSS FRAMEWORKS IN THE
GENERAL TOPIC AREAS
EXPECTED OF TEACHERS. THE
FRAMEWORK FOR "EARLY
ADOLESCENCE THROUGH YOUNG
ADULTHOOD/CAREER AND
TECHNICAL EDUCATION" IS
PROVIDED AS AN EXAMPLE (SEE
EXHIBIT 6.1). WE SELECTED THIS
SPECIFIC FRAMEWORK BECAUSE
THE FACE VALIDITY OF THE
THEMES AND TOPICS

**CORRESPONDS WELL WITH
TOPICS THAT MIGHT BE COVERED
IN A BODY OF PROFESSIONAL
STANDARDS FOR ABE TEACHERS.**

Teachers achieve certification after successfully completing a performance assessment process. The performance assessment takes into account varied aspects of teaching and consists of two parts: a portfolio and assessment center exercises. The portfolio is completed in the classroom and contains videotapes of classroom teaching, samples of student work, and written commentary. Portfolio requirements vary from assessment to assessment, but they are based on evidence of accomplished teaching practice with current classes and students. Portfolios generally require four or five classroom-based exercises, may ask for videotapes of classroom interactions or samples of student work, and require written analysis and reflections. Another part of the portfolio

documents teachers' work outside the classroom with families, colleagues, and the community. Teachers are asked to show evidence of their accomplishments and comment on the importance of those accomplishments. The goal of all these exercises is to document that teachers meet National Board standards. Teachers take an average of about 120 hours over four months, about a day a week, to complete their portfolios. A good portfolio both reflects the standards and gives a true picture of a teacher's level of accomplishment.

In the Assessment Center Exercises teacher candidates complete written tasks and exercises focused on pedagogical content and knowledge. The assessments ask candidates to respond to specific prompts, which may be based on materials sent to candidates well in advance. Exercises may be simulated situations to which teachers must respond, or they may be explorations of

pedagogical issues.

Both the portfolio and assessment center approaches are applicable to the context of adult basic education. One possibility for the field to consider is working directly with the National Board to create a certificate for adult educators. Another possibility is for states to adopt elements of the process model used by the National Board as part of their certification process.⁵

SUMMARY. Because many ABE teachers have K-12 experience, determining the extent to which teaching competencies for adult educators overlap with the teaching standards of K-12 teachers is a critical issue. Many teachers will want to build on their current certification rather than start all over again. But the adult educator's professional responsibilities are different from those of the traditional K-12 teacher. First, in ABE there is less consensus on the need for and role of

training and preparation in the traditional academic course areas. Second, ABE program missions have traditionally embraced broader purposes for literacy, including such areas as community and emancipatory education, family and parenting, life skills, and workforce preparation. In evaluating differences between ABE and K-12, one might conclude that the teaching demands in ABE are qualitatively different from those in K-12, so the training and preparation, to be effective, must be different as well, perhaps to the extent that no certification is necessary but that extensive in-service education is required. Or one might conclude that the demands of adult teaching are an extension of K-12 skills and warrant a separate ABE endorsement in addition to basic certification. Finally, one might conclude that teaching is no different, so K-12 certification alone is fine for adult educators (as it is now in seventeen states).

Governance and Stakeholders

The policymakers and administrators of the existing state K-12 certification boards are critical stakeholders in any initiatives or reforms aimed at ABE; K-12 state educational agencies administer ABE in forty-two states (solely in twenty-four states, jointly with postsecondary agencies in eighteen states) (National Adult Education Professional Development Consortium, 1998). State boards for community colleges administer ABE in four states (Mississippi, North Carolina, Oregon, and Washington), a separate state vocational agency administers it in three states (Arkansas, Georgia, and Wisconsin), and a workforce development cabinet administers it in one state (Kentucky). ABE staff are a small percentage of state education staff. More than 80 percent of the states have fewer than twenty state staff members working for ABE; more than 50 percent have ten or fewer

(National Adult Education Professional Development Consortium, 1998). ABE budgets are a small fraction of state education spending. The relationship forged between the ABE community and these other educational stakeholders determines the nature and form of ABE professionalization efforts.

Providers of adult literacy services may be local educational agencies, institutions of higher education, community-based organizations, libraries, public or private nonprofits, public housing authorities, correctional agencies, family literacy providers, or consortia of for-profit agencies. Furthermore, because funding of ABE by WIA block grants may be supplemented at the state or program level by other special grants or private foundation funding, overly rigid or mandatory certifications may not be workable or enforceable for all stakeholders. Consequently, the viability

or practicality of a teacher certification process depends on negotiations between the stakeholders at the governing and service-delivery levels. Consortia of stakeholders and advocacy groups may need to develop strategic plans and visions to work directly with legislatures and policymakers to reform and build new systems that better fit the unique needs of ABE in the state.

