



**MA Public Adult Education
Professional Development System**
A PUBLIC ADULT EDUCATION OF MA PROGRAM

Transcript: Part 3: Introduction to the Massachusetts Professional Standards for Teachers of Adult ESOL

Welcome back to the introduction to the Massachusetts Professional Standards for teachers of adult ESOL. This is Part Three in a three-part video series. Parts One and Two provided an overview of the standards and the revisions made to the recent edition and took a close look at each of the seven standards. In Part Three, we focus on what you can do with the standards to be a more effective teacher.

There are several ways you can make use of the ESOL Professional Standards. Here are four: you can read the document with colleagues and use it as a jumping-off point for discussions; you can use it as a professional development tool, beginning with a self-assessment; because there are effective instructional practices identified, you can use the standards to help guide classroom observation; and finally, you can use the standards as a guide to curriculum development and instructional planning. All of these professional standards encourage teachers' professional growth, so let's take a look at each one more closely.

Let's begin with a professional study. Professional study is when a small group of educators get together to read and discuss a selected text or sections of a text, guided by the question: How will this text influence my professional practices and the practices in my program? In general, you conduct a professional book study by deciding what you want to focus on. In the case of the ESOL Professional Standards, you could read the whole document or one of the standards in particular. This will depend on your and your colleagues' goals or the needs of your program. For example, you and some colleagues may want to devote time to learning more about Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Teaching, and so you would read and discuss Standard Three. Or, if your program is working on curriculum, then your group would read Standard Four.

Once you've made the decision of what to focus on, you and your colleagues could commit to reading either individually or during staff meeting time, depending upon your program resources. As with any kind of study, it helps to take notes, write questions, and reflect while reading in order to prepare for group discussion. Then you meet with colleagues and talk about the reading. It is helpful to have norms and protocols established by the group so that these discussions are productive and beneficial for everyone involved. Most importantly, the discussion should always circle back to the question: How will this reading influence my teaching? At some point, everyone commits to trying out something new in their practice. It helps to focus on a particular practice and to have a way to assess whether or not you are successful in implementing it. This is where the ESOL Professional Standards can be very useful because they provide specific

strategies, tools, and techniques that teachers can use to try out, and then the group discusses how successful they were with implementation and makes recommendations for moving forward. These might include recommendations for the program to adopt.

Professional study is effective because it is self-directed and task-centered. As we know from adult learning theory, adults learn best when they have some control over their learning and when it serves a purpose, for example, when it is job-embedded so that new learning can be immediately applied in the classroom. Professional learning offers a supportive environment for teachers to talk with colleagues on professional issues. It promotes professionalism and interest in evidence-based practices, educational theory, policy, and in this case, the standards. It offers an opportunity for teachers to constructively contribute to their program's goals. And of course, the goal of any professional learning is to have a positive impact on student learning. Through professional studies, teachers can use the ESOL Professional Standards as professional development.

You can use the ESOL Professional Standards for professional development and planning by using the self-assessment tool available on the SABES or ACLS website. This is a short set of 21 questions, three per standard, that gives you a rough sense of your relative strengths and weaknesses regarding the standards. For a more accurate sense, you can also use the document itself to self-assess by perusing the supporting explanations and indicators of knowledge and sample applications. You would either recognize terms and concepts or not. If not, one could read further into the document or decide to pursue more formal professional development. For example, a chart from Standard Two, Components of Language, identifies each of the components by its linguistic terms and notes why each component is helpful for students to know. You might look at this chart and know with confidence that this is a strength of yours. Conversely, you might realize that you don't often teach metalinguistic awareness or don't know what pragmatics is and decide to pursue professional development on this topic.

Similarly, Standard Six identifies several effective ESOL teaching practices. You can use Standard Six to ask yourself: To what extent do you include content that is culturally responsive, contextualized, and authentic? Do you include activities that foster critical thinking, make content accessible to all learners, use the gradual release of responsibility model, provide communicative and collaborative learning opportunities, limit your talk in the classroom, and correct students' errors judiciously? Depending on your answers, you can explore steps to improve. In addition to self-assessment, you can use the standards as a guide for classroom observation. While they weren't designed as a classroom observation guide per se, they are written in concrete language, which makes them helpful for identifying observable practices, particularly in the "Know and Do" chart in each standard.

For example, in Standard One on the Principles of Second Language Acquisition, the standard states that the ESOL teacher understands current theories and principles of second language acquisition and applies this knowledge to promote adult learners' English language development. This statement is not easily observable in the classroom. In the chart of indicators of knowledge and sample applications, the abstract statement is brought to a more concrete level. One indicator of SLA knowledge is that language acquisition is enhanced when learners are engaged in meaningful communication and authentic contexts. Under sample applications, examples of what

this knowledge looks like in the classroom include contextualizing language learning and meaningful content relevant to students' lives rather than relying on language points predetermined by a textbook, developing activities requiring learners to use authentic language to solve real-life problems, and facilitating group or pair activities to maximize student-to-student interaction and minimize teacher-to-student interaction. These examples could be used as "look-fors" in the classroom.

The ESOL Professional Standards can also be useful for curriculum and instruction planning in two ways. One is by reviewing Standard Four on curriculum and instructional planning. The other is to use the standards as a checklist to make sure that key elements are present in your curriculum. Standard Four provides guidance for curriculum development by describing a useful planning process, specifically backward design, which starts with planning end goals, followed by assessments, and then activities aligned to those goals. This process is ongoing, revisited, and revised regularly as the makeup of your students changes. It helps create a cohesive and coherent structure for instructional design plans, aligning each part of the curriculum within and across class levels. The structure is designed for both in-person and online courses. Standard Four also describes the content of an effective ESOL instructional plan, which should be relevant, rigorous, and engaging for all learners.

You can also use all of the standards as a guide or checklist for curriculum development by asking: Are your instructional plans aligned to the SLA principles in Standard One? Are the components of language addressed adequately and appropriately? Is the curriculum as culturally responsive as it could be? Is culture built into the curriculum so that it is sustained? Does your curriculum meet the Standard Four expectations? Are you including enough assessments before, during, and after instruction? Are the activities in your unit and lesson plans consistent with the key effective and evidence-based practices described in Standard Six? Finally, are your colleagues cultivating a reflective practice that allows you to regularly improve curriculum and instruction?

Standard Seven, Professional Growth, summarizes how an educator can grow professionally to be a more effective teacher and improve learner outcomes. The ESOL teacher engages in a continuous improvement process that includes ongoing reflection, self-assessment, goal setting, and high-quality professional development to gain greater teaching expertise, develop new instructional practices, increase learner engagement, and improve student outcomes. From this video, you should be able to use the ESOL Professional Standards to guide professional growth, self-assessment, reflection, professional development, and instructional planning.

Thank you for joining us. If you have any questions about the ESOL Professional Standards or professional development, please contact the SABES Curriculum and Instruction PD Center for ESOL at any time.