EFF Content Standards for Adult Literacy and Lifelong Learning

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EFF Standards include four fundamental categories of skills that adults need to draw from to carry out the key activities that are central to their primary roles:

EFF Communication Skills

➢ **Read With Understanding**
* Determine the reading purpose;
* select reading strategies appropriate to the purpose;
* monitor comprehension and adjust reading strategies;
* analyze the information and reflect on its underlying meaning;
* integrate it with prior knowledge to address reading purpose.

➢ **Convey Ideas In Writing**
* Determine the purpose for communicating;
* organize and present information to serve the purpose, context, and audience;
* pay attention to conventions of English language usage, including grammar, spelling, and sentence structure, to minimize barriers to reader's comprehension;
* seek feedback and revise to enhance the effectiveness of the communication.

➢ **Speak So Others Can Understand**
* Determine the purpose for communicating;
* organize and relay information to effectively serve the purpose, context, and listener;
* pay attention to conventions of oral English communication, including grammar, word choice, register, pace, and gesture in order to minimize barriers to listener's comprehension;
* use multiple strategies to monitor the effectiveness of the communication.

➢ **Listen Actively**
* Attend to oral information;
* clarify purpose for listening and use listening strategies appropriate to that purpose;
* monitor comprehension, adjusting listening strategies to overcome barriers to comprehension;
* integrate information from listening with prior knowledge to address listening purpose.

➢ **Observe Critically**
* Attend to visual sources of information, including television and other media;
* determine the purpose for observation and use strategies appropriate to the purpose;
* monitor comprehension and adjust strategies;
* analyze the accuracy, bias, and usefulness of the information;
* integrate it with prior knowledge to address viewing purpose.

EFF Decision-Making Skills

➢ **Use Math to Solve Problems and Communicate**
* Understand, interpret, and work with pictures, numbers, and symbolic information;
* apply knowledge of mathematical concepts and procedures to figure out how to answer a question, solve a problem, make a prediction, or carry out a task that has a mathematical dimension;
* define and select data to be used in solving the problem;
* determine the degree of precision required by the situation;
* solve problem using appropriate quantitative procedures and verify that the results are reasonable;
* communicate results using a variety of mathematical representations, including graphs, charts, tables, and algebraic models.

➢ **Solve Problems and Make Decisions**
* Anticipate or identify problems;
* use information from diverse sources to arrive at a clearer understanding of the problem and its root causes;
* generate alternative solutions;
* evaluate strengths and weaknesses of alternatives, including potential risks and benefits and short- and long-term consequences;
* select alternative that is most appropriate to goal, context, and available resources;
* establish criteria for evaluating effectiveness of solution or decision.

➢ **Plan**
* Set and prioritize goals;
* develop an organized approach of activities and objectives;
* actively carry out the plan;
* monitor the plan's progress while considering any need to adjust the plan;
* evaluate its effectiveness in achieving the goals.

EFF Interpersonal Skills

➤ **Cooperate with Others**
* Interact with others in ways that are friendly, courteous, and tactful, and that demonstrate respect for others' ideas, opinions, and contributions;
* seek input from others in order understand their actions and reactions;
* offer clear input on own interests and attitudes so others can understand one's actions and reactions;
* try to adjust one's actions to take into account the needs of others and/or the task to be accomplished.

➤ **Advocate and Influence**
* Define what one is trying to achieve;
* assess interests, resources, and the potential for success;
* gather facts and supporting information to build a case that takes into account the interests and attitudes of others;
* present a clear case, using a strategy that takes into account purpose and audience;
* revise, as necessary, in response to feedback.

Resolve Conflict and Negotiate

* Acknowledge that there is a conflict;
* identify areas of agreement and disagreement;
* generate options for resolving conflict that have a "win/win" potential;
* engage parties in trying to reach agreement on a course of action that can satisfy the needs and interests of all;
* evaluate results of efforts and revise approach as necessary.

Guide Others

* Assess the needs of others and one's own ability to assist;
* use strategies for providing guidance that take into account the goals, task, context, and learning styles of others;
* arrange opportunities for learning that build on learner's strengths,
* seek feedback on the usefulness and results of the assistance.

