

# Workforce Education Standards

*for*  
Adult Education  
Programs

Developed *by*

**Workforce Solutions Collaborative**  
*Connecting Education to Work*

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania • March 2011

**WORKFORCE EDUCATION  
STANDARDS ADVISORY GROUP**

Tina Baker-Gee

*Center for Literacy*

Alexis Brown

*Community Women's Education  
Project*

Donald Butler

*Community College of  
Philadelphia*

Cheryl Feldman

*District 1199C Training and  
Upgrading Fund*

Seth Green

*Job Opportunity Investment  
Network (JOIN)*

Lauren Hirshon

*Philadelphia Workforce  
Investment Board*

Diane Inverso

*Philadelphia Mayor's Commission  
on Literacy*

Ulicia Lawrence

*Temple University Center for  
Social Policy and Community  
Development*

Sheila McKenna

*Community College of  
Philadelphia*

Michael Perez

*Philadelphia YMCA Education  
and Technology Center*

Jamie Preston

*PathWays PA*

Lequyen Vu

*Indochinese American Council*

Rebecca Wagner

*Community Learning Center*

JoAnn Weinberger

*Center for Literacy*

# Table of Contents

Introduction .....	1-2
Workforce Education Standards.....	3-6
Program Self-Assessment.....	7-10
Bibliography .....	11

## Acknowledgements

Funding for this publication was generously provided by the United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania.

The Workforce Solutions Collaborative is the leading voice for the workforce literacy system in the greater Philadelphia area with the goal of creating a unified, universally accessible workforce literacy system that prepares adults to enter and advance in the workforce and meets the needs of area employers for a quality workforce.

The content for the tools included in this publication was developed by the Philadelphia Workforce Solutions Collaborative. KayLynn Hamilton from the Institute for the Study of Adult Literacy at the Pennsylvania State University served as an independent consultant to facilitate the development of these Standards and the accompanying Self-Assessment.

Copyright ©2011 United Way of Southeastern PA  
Reproduction not permitted without prior permission of United Way of Southeastern PA.  
Commercial use or reproduction for sale not permitted.

# Introduction

Philadelphia is challenged with a growing gap between the essential needs of regional businesses and the fundamental skills of the population. As documented in the Philadelphia Workforce Investment Board's 2009 report, *Help Wanted*, the City of Philadelphia has more than 202,000 adults who have not yet completed a high school diploma. Additionally, more than 52 percent of working-age Philadelphians — about 550,000 people — need to develop their workforce literacy skills in order to effectively compete in an increasingly knowledge-based economy. With more than two-thirds of the jobs located in Philadelphia requiring intermediate levels of literacy proficiency or above, it means that 50% of Philadelphians are competing for 30% of available low-skilled jobs and unable to qualify for mid-skilled positions requiring post secondary credentials. Only 20% of Philadelphians have college degrees, placing Philadelphia in 92nd place of the country's 100 largest cities in the percentage of college-educated residents.

The gap between supply and demand for a skilled workforce is growing in Philadelphia. We have a surplus of low-skilled individuals, with 550,000 residents qualifying for about 211,000 entry level jobs. If the issue of adult literacy is not addressed more effectively, another 50,000 Philadelphians will not have the basic literacy skills to compete in the economic mainstream by 2030. By 2015, there will be 120,000 additional vacancies in the city for higher level managerial and professional jobs and a potential shortage of highly skilled Philadelphians to meet the demand.

When the Philadelphia Workforce Investment Board documented the extent of the adult literacy challenges in the city and highlighted the insufficient resources to address these challenges, Philadelphia's literacy community responded by forming the Workforce Solutions Collaborative (WSC). This group represents a partnership between Philadelphia workforce literacy providers, higher education, funders, the Philadelphia Workforce Investment Board, and other organizations that have a stake in the quality of the region's workforce.

Through a grant from the United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania, the WSC developed the Workforce Education Standards contained in this publication. The Standards were developed by synthesizing workforce education research, professional wisdom, and best practices in workforce education.