At first glance, stakeholders put at risk by a movement toward increased professionalization sanctioned through mechanisms of licensing and certification would appear to be the following:

- Community-based programs that recruit staff from the area who may not have the educational background to achieve certification
- Volunteer organizations in which the volunteer is the learners' primary teacher
- Programs that rely on part-time staff who do not have the time or incentive to acquire credentials

The reality is that many states are sensitive to these needs and make special

provisions to ensure that the entire field of adult literacy service providers is given the opportunity to pursue professional development. As Shanahan, Meehan, and Mogge (1994) point out, no one has ever debated the value and utility of volunteers, only the role they play, especially when tutors are assigned as the only instructor for the lowest-level learners. As for community-based, nontraditional staff, to the extent that a certification program follows the traditional K-12 teaching model (in which a bachelor's degree is a minimal requirement and additional higher education is often assumed), it could be a barrier to community-based recruits who may be effective with learners but are not in a position, financially or otherwise, to pursue a four-year degree. Legitimate alternate pathways can be created for such staff, however, with the ultimate goal of building into the system a pathway from volunteer to part-time to full-time professional.

Accountability and Incentives

Few topics raise as many strong opinions and feelings as accountability (see Merrifield, 1998). Much of the strong emotion is reserved for state and federal policymakers and legislators who would hold local programs and teachers accountable for student learning or other program-level requirements (for example, program evaluation and improvement indicators) without making provisions for the resources and training necessary to accomplish the tasks. The chronic instability of funding and unreliable career paths create a dual difficulty for programs that must recruit and retain both students and quality teachers. Demand too much from teachers and the already thin field of qualified candidates will become even thinner. Set the requirements too low and the field cannot achieve the level of professionalism it seeks to garner increased support and credibility.

The NRS was designed to create a national database of information and outcomes to demonstrate the overall effectiveness of the federally funded ABE program to meet WIA accountability requirements. The outcomes data form the basis of federally awarded state incentive grants based on performance. States are also required to evaluate local program performance on these same indicators as one condition of local funding, although they are free to use other indicators as well. In addition to learner outcomes, states may choose to use the quality of instructional staff as a local program quality indicator. In lieu of making it mandatory to hire certified teachers, the number or proportion of state-certified teachers employed by programs could be a quality indicator, as could evidence of improved performance of staff on measures of competency (such as portfolios). The proper balance

of incentives, sanctions, and mandatory requirements must be struck based on consideration of each state context.

CASE STUDIES:

MASSACHUSETTS AND TEXAS

In summarizing the advantages and disadvantages of professionalization in adult literacy education, Perin (1998ñ99) notes that a key factor in securing field support is the perception of who is certifying that professionalization. Many professions are self-regulated through boards or councils made up of representatives of the profession who set standards for minimal competency and ongoing maintenance of professional status.

Central to the debate on the reform of teacher preparation and development in ABE is the method by which teacher competence will be evaluated. On one side of this issue are those who believe that what is needed is an increase in

traditional requirements, such as coursework, testing, and in-service training. On the other are those who believe that the traditional system is hopelessly flawed and that the only way to ensure teacher competence is to provide alternative, performance-based measures. This is not an easy issue to resolve, and in ABE it is complicated by the lack of both traditional and performance-based measures that are applicable to a fragmented field.

To demonstrate the real-life process of developing certification systems, we present case studies of two states, Massachusetts and Texas. Both are working to change the systems they use both to deliver ABE services and to provide for the professional development that will be needed to implement that delivery. Although the specifics of the two states' policies and plans are different, their goal is the same: to improve the quality of teaching. Each

state also acknowledges that though some concrete reform steps can and must be taken, the delivery system, infrastructure, and funding streams of ABE are not yet able to support the implementation of full-scale systems. We make no claim that these two cases are representative of the nation. However, they do address many of the issues facing all fifty states as they attempt to put systems for teacher certification in place. We have classified the direction of the changes taking place in these systems as follows:

- Changes that originate at the state level and are driven by changes in legislation (for example, the Workforce Investment Act) or policy. We have labeled these "top-down" changes.
- Changes that originate in the field and are driven by perceived problems in the delivery of services or the quality of the workforce. We have labeled these "bottom-up."
- Changes that are driven by a number of different forces, including pressure from federal or state legislation and the perception of unmet student needs within the existing system. We have labeled these "hybrid" changes.

In our discussion, we provide a snapshot of the progress in each state as it moves toward professionalization for ABE teachers. We do this by focusing on the state's previous history, where the impetus for change originated and how it developed, current plans for implementation, plans to measure success, and the present status of professionalization. In the summary, we briefly review the similarities and differences in the approaches of each state.

Massachusetts

Certification efforts for teachers of ABE in Massachusetts began in 1970 with the establishment of the State Committee on Adult Education. This group established the K-12 certification requirement for all ABE teachers and mandated an additional two courses in ABE for certification. This effort was not successful and was discontinued. For the next twenty-five years, Massachusetts

struggled with certification issues. Overall, the state's certification history has included both the state and the field taking turns driving the process. The state's Department of Education lists the following points as key differences, concerns, and challenges among the various stakeholders:

- The most obvious divisions have been between adult educators employed by organizations that require a Department granted certification for employment (for example school districts and correctional facilities) and those that do not (for example institutions of higher education and community based organizations).
- Many of the 2500 adult educators who already possess from one to thirty years of experience in this field believe that certification must recognize the essential skills and abilities they already possess and they may not need to enroll in courses to fulfill ABE licensure standards.
- Adult students (and the practitioners who serve them) are confronted with substantially different circumstances from children trying to master the same skills: their pursuit of education is voluntary, not mandatory; they must balance competing priorities; and in some respects they learn differently from children.

