

Framework for Quality Professional Development for Practitioners Working With Adult English Language Learners



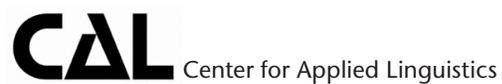
Framework for Quality Professional Development for Practitioners Working With Adult English Language Learners

CENTER FOR ADULT ENGLISH LANGUAGE ACQUISITION (CAELA) NETWORK
CENTER FOR APPLIED LINGUISTICS, WASHINGTON, DC
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Both professional educational organizations and federal and state legislative bodies view professional development as essential... and are more invested in assuring that teachers have ongoing opportunities to learn as an integral part of their practice.

—Rosemary, Roskos, & Landreth (2007)

 **CAELA**
NETWORK



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Proofreading: Amy Fitch

Design: Francis Sheehan (based on original design by Pottman Design)

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Introduction

For many years, there has been interest in the field of adult education in teacher quality, effective instruction, and the impact of these on learner progress (e.g., National Center for ESL Literacy Education, 2003; Smith & Gillespie, 2007). The Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) in the U.S. Department of Education has played a leadership role in providing resources to enhance teacher quality and guide the improvement of adult education programs.

One area of focus, professional development for practitioners working with adults learning English, has become especially important in the last 20 years as our country has seen the immigrant population grow rapidly. As a result of this growth, many adult education programs are working with new populations of adults who need to learn English. Given the labor market demands of the 21st century, it is important that adult educators prepare English language learners to transition to postsecondary education and employment. For this, a strong workforce of trained and knowledgeable practitioners is needed that can work effectively with adults learning English and facilitate their transitions through adult education programs and into postsecondary education and employment.

The Center for Adult English Language Acquisition (CAELA) Network, under contract with OVAE, has created a framework that can be used to plan, implement, and evaluate professional development for practitioners working with adult English language learners at the state, regional, and program levels. The framework addresses the need to improve student learning and facilitate learner progress through and beyond programs and, as a result, the need for high-quality adult education practitioners and professional development programs for them.

The CAELA Network Framework

The framework is based, in part, on *An Environmental Scan of Adult Numeracy Professional Development Initiatives and Practices*, developed by the American Institutes for Research (AIR; Sherman et al., 2006). AIR's environmental scan resulted in the identification of the following essential and desirable features of professional development in adult education:

- Occurs over time; is not a one-shot activity
- Is built on activities that help instructors advance their own understanding of the subject matter and the ways adults learn this subject matter
- Helps instructors connect content and materials to real-world situations
- Reflects the research on how adults learn
- Reflects national or state standards
- Is designed for instructors in adult education programs
- Contains materials whose subject matter accommodates different learner backgrounds
- Includes an evaluation component to appraise change in the knowledge and practices of instructors
- Incorporates affective factor intervention (e.g., study skills, time management, reduction in anxiety)
- Uses appropriate technology to prepare and support participants before, during, and after intervention

The framework provided here is also informed by professional development frameworks developed by professional associations, research from peer-reviewed publications in adult education journals and relevant journals that specialize in K–12 education, and other relevant publications that focus on the professionalization of practitioners working with adult English language learners. (See References for the list of works that inform this framework.)

Purpose and Uses of the Framework

This framework focuses on the knowledge and skills that teachers and administrators need, as well as the systems and processes necessary to help them work effectively with the adult English language learners in their programs. State- and program-level administrators, professional developers, teacher trainers, and teachers can use this framework as they seek to improve instruction with the goal of facilitating learner progress through a systematic, coherent, and sustainable professional development effort. This program improvement process can enhance the design of professional development opportunities, which can in turn improve instructional quality, practitioner responses to learner needs, and learners' progress. The desired outcome is a workforce of trained, knowledgeable practitioners who can respond to the needs of adult English language learners through high-quality, evidence-based practice.