Early project development sessions included the identification of the following indicators of quality and best practice:

- Linking training programs to some credentials, career advancement or post secondary education;
- Incorporation of student goals into training;
- Professional development activities;
- Incorporating project based activities and non-cognitive skills in instruction;
- Full time teachers allowing for built-in time for curriculum development;
- Learner-centered teaching where the teacher is facilitator and the curriculum is driven by the learner;
- Case management in alignment with the teacher and student; and
- The use of formal and informal assessment to guide instruction.

Subsequent project meetings examined, refined, and built upon these initial responses to develop the Workforce Education Standards for Adult Education Programs. The Standards define components of high quality work-based basic skills programs, and can provide a framework for delineating outcomes, competencies, benchmarks, expectations, or indicators for educational programs both in the classroom and in the workplace. There are seven standard groupings that include the following content areas:

- Customer Results
- Program Accountability
- Program Design
- Instructional Systems
- Support Services for Goal Attainment
- Professional Development
- Workforce Collaboration

The WSC also developed a Self-Assessment tool based on the Workforce Education Standards. The Self-Assessment tool can be used to determine agencies' capacity to provide workforce education programs. The Self-Assessment addresses each of the seven Standards and can be used to create agency and individual professional development plans.

The members of the WSC are pleased to share the Workforce Education Standards and Self-Assessment. The Standards and Self-Assessment can be downloaded by using the following link: [http://libwww.freelibrary.org/mcol/mcol\\_resources\\_best.htm](http://libwww.freelibrary.org/mcol/mcol_resources_best.htm); or you may contact the Philadelphia Mayor's Commission on Literacy at (215) 686-5250.

# Workforce Education Standards

The Workforce Education Standards define components of high quality work-based basic skills programs, and can provide a framework for delineating outcomes, competencies, benchmarks, expectations, or indicators for educational programs both in the classroom and in the workplace. There are seven standard groupings that include the following content areas:

- Customer Results
- Program Accountability
- Program Design
- Instructional Systems
- Support Services for Goal Attainment
- Professional Development
- Workforce Collaboration

Each of these content areas includes a key concept that provides an overarching definition statement, sub-categories for each standard grouping, and evidence that indicates successful implementation of the standard.

## Standard 1: Customer Results

**Key Concept:** Program achieves or meets the needs of the job-seekers, workers, employers, and other key stakeholders, including workforce development partners, and postsecondary education institutions.

INDICATOR	EVIDENCE
1.1 Job-seekers' and workers' progress and outcomes are demonstrated by achievement of agreed upon work-related objectives.	Program provides documentation that job-seekers and workers have obtained the skills to retain or advance in employment or transition to postsecondary education.
1.2 Program outcomes are industry driven.	Program outcomes meet the agreed upon objectives of the employers and other key stakeholders.

## Standard 2: Program Accountability

**Key Concept:** The program is data driven and has the ability to report, document, and continuously improve activities and outcomes.

INDICATOR	EVIDENCE
2.1 The program maintains an information management system with the capacity to report participant outcomes and monitor program performance.	Program provides qualitative and quantitative data from the information management system and sample reports produced through this system.
2.2 The program measures customer satisfaction by periodically gathering feedback from job-seekers, workers, employers, and other key stakeholders.	Program uses customer satisfaction surveys and/or information regarding other methods to solicit feedback, such as focus groups.
2.3 Data will be analyzed with the goal of continuously improving workforce services.	Program will conduct periodic review and analysis of data and proposed changes to the workforce program as needed.

## Standard 3: Program Design

**Key Concept:** The process of program planning that identifies job-seeker, and/or worker, employer, and other key stakeholder needs and the goals and strategies to address them.