- An estimated 70 percent of Massachusetts adult educators are employed part-time, without benefits, with incomes on average 20% below K-12 educators. [Department of Education, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 2001]

To accommodate these concerns and challenges, the Massachusetts legislature established a task force consisting of representatives from the field to consider options for certification other than course requirements, called the Staff Development and Teacher Certification Task Force. On the recommendation of the task force, in 1991, the System for Adult Basic Education Support (SABES) was established with the support of funds separate from the K-12 system. Massachusetts is unusual in having established an infrastructure for the training and licensing of ABE teachers that is separate from the K-12 system in terms of both funding and operation. SABES was designated as the state's primary 353 (funding for professional development) grantee and was charged with creating a meaningful certification

for teachers that would both accommodate the diverse needs of the students who enroll in ABE programs and recognize the special competency required of its teachers.

DIRECTION OF CHANGE. HAVING LEARNED FROM PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE, THE STATE MADE AN UNUSUAL EFFORT TO REJECT THE TOP-DOWN APPROACH IT HAD ADOPTED IN 1970, WHICH MANDATED COURSEWORK FOR TEACHERS. INSTEAD, IT EMPOWERED SABES TO OBTAIN SUPPORT FROM THE FIELD BY SOLICITING INPUT FROM TEACHERS AND PROGRAM DIRECTORS IN DEVELOPING THE REQUIREMENTS FOR CERTIFICATION. TO INFORM PRACTITIONERS AND OTHER INTERESTED PERSONS AND TO PROVIDE A FORUM FOR DISCUSSION OF DIVERSE POINTS

OF VIEW, SABES INVITED PRACTITIONERS FROM ACROSS THE STATE TO PARTICIPATE IN A SERIES OF FOCUS GROUPS (CALLED "CERTIFICATION ROAD SHOWS"). THESE GROUPS IDENTIFIED WHAT THEY PERCEIVED TO BE THE COMPONENTS OF AN "IDEAL SYSTEM" OF CERTIFICATION. THAT SYSTEM WOULD

- Be based on meaningful competencies agreed upon by field representatives
- Recognize the prior experience, knowledge, and skills of teachers
- Require teachers to reflect on their teaching philosophy and practice
- Align itself with preexisting K-12 certification requirements but protect and reflect the special needs and concerns of the ABE domain (that is, ABE standards would be aligned with but not parallel to K-12 standards)
- Be flexible, accessible, and low cost
- Be voluntary

Though this new system was to be aligned with the existing K-12 certification requirements, the task of

SABES was to protect and reflect the special needs of ABE.

Additional stipulations for ABE teacher certification were entered into the state budget for fiscal year 1999. Partners in the movement for change in Massachusetts include the offices of Teacher Certification and Credentialing and of Adult and Community Learning Services, as well as appointed members of the ABE Certification Advisory Committee. In 1999 two new staff positions were created in the Massachusetts Department of Education and SABES. Appointees to the positions (Mary Jane Fay and Carey Reid) were asked to conduct research, produce draft documents for working group and advisory committees, and establish links with delivery agencies (Fay & Reid, 2000).

ACTION PLAN. ORIGINALLY, THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE

MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION PROPOSED A THREE-TRACK SYSTEM FOR ABE CERTIFICATION THAT WOULD ACCOMMODATE TEACHERS WITH K-12 CERTIFICATION AND ONE YEAR'S EXPERIENCE TEACHING IN ABE, TEACHERS WITH NO K-12 CERTIFICATION AND AT LEAST FIVE YEARS OF ABE TEACHING EXPERIENCE, AND TEACHERS WITH K-12 CERTIFICATION AND AT LEAST FIVE YEARS OF TEACHING EXPERIENCE IN EITHER K-12 OR ABE. CERTIFICATION IN MASSACHUSETTS, AS IN OTHER STATES, WAS TO BE BUILT ON A FOUNDATION OF REQUIRED "COMPETENCIES," WITH THE ADDED PROVISION THAT IN ESTABLISHING THE COMPETENCIES THE STATE WILL BE "FLEXIBLE AND CREATIVE" (DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, MASS., 1999, P. 5) SO

AS TO ENSURE THAT THIS CERTIFICATION REFLECTS THE UNIQUE CHARACTERISTICS OF ABE. ON JANUARY 26, 2001, THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION APPROVED A DRAFT SET OF REGULATIONS FOR PROVIDING A VOLUNTARY LICENSE FOR TEACHERS OF ADULT BASIC EDUCATION. THE DEPARTMENT HOPES TO ACCOMMODATE THE NEEDS OF THE FIELD BY PROPOSING FOUR "ROUTES" TO LICENSURE, RANGING FROM PROSPECTIVE AND NOVICE ABE TEACHERS TO THOSE WITH FIVE YEARS OF ABE TEACHING EXPERIENCE. TO OBTAIN A LICENSE, EVEN THE MOST EXPERIENCED TEACHERS MUST INDICATE PROFICIENCY IN AT LEAST EIGHT "STANDARDS." THE STANDARDS LISTED IN THE NEW REGULATIONS ARE BASICALLY THE SAME AS THE

RECOMMENDED LIST OF
COMPETENCIES FOR
MASSACHUSETTS LISTED IN THE
1999 REPORT, BUT THE TERM
STANDARDS IS NOW USED FOR
THEM.