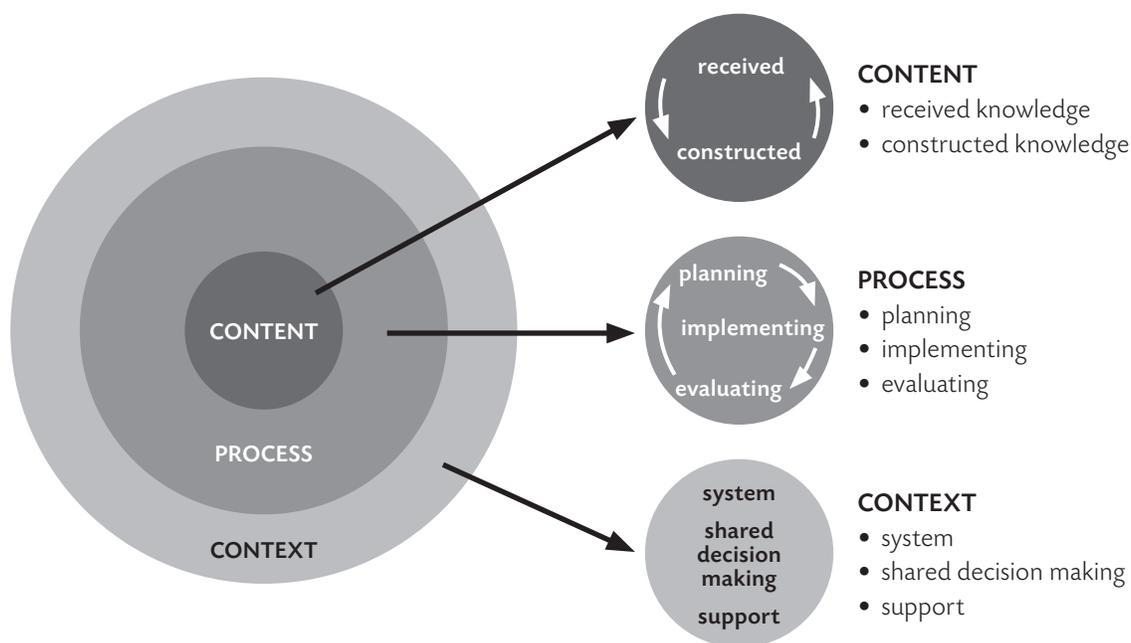


Figure 1. Components of the CAELA Network Quality Professional Development Framework.

The framework has three components (Figure 1):

- The *content* that practitioners need to be successful in working with adult English language learners
- The *process* for planning, implementing, and evaluating professional development for practitioners
- The *context* in which professional development is provided

Each of these components, with its specific elements, is described in the following section. The elements that are also on AIR's list of features of high-quality professional development are designated with an asterisk (*).

Framework for Quality Professional Development ■

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CONTENT

The content of professional development focuses on the knowledge that practitioners (teachers and administrators) need in order to work effectively with the adult English language learners in their programs.

The content of professional development includes both knowledge received in workshops, classes, and conferences, and knowledge constructed by or among practitioners through practice and focused reflection. There is a dynamic and reciprocal relationship between received and constructed knowledge (Borg, 2006; Crandall, 2000; Freeman & Johnson, 1998, 2004; Vygotsky, 1986; Yates & Muchisky, 2003). Therefore, knowledge received in professional development sessions has an impact on program design and delivery and on teaching and learning in classrooms, and knowledge constructed in classrooms and programs influences what practitioners need to receive next in professional development sessions.

The distinction between received and constructed knowledge can be seen clearly in the following scenario. In a professional development workshop, practitioners may be presented with the definition of *interlanguage*—the intermediate patterns of language use between the target language (English) and the learner’s first language (Ellis, 2000; Selinker, 1972). That is, in moving from the first or native language to the target language, learners make hypotheses about how a language works; these hypotheses are part of the learner’s interlanguage. Learners may produce some erroneous forms because they have a faulty hypothesis about the target language at a stage of their learning (Dulay & Burt, 1972, 1974a, 1974b, 1976; Ellis, 2000). For example, a learner may use the “-ed” suffix for all past tense forms, even for irregular verbs, such as *went*. If a teacher sees such a pattern in the forms the learner is producing, then she or he can deduce that the learner has a faulty hypothesis about formation of English past tense and can address this issue in instruction.