INDICATOR	EVIDENCE
3.1 Goals and objectives are developed based on the needs of the job-seekers, and/or workers, employers, and other key stakeholders.	Program assesses workforce education needs of all stakeholders through the use of organizational needs analysis, literacy task analysis, focus groups, interviews, surveys, observation, and review of extant data.
3.2 The program design is responsive to the needs of industry.	Consideration given for recruitment, scheduling, location, release time, intensity and duration to achieve work-based skill development, and various other program issues.
3.3 Program design includes a comprehensive training plan that is responsive to the needs of the job-seekers, and/or workers, employers, and other key stakeholders, as appropriate.	Training plan includes workforce goals, benchmarks, workforce curriculum, supportive services, evaluation plan, monitoring plan, technology plan, and final report.
3.4 Terms of confidentiality are negotiated in the training plan.	Confidentiality agreement addresses information about job-seekers and/or workers that will be shared between the provider and the employer or other key stakeholder.
3.5 Program provides opportunities to link training plan to career pathways and postsecondary education.	Career ladders and lattices are incorporated into training plan, as appropriate.

## Standard 4: Instructional Systems

**Key Concept:** The instructional system integrates ongoing assessment, individualized instructional planning, the use of appropriate workforce education curriculum frameworks, research-based workforce instructional practices, and multiple-delivery systems.

INDICATOR	EVIDENCE
4.1 Customized assessments are developed based on the workforce education needs of the job-seekers, and/or workers, employers, and other key stakeholders.	Assessments are customized to measure work-related skill development.
4.2 Program staff, job-seekers, and/or workers, employers, and other key stakeholders jointly develop, regularly evaluate, and update individual instructional plan that incorporates the individual's learning styles and preferences, and work-related goals.	Program maintains sample individual instructional plans and policies for review and updating of plans.
4.3 Curriculum and instructional development is customized and contextualized to address workforce needs, best theory and practice, a comprehensive review of available materials and technologies, well-articulated instructional goals, reasonable scope and sequence, and coordination with instructional staff.	<p>Work is the central context for the curriculum and the delivery of instruction with lessons that apply to the workforce.</p> <p>Educational activities include opportunities to use skills to problem solve and develop critical thinking skills for the workplace.</p> <p>Instructors incorporate project-based learning activities into instruction.</p> <p>Instructors incorporate non-cognitive skill development into instruction.</p> <p>Instructors use formal and informal assessment to both guide instruction and measure skill development.</p> <p>Programs use research-based instructional practices, technology, and multiple-delivery systems to address learner, employer, and other key stakeholder needs and preferences, and to accommodate the instructional needs of the workforce.</p>

## Standard 5: Support Services for Goal Attainment

**Key Concept:** Program coordinates access to information and supportive services.

INDICATOR	EVIDENCE
5.1 Program provides job-seekers and workers with access to information on the local labor market and career ladders and lattices for the purposes of career planning and coaching.	Resources documented include PA Career Guide, Labor and Industry Web sites, O*Net, and High Priority Occupations specific to the region.
5.2 Program incorporates career coaching that aligns instruction with job-seeker and/or worker, employer and other key stakeholder needs.	Program maintains capacity to transition job-seekers and workers to opportunities to obtain credentials, career advancement or postsecondary education.
5.3 Program provides information to access support and follow-up services to reduce job-seekers' and/or workers' barriers to retention and goal attainment.	Program maintains documented list of community resources.
5.4 Program identifies the resources to help job-seekers and workers explore career pathways and the skills required to succeed.	Job-seekers and workers develop career pathway plans.

## Standard 6: Professional Development

**Key Concept:** Professional development activities contribute to well-trained administrators and practitioners, including volunteers, who ensure quality workforce education that maximizes job-seeker, worker, employer, and other key stakeholder outcomes.

INDICATOR	EVIDENCE
6.1 Program completes Workforce Education Standards Self-Assessment and identifies gaps.	Program professional development plan to address gaps is in place.
6.2 Program leaders supervise and conduct regular performance appraisals with all staff, including volunteers.	Individual professional development plans are in place for all staff members.
6.3 Administrators and staff continuously improve their practice through regular participation in workforce education professional development activities. Specifically: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All paid staff complete online Foundation Skills Framework course and two (2) additional workforce-related professional development opportunities (approved by their supervisor) each year.</li> <li>• The program makes available continuing professional development training opportunities and resources for staff and volunteers (can be provided either on-site or off-site).</li> </ul>	Policy regarding staff requirements for continuing professional development; sample agendas, training calendars, and/or certificates of completion is in place.  Plan for on-going in-house or off-site training opportunities is in place.
6.4 Program staff will have current knowledge of the local labor market, employer and industry needs, skills workers need to successfully perform in-demand jobs, and career pathways.	Program maintains documentation of resources that are available to staff.