EFF Lifelong Learning Skills

➤ **Take Responsibility for Learning**
* Establish learning goals that are based on an understanding of one's own current and future learning needs;
* identify own strengths and weaknesses as a learner and seek out opportunities for learning that help build self-concept as a learner;
* become familiar with a range of learning strategies to acquire or retain knowledge;

*   identify and use strategies appropriate to goals, task, context, and the resources available for learning;
*   monitor progress toward goals and modify strategies or other features of the learning situation as necessary to achieve goals;
*   test out new learning in real-life applications.

➢ Reflect and Evaluate
*   Take stock of where one is: assess what one knows already and the relevance of that knowledge;
*   make inferences, predictions, or judgments based on one's reflections.

➢ Learn Through Research
*   Pose a question to be answered or make a prediction about objects or events;
*   use multiple lines of inquiry to collect information;
*   organize, evaluate, analyze, and interpret findings.

➢ Use Information and Communications Technology
*   Use computers and other electronic tools to acquire, process, and manage information.
*   use electronic tools to learn and practice skills.
*   use the Internet to explore topics and gather information.
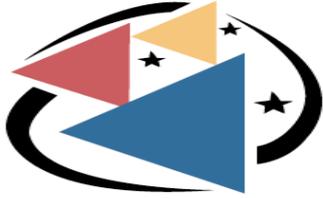
Abilities: enduring attributes of individuals that influence skill development and performance (e.g., cognitive, psychomotor, physical, and sensory). (See Stein, 1997, p. 32)

Adult Learner: an adult who is engaged in formal education or training to build his or her knowledge and skills. This education or training includes the full range of education from basic education, literacy, and high school equivalency through postsecondary education and training, work-based training, proprietary school training, and certification programs. (See Stein, 1997, p. 29)

Broad Area of Responsibility: the term EFF uses to describe the critical overarching actions that adults perform when operating within a particular role (worker, family member, community member). (See Stein, 2000, pp. 8-14; Stein, 1997, pp. 13-20, 32).

Common Activities: the term EFF uses to refer to those activities that occur in all three roles (worker, family member, community member). The EFF team identified the 13 Common Activities by looking across the Broad Areas of Responsibility, the Key Activities, and the Role Indicators for each role map. (See Stein, 2000, p. 14; Merrifield, 1999, pp. 33-34).

Components of Performance: the term EFF uses to describe what a skill looks like when applied in the real world. The Components of Performance for each skill offer a shared definition of what that skill entails. They reflect a problem-solving approach to skill development, enabling learners and practitioners to focus on learning skills in such a way as to build the cognitive and metacognitive strategies required for lifelong learning and application. The Components of Performance are the "heart" of the EFF Standards and are designed to be the focus of planning, learning, and assessment. (See Stein, 2000, 19-23).

Constructivism: a theory of learning, which holds that all knowledge is constructed from previous knowledge. EFF embraces a school of constructivism, which invites learners to create their own meaning and achieve their own goals by interacting actively with objects and information and by linking new material to existing cognitive structures. Constructivism is based on the work of Jean Piaget, Jerome Bruner, Lev Vygotsky, and John Dewey. (See Bransford, et. al., 1999, p. 11; Merrifield, 1999, pp. 9-11; University of Colorado at Denver School of Education website at http://carbon.cudenver.edu/~mryder/itc_data/constructivism.html)

Content Standards: term used in a variety of fields to describe what adults need to know and be able to do for a particular purpose. In EFF, the 16 Content Standards identify what it is adults need to know and be able to do in order to meet their purposes for learning and to be effective in their adult roles. Each EFF Content Standard is comprised of the title of the standard and the Components of Performance for that standard. (See Stites, 1999, p. 3; Stein, 2000, p. 19-20)

Contextualized Learning: an approach to learning embraced by EFF in which learners develop skills through application for real-world uses in real-world situations. Learning in a variety of contexts best facilitates transfer to new contexts. (See Bransford, et. al., p. 50; Merrifield, 1999, pp. 10-11; Stein, 2000, pp. 20, 85; http://www.stw.ed.gov/factsht/bull0996.htm).