Teachers and tutors can grasp the concept of interlanguage and how it affects learner movement toward producing correct target language forms. In order to come to a deeper knowledge of what interlanguage is and benefit from this knowledge in their teaching, they need to apply it when working with their own students. For example, after a training in which teachers and tutors learn about interlanguage (received knowledge), they may be given activities to apply what they have learned. They may be asked to analyze several pieces of student writing for interlanguage patterns, ascertain if there are consistencies in the forms used, and determine what hypotheses the learners may have about English. They can then detail what lessons they would teach to lead the learners toward correct hypotheses about the language. Through this activity of analyzing their students’ writing, the teachers are constructing their knowledge about interlanguage. In future professional development sessions, they can discuss what they have learned and obtain more information about this topic.

PRACTITIONER KNOWLEDGE

In working with adult English language learners, the content knowledge that practitioners need to both receive and construct includes the following:

- The characteristics and needs of their students based on a review of data on learner goals, levels, and performance (Schaetzel, Peyton, & Burt, 2007; Young & Peyton, 2008)
- The processes of second language acquisition for adult learners (e.g., interlanguage, the impact of native language proficiency on second language acquisition, stages of acquisition) (Dulay & Burt, 1972, 1974a, 1974b, 1976; Ellis, 2000; Fillmore & Snow, 2002; Florez & Burt, 2001; Muchisky & Yates, 2004; Yates & Muchisky, 2003)
- The processes of learning components of the language (e.g., sound-symbol correspondence, grammar, vocabulary) (Burt, Peyton, & Adams, 2003; Fillmore & Snow, 2002; Muchisky & Yates, 2004; Yates & Muchisky, 2003)
- The types and impact of native language literacy on English language and literacy learning (e.g., nonliterate, literate in a nonalphabetic script, literate in a Roman alphabetic script) (Birch, 2002; Burt, Peyton, & Adams, 2003; Davidson & Strucker, 2002; Hilferty, 1996; Huntley, 1992; Strucker, 1997)
- The affective factors that can influence adult learning (e.g., study skills, time management, level of anxiety and confidence)* (Fillmore & Snow, 2002, Florez & Burt, 2001; Gee, 2004; Hawkins, 2004; Haynes, 2005)
- The evidence-based principles and instructional strategies for teaching adults learning English (e.g., direct method, communicative language learning, project-based learning) (Brown, 2000; Hall & Hewings, 2001)
- The selection and use of valid, appropriate, and reliable assessments to inform instruction and provide feedback about learner progress (e.g., standardized, formative, performance, and authentic assessment) (Bachman, 1990; Kenyon & Van Duzer, 2003; Mislevy & Knowles, 2003)

- The use of ESL content standards and curriculum guidelines to guide instruction and align with assessment (e.g., benchmarks, scope and sequence, and proficiency levels) (Schaezel & Young, 2007; U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, n.d.; Young & Smith, 2006)
- The appropriate uses of technology to support adult learners before, during, and after instruction* (e.g., guided practice, communicative practice, application of language skills) (Chapelle, 2003; National Center for ESL Literacy Education, 2003)

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The purpose of professional development is to improve instruction so that learners might improve their English language proficiency and literacy. For this reason, the professional development process necessarily begins with analysis of data on student goals and performance. What are students' goals? Where are they performing well? Where are they not performing well? With this information, it can be determined what practitioner changes are needed in order to increase student learning. Data on student attendance, completion of levels, and persistence also need to be examined, along with data on practitioner background and needs. These data can be triangulated with data on local, state, and national resources and initiatives. For more information on analyzing data to inform professional development planning, see *Using Data to Plan Professional Development for Practitioners Working With Adult English Language Learners* (Young & Peyton, 2008).

The professional development process includes planning, implementing, and evaluating professional development. This cyclical process helps to ensure that professional development opportunities respond to practitioners' needs and that experience and feedback guide the design and planning of subsequent activities.

PLANNING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Planning involves deciding who will be involved in professional development activities, with what content and skills focus, and on what schedule.