## Standard 7: Workforce Collaboration

**Key Concept:** Program actively partners with the workforce development system.

INDICATOR	EVIDENCE
7.1 Program develops an understanding of the local workforce development system, the key partners in the system, and the role and responsibility of adult education programs within the system.	Program participates in the development and implementation of the Pennsylvania Department of Education Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education Workforce Plan or individual agency workforce plan.
7.2 Program participates as a partner of the workforce development system.	Programs establish relationships with individual employers, employer associations, and workforce development partners to ensure alignment of needs and program development.
7.3 Program seeks to participate in regional workforce advisory groups and workforce partnerships.	Program provides relevant supporting educational documentation to workforce development partners.

# Program Self-Assessment

In the process of developing the seven Workforce Education Standards, the Workforce Solutions Collaborative identified the need for developing an accompanying Self-Assessment tool. The Self-Assessment tool helps literacy agencies to self-assess their needs in developing and implementing a workforce education program. This tool enables an agency to objectively evaluate its workforce program by rating itself using the following four-point scale based on evidence that is identified for each standard:

- 1 = no evidence in place
- 2 = minimal level/aspect of evidence in place
- 3 = modest level/aspect of evidence in place
- 4 = significant level/aspect of evidence in place

The completed Self-Assessment can serve as a guide to developing an agency professional development plan. After the Self-Assessment is completed, agencies may want to engage in a process of reflecting on their ratings. The evidence identified that received mostly 1's and 2's indicates the standards where there are greater opportunities for enhancement. These standards are where agencies may want to focus their efforts to strengthen their workforce education offerings. Using this information, a professional development plan can be developed that addresses program gaps.

## Standard 1: Customer Results

**Key Concept:** Program achieves or meets the needs of the job-seekers, workers, employers, and other key stakeholders, including workforce development partners, and postsecondary education institutions.

EVIDENCE				
Program provides documentation that job-seekers and workers have obtained the skills to retain or advance in employment or transition to postsecondary education.	1	2	3	4
Program outcomes meet the agreed upon objectives of the employers and other key stakeholders.	1	2	3	4

## Standard 2: Program Accountability

**Key Concept:** The program is data driven and has the ability to report, document, and continuously improve activities and outcomes.

EVIDENCE				
Program provides qualitative and quantitative data from the information management system and sample reports produced through this system.	1	2	3	4
Program uses customer satisfaction surveys and/or information regarding other methods to solicit feedback, such as focus groups.	1	2	3	4
Program conducts periodic review and analysis of data and proposed changes to the workforce program as needed.	1	2	3	4

## Standard 3: Program Design

**Key Concept:** The process of program planning that identifies job-seeker, and/or worker, employer, and other key stakeholder needs and the goals and strategies to address them.

EVIDENCE				
Program has the capacity to assess workforce education needs of all stakeholders through the use of organizational needs analysis, literacy task analysis, focus groups, interviews, surveys, observation, and review of extant data.	1	2	3	4
In training plans, consideration is given for recruitment, scheduling, location, release time, intensity and duration to achieve work-based skill development, and various other program issues.	1	2	3	4
Training plan includes workforce goals, benchmarks, workforce curriculum, supportive services, evaluation plan, monitoring plan, technology plan, and final report.	1	2	3	4
In training plans, confidentiality agreement addresses information about job-seekers and/or workers that will be shared between the provider and the employer or other key stakeholder.	1	2	3	4
Career ladders and lattices are incorporated into training plan, as appropriate.	1	2	3	4

## Standard 4: Instructional Systems

**Key Concept:** The instructional system integrates ongoing assessment, individualized instructional planning, use of appropriate workforce education curriculum frameworks, research-based workforce instructional practices, and multiple-delivery systems.