Establishing these standards was a result of intensive in-state and out-of-state research review and consensus building. The proposed list adopted virtually all the teaching competencies already required in Massachusetts for K-12 teachers, with "minor revisions to make them more age appropriate." Additional competencies are those that have been cited by practitioners as particularly relevant to teachers of adult literacy, adult secondary, and ESOL teaching, including knowledge in core areas such as adult learning theory and in areas of specialization such as reading or ESOL.

The Massachusetts Department of Education has stipulated that the

standards to be established for ABE certification should focus on mastery of what adult educators need to know and be able to do to ensure the success of their students. While the department does state that certification will be voluntary and that it is committed to facilitating access to certification for all ABE teachers, it has acknowledged the difficulties that part-time workers will encounter in pursuing certification (Department of Education, Mass., 1999, p. 6). The department suggests that the proposed regulations present a proficiency-based license, and notes that if accepted, "this will be the first stand-alone ABE teacher's license in the nation" (Department of Education, Mass., 2001).

Though the routes to professionalization are both diverse and flexible, the state's primary commitment appears to be the certification of full-time professionals. According to the 1999 report, the state

believes that "to achieve high levels of performance, we must foster a core of full time career adult educators within each [ABE] program. We will continue to promote policies that support an increase in the number of the full time staff in the [ABE] programs we fund" (Department of Education, Mass., 1999, p. 6). It is clear from this statement that program funding will be affected by the number of "full-time" professionals employed.

MEASUREMENT OF SUCCESS. IT IS NOT CLEAR HOW TEACHER COMPETENCIES AND STANDARDS, ONCE ESTABLISHED, WILL BE DOCUMENTED. SEVERAL DIFFERENT METHODS HAVE BEEN PROPOSED THAT MIGHT PROVIDE EVIDENCE OF PROFICIENCY. AMONG THESE ARE R...SUM...S, SUMMARIES OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT, SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING PROJECTS WITH

DEMONSTRABLE OUTCOMES, COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS THAT MET STATED GOALS, CASE STUDIES ILLUSTRATING THE DEVELOPMENT OF STRATEGIES OR MATERIALS, ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHIES, VIDEOTAPES OF CLASSES, PRESENTATIONS, AND AWARDS. WHILE IT IS NOT CLEAR HOW THIS WILL BE DONE, IT APPEARS THAT THESE VARIOUS KINDS OF EVIDENCE OF PROFICIENCY WILL BE EVALUATED, PERHAPS BY ALIGNMENT WITH COMPETENCY STANDARDS ESTABLISHED BY THE STATE. HOWEVER, IT IS CLEAR THAT AT LEAST some coursework or some combination of courses and "clusters of competencies" (meaning sets of related competencies that work together in a particular area) will be a core requirement. There is also some evidence that proficiency can be

demonstrated by passing Part 1 of the Massachusetts Teacher's Test. Issues still to be resolved include the title of certification, practicum requirements, options for demonstrating proficiency, recertification, requirements, and piloting of the certification process. Perhaps more important, however, is assessing the impact of increased demand for evidence of teacher certification on program outcomes and student learning. As yet, no tools are in place to measure these.

STATUS REPORT. The system is not yet in place, and the state continues to solicit input to try to arrive at a consensus for a certification process that will both ensure a professional workforce and be flexible enough to accommodate nontraditional evidence of teaching proficiency. A note in the proposed regulations document, which states, "The department may not require the licensure of teachers of ABE, but it

may be required by individual employers or other agencies that sponsor ABE programs" (Department of Education, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 2001, p. 21), may cause some initial problems and confusion because of conflicting requirements. The state's shift away from a top-down mandate and toward bottom-up consensus building may indicate that Massachusetts fits our definition of a hybrid model of change, since efforts have been driven by a number of different forces, including pressure from federal or state legislation and the perception of unmet student needs within the existing system. However, it is clear from the reports on the process of developing competencies that it was both controlled and directed from the state level. While input from the field was sought, the traditional methods of coursework (either alone or in combination with "competencies"), testing, and in-service training to ensure competency remain firmly in place.

Though the state has invested considerable resources in developing indicators of competency, not much visible effort has been expended on measurement or evaluation. Nor has any systematic research been conducted on the process and progress of teachers as they try to find ways to meet these requirements.

Texas

In the early 1990s, the Texas Association for Literacy and Adult Education (TALAE), a professional organization of ABE practitioners and administrators, made initial attempts to raise interest in credentialing and moving toward standardization of professional development for adult educators. They got as far as having a bill brought before the state legislature, but funding for the process was not forthcoming. The effort was then abandoned. As this effort was going on, the K-12 system initiated a statewide teacher certification

examination requirement as part of an effort to justify state funding and to ensure that qualified teachers were being hired.