- The planned content is designed for practitioners working in adult education programs* (Association of Adult Literacy Professional Developers, in press; Earley & Bubb, 2004; National Center for ESL Literacy Education, 2003).
- The planned content responds to practitioners' assessed needs (Gonzalez & Darling-Hammond, 1997; Kutner, Sherman, Tibbetts, & Condelli, 1997).
- The planned content reflects requirements of national and state program, content, and teacher standards* (American Federation of Teachers, 2002).
- The planned content reflects requirements in state and federal policy directives (Association of Adult Literacy Professional Developers, n.d.; Earley & Bubb, 2004; National Center for ESL Literacy Education, 2003).
- The content, manner of delivery, and application of professional development are shaped by data (Fullan, 2007; Gonzalez & Darling-Hammond, 1997; Kutner et al., 1997; Smith, Hofer, Gillespie, Solomon, & Rowe, 2003).
- The content of professional development is planned by a team of practitioners (teachers, administrators, and professional developers) (American Federation of Teachers, 2002; Corley, 2003; Fullan, 2007; Joyce & Showers, 2002; National Council of Teachers of English, 2006; Senge, 1990; Shulman & Shulman, 2004; Smith & Rowley, 2005).

IMPLEMENTING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Implementation involves the delivery of and practitioner participation in professional development activities.

- The presentation of content reflects research on how adults learn* (Association of Adult Literacy Professional Developers, in press; Earley & Bubb, 2004; National Center for ESL Literacy Education, 2003).
- The presentation of content accommodates different participant backgrounds, covering the breadth of topics needed by new practitioners and the depth of knowledge needed by more experienced practitioners* (American Federation of Teachers, 2002).
- The professional development program uses technology to support participants before, during, and after the professional development sessions* (Dede, 2006; National Center for ESL Literacy Education, 2003).
- Professional development sessions are not an isolated event but rather are followed up by ongoing opportunities for reflection and practice* (Fullan, 2007; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001; Smith & Gillespie, 2007).
- Opportunities are provided to learn and apply content occur over time and are not confined to one-time activities* (Fullan, 2007; Garet et al., 2001; Smith & Gillespie, 2007).
- Opportunities include activities that help practitioners advance their own understanding of the subject matter presented* (Farrell, 2004; Garet et al., 2001; Richards & Lockhart, 1996).
- Opportunities help practitioners connect content and materials presented with the real-world situations in which they work* (Borg, 2006; Freeman & Johnson, 1998, 2004; National Center for ESL Literacy Education, 2003).

EVALUATING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Evaluation determines the extent to which desired outcomes are achieved.

- Evaluation activities document the input, output, and outcomes of the professional development activities (Association of Adult Literacy Professional Developers, in press; Fullan, 2007; Guskey, 2002; National Council of Teachers of English, 2006).
- Evaluation activities are designed to document changes in teacher knowledge, skills, and practice* (received and constructed knowledge) (Fullan, 2007; Guskey, 2002).
- Evidence of change in practitioners' knowledge, skills, and practice is collected in a variety of ways and at different intervals in time (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Garet et al., 2001).

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

The context in which professional development is carried out provides the basis and support for a program that is coherent, systematic, and sustainable. Professional development occurs within and is affected by national, state, and local contexts that include immigration trends, legal requirements, and education policies and regulations. These elements of the context, while significant, cannot always be controlled. At the same time, the aspects of the context that can be controlled consist of three broad areas.

SYSTEM FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The system may include

- The personnel and processes to guide and deliver professional development for teachers and administrators who work with adult English language learners
- A mission and guiding principles
- A person or team to manage professional development
- Trainers and professional developers

SHARED DECISION MAKING

Decision making about professional development involves

- A team to analyze patterns in learner and practitioner data, prioritize needs for professional development, systematically plan ways to address those needs, and work together to implement and evaluate plans

SUPPORT FOR A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM

Support for professional development at the state and local level includes

- An ongoing fiscal commitment to providing professional development
- Incentives for teachers and administrators to take part
- Working conditions that ensure opportunities for and access to professional development

Appendix: Background

A GROWING IMMIGRANT POPULATION

During the past 20 years, the immigrant population in the United States has been growing. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the foreign born represented 7.9% of the total U.S. population in 1990. A decade later they made up 11.1% of the total U.S. population, and as of 2007, they comprised 12.6% (Terrazas & Batalova, 2009). In 2005, immigrants comprised more than 15% of the workforce (Migration Policy Institute, 2007a, 2007b). If current trends continue, the U.S. population will increase by 142 million individuals by 2050, and 82% of that increase will be due to immigration (Passel & Cohn, 2008).