Continuum of Performance: a description of what a particular skill looks like in a lifelong, developmental process of growing adult competence of performance. EFF is particularly interested in ensuring that the EFF continuum is sensitive to performances at the beginning of the continuum, but the aim is to build for each standard a continuum, which will describe performances from novice to expert levels. The continuum will be built around the four Dimensions of Performance, and performance levels will be defined by identifying key features of performance at various points along the continuum. (See McGuire, 2000; Stein, 2000, pp. 58-59).

Customer: anyone who benefits directly from services offered by an organization. In EFF, the primary customer is defined as the adult learner, but other customers include employers, community organizations, legislators, policymakers at all levels, unions, libraries, etc., who benefit directly from an adult learning system which prepares adult learners to meet the four purposes of EFF. (See Stein, 1997, p. 29).

Dimensions of Performance: the theoretical foundation on which the EFF Continuum of Performance for each skill is being built. The Dimensions of Performance identify qualitative differences between novices and experts related to four areas: 1) Structure of knowledge base, 2) Fluency of performance, 3) Independence of performance, and 4) Range of conditions for performance.   (See Stein, 2000, pp. 59-60; Bransford, et. al., Chapter 2, 1999).

EFF Assessment Framework: a guide to an integrated process of measuring and reporting adult learners' performance based on the EFF Content Standards. The Assessment Framework is in development and will be comprised of the Guiding Principles, the Dimensions of Performance, the Continuum of Performance, and the tools and strategies needed to meet multiple assessment purposes.

EFF Content Framework: all the elements identified through EFF research, which can be used to support adults as they develop the skills, knowledge, and abilities necessary to be effective in meeting their learning goals. The framework is composed of the EFF Purposes, Role Maps, Common Activities, Knowledge Domains, and the Content Standards.

EFF National Center: the central office for EFF resources, training, and technical assistance. Located at the University of Maine, the EFF National Center is responsible for developing and supporting the facilitator network and certification system, as well as providing EFF staff development to diverse customers nation-wide. The EFF Voice and HOT topics are topical quarterly publications of the EFF National Center. For more information, contact Lisa Levinson, Director of the EFF National Center, at: 207-581-2404, or by email at: LisaL595@aol.com.

EFF Discussion List: an online forum for asking questions about EFF, sharing discoveries and concerns, and receiving feedback about using EFF from other adult literacy practitioners. To subscribe, go to the NIFL-4EFF site at: http://www.nifl.gov/lincs/discussions/nifl-4eff/subscribe_nifl-4eff.html, click on the subscribe button, and follow the directions.

EFF Standards: the knowledge and skills all adults need to be effective in meeting the four Purposes and in carrying out activities central to their roles as family members, community members, and workers. The 16 Standards are based on the Generative Skills, which EFF research revealed were required to carry out the Common Activities and day-to-day tasks of adult living.   Each EFF standard is comprised of the skill name and the components of performance, which offers a shared definition of what the skill includes. The EFF Standards expand the field's understanding of "literacy" to include the Communication, Interpersonal, Decision-Making, and Lifelong Learning skills. They are the heart of EFF and should be central to the planning, learning, and assessment services of any adult learning program. (See Stein, 2000, pp. 15-25).

Equipped for the Future (EFF): a customer-driven, standards-based, collaborative initiative of the National Institute for Literacy. EFF's large goal is to align the components of the nation's adult learning system to focus on the range of skills and knowledge that adults need to achieve their primary purposes for learning (i.e. access information, take independent action, express their own ideas and opinions, keep up with a changing world, and exercise their rights and responsibilities as family members, workers, and community members.) EFF has been instrumental in shifting approaches for adult literacy education from an emphasis on replicating K-12 education to one that uses research-based standards to prepare adults to meet their real-world goals. (See Merrifield, 1999, pp. 1-4; Stein, 2000; Stein, 1997, pp. 1, 30).

Explicit Teaching: teaching that makes clear the terms, processes, purposes, and strategies required for learning. Explicit teaching invites learners to exercise control of their learning and facilitates transfer of learning to a variety of contexts. (See Stein, 2000, p. 85).

