Notes on Content Standards

SINCE THE LATE 1980s, standards-based education has been a hot issue in k-12 education. More recently, content standards have been developed for adult education programs. Many states, including Maryland, have developed sets of content standards for adults, and various national content standards have been developed as well, including Equipped for the Future (EFF), the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS), and the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) standards (Young and Smith, 2006).

According to Stites (1999), "content standards describe the range of desirable knowledge and skills within a subject area... The content standards for adult literacy being developed through the Equipped for the Future (EFF) Initiative ...[for example] define a set of knowledge and skills needed for competent adult performance in the roles of worker, community member, and parent or family member". So, ideally, content standards should define a set of knowledge and skills that adult learners should have at each level, to both ensure uniformity between programs and provide a basis for accountability for each program. They are not intended to mandate exactly what a teacher should present, but rather to "provide a guiding framework for what students should know and be able to do as a result of instruction" (Shaetzel and Young 2007).

Your program may mandate a set of content standards for you to follow, or you yourself may decide to adopt a set. As a teacher, content standards should provide you with a set of guidelines, showing you both what your student should know at the various levels of instruction and what they are expected to know when they complete that level. Together with learner needs assessment and your texts; they should provide you with a guideline for developing an appropriate learning plan for your students.

REFERENCES

Stites, R. "A User's Guide to Standards-Based Educational Reform: From Theory to Practice". *Focus on Basics, Volume 3, Issue C, September 1999.* Available from: http://www.ncsall.net/?id=352

Young, S., & Smith, C. (2006). *Understanding Adult ESL Content Standards.* Washington, DC: Center for Adult English Language Acquisition. Available from: http://www.cal.org/caela/esl_resources/briefs/contentstandards.html

Schaetzel, K. and Young, S. (2007). *Using Adult ESL Content Standards.* Washington, DC: Center for Adult English Language Acquisition. Available from: http://www.cal.org/caela/esl_resources/briefs/usingcontstandards.html

FURTHER RESEARCH

Adult Education Content Standards Warehouse
http://www.adultedcontentstandards.ed.gov

Adult Literacy Education Wiki Web site on Standards
http://wiki.literacytent.org/index.php/Standards

CASAS Website
https://www.casas.org

Equipped for the Future Content Standards
www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/recordDetail?accno= ED437557

Maryland Content Standards for Adult ESL/ESOL
http://www.umbc.edu/alrc/standards.html

REEP ESL Curriculum for Adults
http://www.apsva.us/15401081182015517/lib/15401081182015517/reepcurriculum/lessonplanindex.html

Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS)
http://wdr.doleta.gov/SCANS