DIRECTION OF CHANGE. DURING THE LATE 1990S, THE TALAE PERCEIVED THAT IF STATE APPROPRIATIONS FOR ABE WERE TO BE INCREASED, THE FIELD WOULD HAVE TO EXPRESS ITS NEEDS AND PRIORITIES TO THE LEGISLATURE MORE CLEARLY AND MAKE IT APPARENT THAT THE ABE SYSTEM IS STAFFED WITH A PROFESSIONAL CADRE OF EDUCATORS WHO PROVIDE HIGH-QUALITY SERVICES. TALAE MEMBERS FELT THAT THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN ABE CREDENTIAL WOULD PROVIDE THIS ASSURANCE. THEY SAW THAT ANOTHER BENEFICIAL OUTCOME OF A MOVEMENT TOWARD CREDENTIALING ADULT

EDUCATORS MIGHT BE THAT HIGH-QUALITY EDUCATORS WOULD BE ATTRACTED TO WORKING IN THE FIELD, THEREBY IMPROVING ABE PROVISION AND PROGRAMS. THE RATIONALE, AS ARTICULATED BY ACTING STATE DIRECTOR DEBORAH STEDMAN, WAS THAT CREDENTIALING WOULD LEAD TO BETTER TEACHERS, WHICH IN TURN WOULD LEAD TO BETTER OUTCOMES, OUTCOMES THAT WOULD BOTH DEMONSTRATE ACCOUNTABILITY AND IMPRESS LEGISLATORS. THIS PROCESS, ONCE COMPLETED, WOULD ULTIMATELY LEAD TO BETTER FUNDING.

Under the 1998 Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, Title II of the Workforce Investment Act, the Division of Adult and Community Education of the Texas Education Agency developed

the Texas State Plan for Adult and Family Education to guide ABE provision for the next five years. The state established fifty-five geographic areas to manage ABE and held a competitive application process to establish the fiscal agents to oversee ABE in each area. Approximately half of the fifty-five fiscal agents are school districts, about a quarter are regional educational service centers that are state-funded and generally provide technical support to K-12 systems, and another quarter are public colleges, mostly community and junior colleges. Two fiscal agents are community-based organizations.

The fiscal agents oversee approximately 3,500 teachers, of whom 200-250 teach full time; more than 90 percent of the ABE teaching force work part time. The minimum qualification established by the State Department of Education for adult educators is attainment of a

bachelor's degree. State teacher certification in any discipline is rewarded with a higher salary and fewer required professional development hours. Most ABE teachers are active or retired schoolteachers who have certification.

An initial credentialing system has been designed to function within the structures of the fifty-five fiscal agents. Additional input was sought from all stakeholders through focus groups, organization and project online discussion groups, and conference sessions. The credentialing process is being pilot tested during 2001 with a limited number of educators from across the state.

ACTION PLAN. THE TALAE PETITIONED THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION TASK FORCE TO SET ASIDE MONEY FOR AN EFFORT TO PROFESSIONALIZE THE FIELD. THIS RESULTED IN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SECTION

29.252 OF THE EDUCATION CODE, MANDATING THAT THE TEXAS EDUCATION AGENCY "PRESCRIBE AND ADMINISTER STANDARDS AND ACCREDITING POLICIES FOR ABE; PRESCRIBE AND ADMINISTER RULES FOR TEACHER CERTIFICATION FOR ADULT EDUCATION." FUNDING WAS GRANTED AND A THREE-PRONGED PROCESS WAS UNDERTAKEN TO ACHIEVE THIS GOAL.

First, the Adult Education Professional Development Consortium, in place since 1992, was charged with primary responsibility for providing the state's ABE teachers with high-quality professional development. The consortium is composed of four major centers, two of which focus on ABE and two on ESL provision, plus other smaller professional development providers. While professional development

requirements for teachers are still being fulfilled by seat-time requirements rather than by professional outcomes or products, the consortium is in a position to provide or monitor the quality of professional development activities to ensure high standards.

Second, to inform the priorities and design of professional development provision, the consortium was also charged with developing a list of teacher proficiencies. Input from all stakeholders was encouraged, and focus groups were held around the state. The initial draft of proficiencies was disseminated widely and, following additional input from teachers, administrators, and consortium members, underwent significant revision.

Third, and at the same time, Southwest Texas State University was contracted to develop a workable model for a voluntary ABE credential and credentialing system that would have the

support of the field. It has not yet been decided which state department will monitor the system. The Adult Education Credential Project has at this point proposed a credential model for new educators as well as those with more than three years of ABE teaching experience. The model addresses proposed content areas, a proposed delivery system, and a proposed documentation system.

The proposed Texas credentialing system is designed to achieve a number of worthy goals. Primarily, the system is to build local capacity by supporting the development of a cadre of master teachers to share their knowledge and skills and to serve as mentors. The system also builds on and will enhance the existing professional development structure rather than create a parallel system. Many of the courses, workshops, conferences, and institutes already exist, and demand from the field and consistent

monitoring by the credential project staff and the Texas Education Agency should increase availability and accountability.

An attempt has been made to strike a balance between a seat-time requirement (time spent taking a course, participating in a workshop, or attending conference sessions) and content proficiency demonstration (being observed, presenting at a conference, mentoring another teacher, or conducting action research). In addition, to receive credit for any seat-time activity, participants must submit a culminating reflection and response report that includes a summary of what was learned, a reflection on the relevance of the content to them and to their classes, and an explanation of how they will implement what they have learned-with evidence of that implementation, if appropriate. The system is flexible enough to meet the varying needs of teachers-such as those living in rural areas, working full-time

during the day, or caring for family members-so that their participation is not prohibited.

The system relies on the current professional development system already in place in Texas but contributes a structure and standardization to the system. The range of delivery options is intentionally wide, and each option is assigned a number of points that will count toward achieving the credential. Alternatives include

- University course (3 semester hours; 30 points)
- Online course (3 semester hours; 30 points)
- Intensive institute (25 points)
- Standard institute (15 points)
- Instructor observation (15 points)
- Mentorship (15 points)
- Study group (15 points)
- Two-day workshop (10 points)
- One-day workshop (5 points)
- Five conference sessions (5 points)
- Presentation at conference (5 points)
- Web page development (5 points)

The particular content of the professional development activity will determine the

assignment of points to core content areas; each activity type requires a particular form of documentation.