Facilitator Certification System: a performance-based process being developed through which EFF facilitators will be certified by the Equipped for the Future National Center to offer EFF trainings. Although the certification system is still in development, facilitators in the process of certification will be asked to collect evidence to show their

progress along the Facilitator Rubric based on the four dimensions of performance during the 2000-2001 year. A defined certification process will be in place during the 2001-2 year.

Generative Skills: the term EFF gives to the skills or knowledge that their research revealed to be core to the performance of a wide range of tasks carried out in multiple roles. The Generative Skills are durable over time in face of changes in technology, work process, and societal demands. They cross functions and serve as the foundation for effective adaptation to changes in role requirements. The Generative Skills became the basis for the EFF Content Standards. (Stein, 2000, p. 15; Merrifield, 1999, p. 35; Stein, 1997, p. 30).

Intentional Teaching: teaching that has a planned outcome and answers the questions "What will I teach?" and "What will I look for in student work?" Intentional teaching with EFF always includes the teaching of a standard. (See Stein, 2000, p. 85).

Iterative: a term used in research to refer to the repetition of a cycle of processes with an eye toward moving ever more closely toward desired results. In EFF, the term is used to describe how EFF has progressively refined the concepts and components of EFF through research, feedback from customers (learners, practitioners, stakeholders, and policymakers), incorporation of research developments in related areas, further feedback from customers, etc., in an effort to be responsive and credible to their constituents. (See Merrifield, 1999, pp. 4, 7-8).

Key Activity: shows how adults combine knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform a particular adult role. Key activities consist of several tasks, not just one task or a series of steps. Several Key Activities are listed for each Broad Area of Responsibility on a role map. (See Stein, 2000, pp. 8-13; Stein, 1997, pp. 31-32).

Knowledge: the foundation upon which skills and abilities are built. Knowledge refers to an organized body of information, which can be applied to performance. Examples: mathematical concepts, languages, biology, and finance. (Stein, 1997, p. 32).

Knowledge Domain: the concepts, procedures, data, information, and perspectives that support the generative skills and are necessary to carry out the Common Activities in adult roles. Instead of a subject-based orientation (e.g., social studies, science, etc.), EFF's Knowledge Domains focus on adult life and the knowledge needed for all the adult roles. They are conceptual, relying on the specifics to emerge in relation to particular activities themselves (Merrifield, 1999, p. 36).

Learner-Centered Teaching: teaching that builds on the strengths, interests, and needs of learners as well as on their conceptual and cultural knowledge. (See Bransford, et. al., pp. 121-124, 180-182).

LINCS (Literacy Information aNd Communication System): the National Institute for Literacy's comprehensive electronic communication and information system. LINCS

is a single point of access for adult literacy resources and up-to-date information at the national, state, and local levels. Several on-line discussion lists can be accessed from the LINCS website: http://www.nifl.gov/lincs .

Metacognition: refers to an individual's ability to think about his/her own thinking and to monitor his/her own learning. Metacognition is integral to a learner's ability to actively partner in his or her own learning and facilitates transfer of learning to other contexts. (See Bransford, et. al., pp. 12, 55-56).

National Education Goal 6: one of the national education goals created by the 50 governors at an education summit in 1989. Goal 6 is the only goal directly related to adult learning and is often referred to as the Adult Literacy and Lifelong Learning Goal. Goal 6 reads, "Every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship." A congressional mandate to measure progress toward Goal 6 was the impetus for the development of EFF. (See Stein, 1995, pp. 3-5; Stein, 1997, pp. 1-5; Stein, 2000, pp. 5-7).

National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS): a national survey reported in 1993, which provided a profile of the literacy skills of the United States' adult population. The results revealed that more than 40% of all American adults have literacy levels at Levels 1 or 2 (out of five), below the level required to secure jobs at good wages.

National Institute for Literacy (NIFL): is an independent federal organization created by the National Literacy Act of 1991 to serve as a focal point for public and private activities that support the development of high-quality regional, state, and national literacy services. One of NIFL's primary activities is promoting adult literacy system reform through Equipped for the Future. (See: http://www.nifl.gov)

National Reporting System (NRS): an outcome-based reporting system for the state-administered, federally funded adult education program required by Title II of the Workforce Investment Act. The goals of the NRS were to establish a national accountability system for education programs by identifying measures for national reporting and their definitions, establishing methods for data collection, developing software standards for reporting to the U.S. Department of Education, and developing training materials and activities on NRS requirements and procedures. EFF is working with the NRS to align outcomes required for federal reporting to the EFF standards. (See: http://www.air-dc.org/nrs; Stein, 2000, Chapter 5).

