

## NCSALL's Evidence-Based Program Self-Assessment

Research, theory and professional wisdom on program quality indicate that the following principles<sup>1</sup> of best practice should guide program design and delivery.

PROGRAM COMPONENT	PROGRAMS SHOULD HAVE:	PRINCIPLES OF BEST PRACTICE	WE NEED HELP	WE HAVE OR DON'T NEED HELP	COMMENTS
<b>Program Quality Support</b>	<i>Well-defined mission, philosophy and goals</i>	A clear statement of mission, philosophy, and goals that guides all aspects of program services and that is designed with attention to the needs of the program's community as well as the policies of its state and national funding agencies.			
		<i>System for planning, evaluation and governance</i>	A governing body, such as an advisory board or board of directors, that oversees program activities, meets regularly, and represents the local community.		
			A regular planning and evaluation process that involves multiple stakeholders, including staff and students, and serves the dual purposes of program development and accountability.		
		<b>Program Quality Support</b>	<i>System to manage human resources</i>	Adequate management of the program's finances, including maintaining financial records, establishing and monitoring a budget, and engaging in fundraising from multiple sources.	
A clear process for recruiting and hiring instructional and support staff.					
A clear policy or standards for determining what constitutes qualified staff that has the skills, knowledge, and life experiences to address the needs of adult students.					
A professional development plan that takes into account the needs of the program and its staff and provides staff opportunities to receive training, practice new skills, and receive constructive feedback.					
		Treatment of staff as professionals (including pay and benefits) and			

<sup>1</sup> (From Comings, J., Soricone, L., & Santos, M. (2006) *An Evidence-based Adult Education Program Model Appropriate for Research*. NCSALL Reports. Boston, MA: National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy)

PROGRAM COMPONENT	PROGRAMS SHOULD HAVE:	PRINCIPLES OF BEST PRACTICE	WE NEED HELP	WE HAVE OR DON'T NEED HELP	COMMENTS
<b>Entering a Program</b>	<i>Adult student-centered environment for learning</i>	working conditions that support student progress and staff improvement. Instructional services that are provided at hours and locations convenient to adult students.			
		A physical environment that supports adult learning and is safe and comfortable for students and staff.			
		A psychologically safe environment that protects the confidentiality of students and staff and demonstrates respect for the cultures of students and staff.			
	<i>Organized student recruitment process</i>	Learning materials that are designed for use by adults, including written materials and technology.			
		Participation in networks and development of partnerships with other education and training providers, businesses and community organizations.			
		A variety of recruitment strategies (e.g., community needs assessment, media, and personal contact) that are suited to the target population and reflect their languages, cultures, and interests and that are clear about the nature of the program and its requirements.			
<b>Entering a Program</b>	<i>Organized approach to intake and student orientation</i>	Use of data on recruitment success and feedback from students in order to improve recruiting practices.			
		Assessment of each student's goals, skill level, and support needs.			
		A presentation to each student of a realistic assessment of skill levels and the time and effort required for achieving his or her goals.			
		An individual learning plan for reaching the student's goals that includes proactive ways to address support needs and ensure persistence.			
		Information about students' rights and program expectations of students.			
Process to familiarize new students with the program's staff, services and facilities.					

PROGRAM COMPONENT	PROGRAMS SHOULD HAVE:	PRINCIPLES OF BEST PRACTICE	WE NEED HELP	WE HAVE OR DON'T NEED HELP	COMMENTS	
<b>Participating in a Program</b>		Clear policy on when the student is considered officially enrolled in the program.				
		Procedures to accommodate students who are placed on a waitlist, which may include provision of limited services; opportunities for self-study; and referral to other education programs.				
		<i>Effective approach to classroom management</i>				Appropriate staff-to-student ratios that are informed by the instructional goals and characteristics of the student population.
		Intensity and duration of instruction sufficient for meeting the learning needs of students.				
		Managed enrollment (rather than open enrollment that allows new students to enter class frequently and in ways that disrupt the class continuity).				
		A mix of group and individual work that promotes peer learning and accommodates individual learning needs.				
		Class levels (e.g., beginning, intermediate, advanced) based on a clear understanding of students' abilities and needs, avoiding as much as possible the practice of multi-level classes in which students have profound skill differences.				
		<i>Effective approach to instruction</i>				Strategies to create a non-threatening learning environment that reduces the anxiety of adult students and encourages them to take risks in their learning.
		Instructional activities that promote active learning, that is, activities that involve students in "doing things and thinking about the things they are doing" (Bonwell & Eison, 1991, p. 2).				
		An organized curriculum, i.e. a master plan for selecting content and organizing learning experiences that is a result of a clear process for making curriculum decisions and that addresses the needs and goals of adult students.				

PROGRAM COMPONENT	PROGRAMS SHOULD HAVE:	PRINCIPLES OF BEST PRACTICE	WE NEED HELP	WE HAVE OR DON'T NEED HELP	COMMENTS	
Participating in a Program		A range of instructional approaches appropriate to students' skill levels, goals, and learning preferences.				
		Instructional activities that are relevant and meaningful to adult students' life contexts and draw on their strengths.				
		A comprehensive approach for assessing and placing students, evaluating their progress, and determining their achievement, with this information clearly explained and shared with students to the extent possible.				
		<i>Effective approach to supporting student persistence</i>	A system for monitoring student persistence, e.g. length and intensity of attendance, dropout rate, and reasons for departure.			
		Instructional and counseling services that intentionally promote the development of students' self-efficacy (i.e. beliefs about their capacity to be successful students) around learning.				
		Educational and personal counseling that is intended to help adult students persist in their learning and attain their educational goals.				
Re-Engagement in Learning	<i>Effective system for supporting student re-engagement in learning</i>	A clear and purposeful system for identifying students' needs for support services and providing the necessary services or referring students to agencies that can provide those services.				
		A system for monitoring student departure from a program, applied to instances of both dropout/ stopout and program completion.				
		A plan for helping students who stop attending classes to find suitable ways to re-engage in learning until they reach their goals.				
		A network of appropriate support services for student transition to postsecondary education or training, including career counseling to help students make informed choices about further education and to make a successful transition.				