These population increases have not been evenly distributed across states. Instead of settling in large, urban centers, as in the past, many immigrants are now settling in states with employment opportunities in construction, industry, and tourism (Singer & Wilson, 2006). As a result, many states are experiencing record increases in immigrant populations (Capps, Fix, & Passel, 2002; McHugh, Gelatt, & Fix, 2007). For example, from 2000 to 2005, 14 states (including Arkansas, Georgia, Utah, and the Carolinas) experienced an increase of 30% or more in foreign-born populations (Jensen, 2006; Kochhar, 2006). This increase is expected to continue.

LEARNER PROGRESS

In addition to increases in the adult English language learner population, there is also increased emphasis in programs on learner progress through and beyond adult education programs into work opportunities and academic programs of study (e.g., Burt & Mathews-Aydinli, 2007; Chisman & Crandall, 2007; Mathews-Aydinli, 2006). Thus there is a growing need for professional development that helps practitioners prepare adult learners to reach these goals.

A NEED FOR HIGH-QUALITY ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND PRACTITIONERS

According to the Workforce Investment Act (1998), national leadership activities, including professional development, need to be designed and implemented to improve and enhance the quality of adult education and literacy programs. Well-qualified teachers are the most important factor in improving student learning, raising student achievement, and helping students progress through programs (U.S. Department of Education, 2007, which is focused on K–12 teachers. See also Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005; Rowan, Correnti, & Miller, 2005; Sanders & Rivers, 1996; Whitehurst, 2002). While many teachers are prepared to work effectively with adult immigrants, others, especially in states only recently experiencing increased adult English language learner enrollments, may not have extensive background in language teaching or experience with teaching adults learning English (Crandall, 1993, 2000; Crandall, Ingersoll, & Lopez, 2008; Schaetzel, Peyton, & Burt, 2007). In addition to teaching English as a second language, teachers need to help students understand cultural aspects of life in the United States, be prepared for additional responsibilities at work, and make smooth transitions to subsequent education (Haynes, 2005; McHugh, Gelatt, & Fix, 2007). For these reasons, professional development is necessary.

Teachers are not the only practitioners in need of professional development. Administrators who are designing and implementing programs for adult English language learners and volunteers working with this population also need professional development on topics such as second language acquisition, cultural differences, and English language teaching methods. A system for professional development that is responsive to the needs of all types of educational practitioners may enable them to meet the needs of adult English language learners more systematically, helping them to progress through National Reporting System (NRS) levels and transition to work and advanced education opportunities (Association of Adult Literacy Professional Developers, n.d.; Belzer, Drennon, & Smith, 2001; Brancato, 2003; Fullan, 2007).

The CAELA Network at the Center for Applied Linguistics has published three briefs for program managers. The briefs outline fundamental responsibilities of adult education administrators, describe components of typical programs serving this population, and include resources and tools that can facilitate successful administration of these components. They also provide research-based tools and strategies to use in supporting, supervising, and training teachers. The briefs include *Observing and Providing Feedback to Teachers of Adults Learning English* (Marshall & Young, 2009), *Supporting and Supervising Teachers Working with Adults Learning English* (Young, 2009), and *Managing Programs for Adults Learning English* (Rodríguez, Burt, Peyton, & Ueland, 2009).

The majority of adult education practitioners, including those working with English language learners, receive much of their preparation through inservice and on-the-job-training rather than through extensive preservice training (Smith & Gillespie, 2007). However, practitioners often work part time and are not consistently funded to participate in professional development activities (Crandall, Ingersoll, & Lopez, 2008; Schaetzel, Peyton, & Burt, 2007; Smith & Gillespie, 2007). Working to overcome these challenges, adult education programs and state agencies are designing professional development opportunities to increase practitioners' knowledge and skills. This framework is designed to help guide the process of planning, implementing, and evaluating these opportunities.

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