The proposed system varies slightly for those just entering the field and for those who are already working as full- or part-time teachers with more than three years of experience. Each teacher is required to complete 115 points (125 for new teachers) that are spread across six core content areas:

- Principles of adult learning (25 points)
- Teaching-learning transaction with adult students (30 points)
- Diverse learning styles, abilities, and cultures (20 points)
- Integrating technology into adult learning (20 points)
- Accountability systems (15 points)
- Field participation (15 points)

Once the core credential has been completed, an optional subject area specialization (70 additional points) is available for those interested.

New and experienced full-time teachers will be given three years to complete their credential; part-timers will have six years. The final year for all will be devoted to a structured, formal teacher action research project with required products, using the Project IDEA model of El Paso Community College and monitored by the Credential Project. Before the final year, a Credential-Project-approved team member will conduct an on-site instructional evaluation of the candidate. Experienced teachers will have an opportunity to receive credit for professional development activities in which they participated over the last five years and for graduate coursework they completed over the last seven years.

MEASUREMENT OF SUCCESS. THE STRENGTH OF THE MODEL RESIDES IN THE CONGRUENCE IT ATTEMPTS TO ESTABLISH BETWEEN THE TEXAS ADULT

EDUCATION INSTRUCTOR
PROFICIENCIES AND THE CORE
CONTENT AREAS OF THE ADULT
EDUCATION CREDENTIAL MODEL.
THE EXTENT TO WHICH
STAKEHOLDERS PERCEIVE THAT
THE CREDENTIAL REFLECTS
ATTAINMENT OF MEANINGFUL
SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES WILL
DETERMINE ITS LEGITIMACY.

Measuring the success of the Texas credentialing system is difficult, especially since participation has been envisioned as voluntary, although the new state director, Sheila Rosenberg, anticipates that participation will become required. It is hoped that a practitioner who attains the credential will have a better chance of being given one of the limited number of full-time positions that provide benefits. Such a commitment by hiring organizations would certainly encourage participation. An additional measure of success will be

if the system is legitimized and supported by a state education agency. Alternatively, perhaps a professional association will adopt the system and encourage participation.

One particular bright spot in the Texas plan is its commitment to documenting the development of the credentialing system. This will help others understand, appreciate, and learn from the pitfalls, false starts, ongoing concerns, and necessary compromises that were made. Insight into the development process allows those both inside and outside of the system to understand it better.

STATUS REPORT. PROJECT PERSONNEL BELIEVE THAT THE SYSTEM WILL BE FULLY FUNCTIONAL BY 2005 OR 2006. IN THE COURSE OF THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS, THE SYSTEM IS CONTINUALLY BEING REVIEWED BY ALL

STAKEHOLDERS, WITH NUMEROUS SCHEDULED FORUMS PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR INPUT AS WELL AS AN OPEN CALL FOR COMMENTS FROM TEXANS AND ANY OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES.

During 2001, the project is undertaking a year-long pilot test of the system. Ten practitioners will work toward their certification and will receive stipends to contribute to a qualitative and quantitative evaluation of their experience. An additional hundred volunteer practitioners will also participate. If the project is refunded, the pilot testing will be extended.

The documentation process for the credentialing system will be electronic and work continues in the development of the software to manage the data. Participating teachers will have electronic portfolios in which to keep

their documentation from professional development providers, individual professional development plans, transcripts, attendance records, instructor observation reports, reflections, and so on.

Summary

The plans for professionalization of the ABE workforce in both Massachusetts and Texas demonstrate that each state is very much aware of the debate in K-12 education on the reform of teacher preparation and development. Each state has adopted performance evaluation methods that combine some seat-time requirements (coursework, workshops) with alternative, performance-based measures (portfolios). Texas has also pledged to support a "core" of professional teachers whom the state will look to for leadership as they work to create an infrastructure on which to build. The approach to building the systems is different: Texas will try to

create a system that builds on the one in place, while Massachusetts has set up a system that is separate from but parallel to the K-12 system.

One interesting aspect of both efforts is the decision to make participation in these systems voluntary. No state has a voluntary K-12 system. All K-12 teachers are required to have at least some credentials for both hiring and continued employment. Nor, to our knowledge, is the achievement of basic credentials voluntary in any other profession. Built into K-12 systems are incentives for teachers to increase their expertise well beyond these basic requirements. While Texas has included some incentives (like salary increases) for teachers who voluntarily increase their professional expertise, Massachusetts has not (to date) done so. This raises a number of questions: What kind of results can be expected from a completely voluntary system of

professionalization? Will teachers in fact choose to participate? Although some might do so for altruistic reasons or for personal enrichment and interest, for many, participation may depend on external incentives for gaining the credential. What can teachers expect in return for investing their time and energy in becoming certified in a field where there are few full-time, stable positions that include benefits?