EVIDENCE				
Assessments are customized to measure work-related skill development.	1	2	3	4
Program maintains sample individual instructional plans and policies for review and updating of plans.	1	2	3	4
Work is the central context for the curriculum and the delivery of instruction with lessons that apply to the workforce.	1	2	3	4
Educational activities include opportunities to use skills to problem solve and develop critical thinking skills for the workplace.	1	2	3	4
Instructors incorporate project-based learning activities into instruction.	1	2	3	4
Instructors incorporate non-cognitive skill development into instruction.	1	2	3	4
Instructors use formal and informal assessment to both guide instruction and measure skill development.	1	2	3	4
Programs use research-based instructional practices, technology, and multiple-delivery systems to address learner, employer, and other key stakeholder needs and preferences, and to accommodate the instructional needs of the workforce.	1	2	3	4

## Standard 5: Support Services for Goal Attainment

**Key Concept:** Program coordinates access to information and supportive services.

EVIDENCE				
Program maintains documentation of resources that include PA Career Guide, Labor and Industry Web sites, O*Net, and High Priority Occupations specific to the region.	1	2	3	4
Program maintains capacity to transition job-seekers and workers to opportunities to obtain credentials, career advancement or postsecondary education.	1	2	3	4
Program maintains documented list of community resources.	1	2	3	4
Job-seekers and workers develop career pathway plans.	1	2	3	4

## Standard 6: Professional Development

**Key Concept:** Professional development activities contribute to well-trained administrators and practitioners, including volunteers, who ensure quality workforce education that maximizes job-seeker, worker, employer, and other key stakeholder outcomes.

EVIDENCE				
Program professional development plan to address gaps in Self-Assessment is in place.	1	2	3	4
Individual professional development plans are in place for all staff members.	1	2	3	4
Policy regarding staff requirements for continuing professional development; sample agendas, training calendars, and/or certificates of completion is in place.	1	2	3	4
Plan for on-going in-house or off-site training opportunities is in place.	1	2	3	4
Program maintains documentation of resources addressing local labor market, employer and industry needs, skills workers need to successfully perform in-demand jobs, and career pathways that are available to staff.	1	2	3	4

## Standard 7: Workforce Collaboration

**Key Concept:** Program actively partners with the workforce development system.

EVIDENCE				
Program participates in the development and implementation of the Pennsylvania Department of Education Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education Workforce Plan or individual agency workforce plan.	1	2	3	4
Programs establish relationships with individual employers, employer associations, and workforce development partners to ensure alignment of needs and program development.	1	2	3	4
Program provides relevant supporting educational documentation to workforce development partners.	1	2	3	4

# Bibliography

*Adult Education for Work: Transforming Adult Education to Build a Skilled Workforce*, National Center on Education and the Economy, Workforce Development Strategies Group, 2009.

Accessed from <http://www.jff.org/publications/workforce/adult-education-work-transforming-adult-/908>.

*Adult Education Supporting the President's Workforce and American Graduation Initiative*. Washington D.C.: National Council of State Directors of Adult Education. 2009.

*Employer Guide to Adult Education for Work: Transforming Adult Education to Build a Skilled Workforce*, National Center on Education and the Economy, Workforce Development Strategies Group, 2009.

Accessed from <http://www.jff.org/publications/workforce/employer-guide-adult-education-work-tran/907>.

Hollenbeck, K. and Timmeney, B. "Lessons Learned from a Workplace Literacy Initiative," Upjohn Institute Working Paper 09-146. W. E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research. 2009. Accessed from <http://www.upjohninst.org/prepub.html>.

Miles, M. *Good Stories Aren't Enough*. Philadelphia, PA: Public/Private Ventures. 2006.

Casner-Lotto, J., Rosenblum E., Wright, M., *The Ill-prepared U.S. Workforce* New York, New York: The Conference Board, 2009.



# Notes





**Workforce Solutions Collaborative**  
*Connecting Education to Work*

The Workforce Education Standards and Self-Assessment can be downloaded  
at [http://libwww.freelibrary.org/mcol/mcol\\_resources\\_best.htm](http://libwww.freelibrary.org/mcol/mcol_resources_best.htm)  
or contact the Philadelphia Mayor's Commission on Literacy at (215) 686-5250.