Performance Standards: descriptions of "how much" an individual knows and "how well" the individual can apply a skill. (See McGuire, 2000; Stein, 2000, pp. 56-64).

Performance-Based Assessment: a tool for measuring student learning that requires the student to construct or produce a response to an assessment item or task. Examples include problem-solving scenarios, journals, projects, performances, computer simulation tasks, and portfolios.

(See Ananda, 2000).

Performance Task: a carefully planned activity that requires learners to address all the components of performance of a standard in a way that is meaningful and authentic. Performance tasks can be used for both instructional and assessment purposes (Ananda, 2000; McGuire, 2000).

Purposes for Learning: the four fundamental, ultimate goals, identified through EFF research, which drive learning across the different contexts of adult life and which express the social and cultural significance of specific, individual goals (Merrifield, 1999, pp. 13-17). The Four Purposes for Learning are 1) Access and Orientation, 2) Voice, 3) Independent Action, and 4) Bridge to the Future. EFF identified the purposes in 1994 through analysis of the essays solicited from adult learners who responded to the question, "What is it that adults need to know and be able to do in order to be literate, compete in the global economy, and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship?" (See Stein, 1995; Stein, 2000, pp. 5-6).

Purposeful Approach to Education: teaching and learning that is designed specifically around the goals and purposes of students. A purposeful approach assumes intentionality, explicitness, and transparency in the learning environment. The Content Standards are important in this approach because they clearly define the skills adults require to meet their goals and purposes. (Merrifield, 1999, p. 9).

Role Indicator: refers to descriptions of how well Key Activities are performed and provide a link between Key Activities and the Generative Skills and Knowledge Domains. (See Stein, 1997, p. 32; Stein, 2000, p. 8; Merrifield, 1999, p. 27).

Role Map: a publicly agreed to, explicit, consensus depiction of the adult roles of worker, parent/family member, and citizen/community member. For each adult role, the role map provides a definition of the broad areas of responsibility, key activities, role indicators, and the knowledge, skills, and abilities required for effective performance of the role. EFF developed the role maps through a collaborative, consensus-building process involving 1,109 participants from many different walks of life. (See Stein, 2000, p. 8-13; Merrifield, 1999, pp. 18-29).

SCANS (Secretary's Commission on Necessary Skills): an initiative of the United States Department of Labor that identified the skills workers need to perform in the world of work and which made recommendations for changes in secondary education to facilitate the development of these skills. The SCANS report was published in 1991 and identified five competencies (allocating resources, working with others, using information, understanding systems, and using technology) and 3 foundational skill sets (basic skills, thinking skills, and personal qualities). EFF builds on SCANS in three ways: 1) the Content Standards and corresponding Performance Levels describe clearly and in-depth those skills required for work; 2) the EFF Role Maps describe other important adult roles requiring the application of these general skills; and 3) EFF

emphasizes the need for reform in the adult basic education arena whereas SCANS' focus has been primarily on K-12 and community college education.

Skills: developed capacities to perform physical or mental tasks. (Stein, 1997, p. 32). See also *Generative Skills* and *Standards*.

Transfer of Learning: the ability to extend what has been learned in one context to new contexts. Research has shown that when a subject is learned in *multiple* contexts, with opportunities to abstract general principles, transfer to new situations is increased.   (See Bransford, et. al., 1999, Chapter 3). EFF encourages programs to create learning situations that invite learners to use skills in a variety of contexts for a variety of purposes. (See Stein, 2000, p. 20).

Transparent Approach to Education: an approach to teaching and learning that seeks to uncover the mysteries of learning by communicating explicitly the concepts, skills, and processes being utilized in any learning activity. The Content Standards are important in this approach because they clearly define the skills adults require to meet their goals and purposes.

The definitions and references in this glossary were drawn from the following sources and compiled by Amy Trawick :

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