It may be, of course, that the states see the voluntary option as temporary, to be used only as they try to create viable systems and increase funding. That both states are committed to the certification of full-time professionals and are establishing rather detailed requirements indicates that they may be moving in that direction. Their success in professionalizing the ABE field will depend on where they end up. If the credential eventually required is perceived as imposed and arbitrary-a

top-down mandate-there may be great resistance to it on the part of those to be certified. If, however, the credential is perceived as an expression of the profession's own standards (a bottom-up movement), then, as the experience of Massachusetts demonstrates, more support will be forthcoming. If, in addition, the credential is supported at the policy level, conferring benefits such as status, salary increases, and stability it is still more likely to succeed. Teachers must see some advantage in being credentialed.

OBSTACLES TO CHANGE

Even with the many promising initiatives now under way, a number of major obstacles remain in the path of professionalization for adult educators.

- Overzealous accountability demands from the top down. The positive atmosphere in which certification is now being considered was built on the efforts of states and programs committed to providing and supporting professional development in a flexible manner with the goal of

improving program effectiveness and student outcomes. If certification is perceived by practitioners and programs as merely a means of punitive evaluation and bureaucratic intrusion, then field resistance will block change. Grassroots buy-in is essential to continued progress.

- Accountability anxiety from the bottom up. The increased accountability demand of the WIA and the phasing in of state and national reporting systems have increased anxiety at the program level and raised suspicions that the demands on programs are exceeding the resources and support provided. Part-timers, volunteers, and other support staff may perceive any professionalization initiative as an effort to push them out.
- Credibility of adult basic education within the administering organizations in the state. Adult literacy is still administered by state departments of education, community college systems, departments of labor, and combinations of these and other governmental agencies. The stature and influence of adult literacy vary greatly from state to state. Progress may require negotiating or collaborating with these organizations, forging new alliances, or advocating directly to state legislatures. Progress may rest entirely on the leadership and experience of the adult literacy state director, a position with a high turnover rate.
- One-size-fits-all solutions. Rapid changes in student populations and demographics, a growing field with a changing infrastructure, and a changing legislative and policy environment are all factors in favor of flexible, multileveled

systems.

- Supply and demand of the K-12 system. The shortage of K-12 teachers is a problem nationwide, and the infrastructure that would make ABE an economically attractive choice is not in place. Given such dynamics, competing with school systems for qualified adult professionals is a reality.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY, PRACTICE, AND RESEARCH

Much as it is important to document obstacles to the development of professionalization and certification in the field of adult basic education, it is important to note the many opportunities for change that present themselves. This section recommends positive actions for change in policy, practice, and research.

Policy

A number of policies recommend themselves to successful efforts at increasing professionalization, and several of these have been adopted in Massachusetts and Texas—for example,

- State commitment to the value of professionalization for full-time adult educators,

which encourages increased professionalization for other practitioners

- An established track record of supporting professional development at multiple levels
- Providing incentives at the teacher and program levels
- Fostering coalition building among stakeholders
- Grassroots involvement in the setting of teaching and learning standards that will become the foundation of requirements
- Constructing flexible systems with multiple options that suggest a willingness to adapt and revise

A number of other policies can also be recommended to states seeking to establish a professional ABE workforce. These include a long-term vision that recognizes that professionalization is not an end in itself but rather a tool for building capacity and a comprehensive ABE service system for learners. States also should establish processes for aligning competencies and professional development activities to teacher needs and changing learner demographics and for aligning certification and professional development to learner standards and outcomes. Evaluation and

monitoring systems that provide programs and policymakers with feedback for improvement are not much in evidence, and are sorely needed. Finally, states should support research and evaluation that links certification and competency processes to program improvement and learner outcomes.

Practice

Practitioners need to reflect on the knowledge, skills, practices, and proficiencies that define competence in teaching in general and that are specific to the adult literacy educator. To what extent are the teaching standards and competencies embodied in the PRO-NET and various NBPTS frameworks applicable to the adult educator? What accountability mechanisms can the field of practitioners accept and embrace as legitimately reflecting the standards of performance teachers expect of their peers?

Practitioners also need to reflect on the learning needs of adults and how they are embodied in content standards. How relevant are the specific K-12 content standards to adult educators? The K-12 curriculum standards represent a societal judgment regarding the outcome of education expected for all citizens. One could conclude that the expectations for adult learners would be to achieve and even exceed the standards set for K-12 students. On the other hand, the needs of adult literacy learners as expressed in the EFF framework put greater emphasis on adult roles and responsibilities than on the subject matter content that is the curricular focus of K-12 education. Preparing to teach as if both approaches are of equal weight would only increase the burden on adult educators. Resolving this apparent conflict is critical to better defining an adult literacy teaching profession.

Practitioners should also consider the

extent to which they wish to form a stronger alliance with the K-12 professional community in general. The benefits of a stronger alliance could include greater prestige and status in the educational community, stronger support and advocacy on the part of teacher unions, and the potential for increased salary and job stability. At the same time, the concerns cited by Perin (1998-99) and others about the disadvantages of alliance with K-12 continue to be valid. Vigilance is necessary to guard against the implementation of systems that

- Discriminate against ABE in favor of K-12
- Restrict the entry of or eliminate valuable staff members with less formal preparation, such as staff with close ties to the community, part-time staff, and volunteers (which does not mean these staff should not be required to demonstrate teaching competence)
- Increase bureaucratic control or government intrusion into teacher preparation and program activities
- Favor seat-time over teaching standards and competence-based approaches

In sum, the disadvantages include loss of a "valid and distinct" identity as an adult literacy educator. A goal of professionalization may be to better define a collection of persons as representing a field of endeavor, but the difficulty is that decisions regarding who is included and excluded in that professional community must be faced. Finally, practitioners must be active participants and advocates for their profession through active membership in state coalitions and professional organizations. As noted, progressive policy-level initiatives look to the grass roots to be informed of how best to implement change. In this way, practitioners can continue to provide leadership in advocating for legislative change, developing teaching and learning standards or competencies, and organizing, communicating, or gathering input from the field to inform policy that helps build the capacity and infrastructure to support an adult literacy

teaching profession.

