

## **SHOP TALK # 5:**

### **Building Capacity to Deliver Effective Work-Related Education**

Wondering how you will wear yet another hat in response to Education Rider 82, which requires Adult Education to respond to the work-related needs of adult learners - particularly those with limited English language proficiency? Although you already have many of the skills needed to do the job, help is on the way.

Professional development is being planned for both program administrators and instructors who anticipate being engaged in the delivery of work-related English language instruction. Both groups will have the chance to inventory their preparedness and set priorities for their own professional development. In order to meet the varying needs of adult educators across the state, the training will be developed and delivered in phases.

No two adult education programs venturing into work-related instruction are identical. Variables include program size and capacity, local industry needs, and partnerships with other stakeholders. Just as the delivery of work-related instruction is not for the faint of heart, neither is it meant to be delivered in isolation. Partnerships must be ramped up in order to offer a continuum of education and training services leading to sustainable employment.

In work-related education, there are three primary responsibilities. These have to do with program administration, curriculum planning, and delivery of instruction.

**Program administration.** Planning and delivering work-related instruction requires the authority to enter into negotiations and agreements with workforce partners, employers and post secondary education and training providers. In addition, the program administrator coordinates curriculum planning and instructional delivery, and selects the instructors best suited for the job. The administrator's leadership ultimately determines overall program success in work-related instruction.

**Curriculum planning.** An effective workforce-related education initiative requires planning the curriculum with employers and employees, workforce partners and other stakeholders, and certainly with instructor(s) to ensure that instruction responds to local labor force needs. Curriculum planning is driven by the needs of the community, employers, and emerging, incumbent, or displaced workers. This responsibility is most often shared by the program administrator and the instructor(s), since few programs have their own curriculum developer.

Because of the labor intensiveness of curriculum development, Texas LEARNS is developing curricular materials for three industry clusters (healthcare, customer service and sales, and manufacturing). These materials will be available to all adult education programs. Still, some adaptation will most likely be necessary. Instructors must be prepared to respond to this need.

**Instruction.** In order to be effective, the instructor(s) should be familiar with the parameters of the negotiations and agreements entered into by the program administrator as well as curricular needs. In addition, instructional staff must understand the focus of work-related instruction, the

language and culture of the workplace, time constraints, and the needs of multiple customers (employers, workers, and other stakeholders).

**Preparing to deliver workforce-related adult education instruction.** While the focus of the 2006 curriculum development is on the needs of the limited English proficient learner, much of the preparation applies to the delivery of ABE/ASE level workforce-related instruction as well. In either case, most successful programs require educators to step outside the academic arena and into the culture of the workplace. Widely recognized frameworks for program design usually include the following components:

1. **Know your program capacity and the services / solutions you can provide.** What do you need in terms of professional development and support for yourself and your instructors?
2. **Facilitate dialogue with a local team of stakeholders who have a vested interest in the language, literacy, and basic skills of the workforce.** This group can help develop and advise the planning process and sometimes identify additional funding sources. If instruction is to occur in the workplace, workers and frontline supervisors should be included in the dialogue.
3. **Conduct a language task analysis to determine how workers' language deficiencies impact targeted industries and occupations.** Identify the knowledge, skills, and competencies workers needed to perform job tasks successfully. Review local labor market information, and gather input from employers, employees, and workforce partners. Request copies of work-related print that workers use on the job. Keep in mind that safety and communication skills are top priorities in the workplace.
4. **Agree on mutual goals and program objectives.** Using the data collected in # 3, as well as employee assessment results (if assessment has been completed at this point), propose a solution that has clear, achievable goals and objectives acceptable to you and the employer and/or workforce stakeholders. Prepare a written proposal for services you can provide, including specifics regarding in-kind contributions, fees for services (if any), expectations of each party, duration of services, assessments, etc.) Identify learners' needs for a continuum of services beyond those adult education can provide.
5. **Utilize information from the language task analysis to inform a curricular response and to define instructional needs.** Configure classes to accommodate client needs, and prepare instructional staff to deliver industry-related instruction. Time constraints require a tighter instructional focus than that often found in regular adult education ESL classes. Arrange for instructional staff to tour worksites, job shadow, examine environmental print, and meet with employees (both native and non-native speakers of English) as well as frontline supervisors. Address confidentiality issues, client expectations, documentation of changes in learners' performance and behavior. Above all, incorporate adult learning theory, principles of second language learning, and an understanding of the culture of the workplace into teacher preparation.
6. **Monitor, evaluate, and report learner progress and program success.** Review baseline assessment information, ongoing assessments by instructional staff – including teacher observations, testimonials from learners / frontline supervisors regarding skills application, and changes in performance and behavior. Report attendance and progress frequently and consistently. Review original goals and objectives, make necessary midcourse changes, and use lessons learned to sustain services and partnerships.

The professional development being planned by Texas LEARNS will address these major components, and participants will have access to templates and worksheets to assist them in delivering successful work-related instructional initiatives.