Research

A research agenda to support and inform the movement toward professionalization would address a number of issues.

Foremost are studies linking the impact of competencies and certification processes to learner outcomes and program improvement. Such studies must be longitudinal and may be difficult and expensive to conduct. However, they are helpful in understanding and evaluating the foundational knowledge and competencies upon which credentialing systems are built. Case studies focused on innovative state programs such as those described in this chapter and in the National Institute for Literacy (2000) report are also needed to better understand the impact of policy on the recruitment, retention, and morale of adult educators. Similarly, more needs analyses and surveys of adult educators should be conducted (full- and part-time

teachers across the variety of programs and contexts serving adults) to better gauge and understand their interest in certification and their views as to whether such certification would have positive or negative impacts on job stability, salary, status, and self-improvement.

Another line of research would address the relationship between K-12 teacher preparation and ABE teaching competence, with special attention to how reforms of the K-12 system can inform a more progressive ABE teacher system. Questions to address might include the following: How would programs specifically targeted to adult educators differ from the typical teacher preparation program? Would a specialization consisting of a set of courses specifically on ABE theory and practice suffice? Are courses aligned to specific K-12 certification types (for example, early childhood education)

relevant to ABE, or would such courses foster misconceptions about adult learning?

In general, the body of research that looks at teaching and teacher education in K-12 is quite rich and elaborated. The unique and valid characteristics of adult literacy educators may best be articulated and documented by conducting research comparing and contrasting their perspectives, experiences, and contexts against this body of work.

Notes

1. One goal of standardizing the profession would be to provide the public at large with the assurance that adult education practitioners maintain a high level of competence that is consistent throughout the profession (Galbraith & Gilley, 1986). The notion of standardized professional responses does not mean that all professional adult educators would act with unanimity—for example, all applying the same instructional methods. However, the range of instructional methods would be more limited, and all would be consistent with high standards of competence serving as guidelines for the profession.

2. Accountability is a complex issue of its own and we have not addressed here the many ethical and operational ramifications that different approaches to accountability entail. Two such fundamental issues are the nature and types of assessment one uses to measure student outcome and who should or can be accountable for results. Regarding the latter issue, John Tibbetts (personal communication, Feb. 21, 2001) commented, "Teachers should not (cannot) be held accountable for student learning any more than we would make a rehabilitation counselor responsible for a client's failure to stop drinking. Teachers should be held accountable for teaching in the best way that we know how to teach. They can do no more than that. Students, in the best constructivist tradition, must be accountable for their own learning. And management must be accountable for providing structure, guidance and support to programs and instructors."

We are concerned, as are many in the educational community, of the misuse of testing and accountability in education. Our point is that accountability is a political and operational reality. Our goal and hope is that it be implemented sensibly and responsibly, serving the ends of a continuous improvement program evaluation model. To illustrate using the reviewer's example, given the same population and counseling program for clientele with alcohol addictions, a measure of outcomes could show that one counselor had a considerably higher rate

of success than a colleague in preventing the recurrence of alcohol abuse in clients. If that information were validly and reliably collected, and the sources of those difference in performance can be identified and used to improve training or support for other counselors or the program, then the accountability mechanisms are justifiable.

3. The GED program has provided an alternative pathway to attaining a high school equivalency diploma for adults for many years. Its credibility as a credential for higher education institutions and business is built upon, in part, its correspondence to the standards of the academic curriculum of secondary education (reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social studies) and its normative reference to graduating high school seniors, which establishes validity of the test as demonstrating that adults who pass the test have skills comparable to those of this target group.

Whether and to what extent the content of the high school curriculum or the approaches to teaching it are adapted to the functional needs of adults is a somewhat different content standards issue. The GED tests are given to high school seniors in the norm-referencing validation studies, so the content and skills necessary to achieve high scores on the tests cannot be highly related to different or unique adult learning principles or contexts in contrast to those that are part of secondary school education. Our point here is that, as sensible as it may be to have established

the validity of an adult credential by benchmarking "tests" against the curriculum standards of a secondary education diploma, it still leaves open the question of what the most appropriate and best curriculum standards for adults may be. Thanks to a reviewer for recommending this expanded discussion.

4. Sherman et al. (1999) cite using as resources guidelines published in Minnesota (Teaching Principles and Competencies for the Minnesota Adult Educator), Kentucky (Competency Profile of an Adult Basic Skills Instructor), Texas (Adult Education Instructor), several from California (including ESL Handbook for Adult Education Instructors, Model Standards for Adult Education, and the Adult Education Programs of Excellence), and Pennsylvania's ABLE Practitioners of Excellence Project. As noted by a reviewer, the foundational work done by Mocker (1974) was an oft-used resource in state development projects.
5. A full description of the National Board Assessment system can be found at <http://www.nbpts.org>.

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[Chapter 7](#) ➔