



## **IDEAS TO ACTION**

### **Creating a Comprehensive Adult Education Professional Development & Learning System**

by

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## FOREWORD

Mary Ann Corley is one of our nation's pre-eminent professional development leaders. Recently retired after years of service as Principal Researcher, American Institutes for Research, Dr. Corley now provides PD services on a consulting basis, partly through Adult Learning Partners, LLC. NCAL has a longstanding interest in professional development for our field and we are pleased to publish this paper by Dr. Corley.

**IDEAS TO ACTION** is a synthesis and wrap-up of several professional development discussions over the past year, a sort of year-long “roundtable on the move.” It started with an NCAL blog, *Moving PD Closer to the Top*, posted a year ago, in August 2015. In that blog, eight national leaders offered their views about highest priority needs. Other blogs, a COABE Pre-conference workshop on PD (sponsored by the Association of Adult Literacy Professional Developers, organized and moderated by Dr. Corley), and listserv discussion on LINCS followed. These initiatives are recognized in this paper along with appropriate links.

In **IDEAS TO ACTION**, Dr. Corley's mines this material and brings her own knowledge to bear as well. The paper aims to generate greater understanding of what professional development is and why it needs to be a high priority on state and national agendas. It provides concrete action recommendations to strengthen Adult Education PD in America. Although the paper is complete on its own, for added dimension we urge readers to also look at some of the background materials mentioned.

This paper reflects the voices of and prose of many people who have cared enough to contribute some of the ideas presented here. We extend our thanks especially to Jeff Carter, Sandy Crist, John Fleischman, Daphne Greenberg, Kim Harris, Donna Parish, David Rosen, Federick Salas-Isnardi, Cristine Smith, Jackie Taylor, Marsha Taylor, John Tibbetts, Johan Uvin, Rebecca Wagner, Randy Whitfield, and Leecy Wise. This report is as much theirs as it is ours. We also want to acknowledge the help of AALPD, the participation of all COABE Pre-conference attendees, and administrative support given by Suzanne Webster at COABE.

Gail Spangenberg  
President, NCAL

## **IDEAS TO ACTION**

### **Creating a Comprehensive Adult Education Professional Development & Learning System**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The need to grow a high-quality teaching force looms large as a challenge for the adult education field. This is especially evident in light of two recent developments – the rollout of the College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education, and the newly enacted Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act legislation (WIOA) with its focus on transitioning learners to postsecondary education and helping them acquire marketable work skills. These developments ramp up the knowledge and skills that adult education teachers should possess to ensure that students succeed.

Various models of professional development (PD) are presently available to adult education practitioners – through their local programs, state and national conferences, and online Webinars, courses, and discussion groups. These opportunities often do a good job of raising participants’ awareness about various research-based strategies, but few programs can afford to provide follow-up coaching to participants as they try to put newly learned skills into practice.

There is compelling need for the adult education field to develop and provide the kinds of professional learning opportunities that enrich and change teacher behaviors so as to improve student learning and performance. As a result of blogs by the National Council on Adult Learning and OCTAE of the U.S. Department of Education, and a recent COABE Pre-conference session, professional development has “risen to the top” as a key issue for discussion and action in Adult Education.

## BACKGROUND

In August 2015, the National Council for Adult Learning (NCAL) hosted a Blog entitled *Moving PD Closer to the Top*<sup>1</sup>, in which several leading adult education practitioners and researchers expressed thoughts and ideas concerning the possible creation of a more effective and comprehensive system of professional development (see footnote). Then, in September 2015, Johan Uvin (Acting Assistant Secretary, Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education, U.S. Department of Education) and Gail Spangenberg (President, National Council on Adult Learning) co-authored *Throwing down the Gauntlet for PD*.<sup>2</sup>

In the *Gauntlet* article, the authors challenge the field to “...rethink and restructure recruitment, training, and program staffing and benefits so that more of the current workforce is motivated to remain in the field and so that young professionals are inspired to enter Adult Education as a respected and fully professional career goal.” The article sets six priorities for creating an effective PD system for adult education. They are...

1. Consult with Those who Provide the Services
2. Define What Constitutes an Effective Adult Education Teacher
3. Identify and Adopt/Adapt Good Training Models and Approaches
4. Build PD Explicitly into Adult Education Planning
5. Improve Data Collection for PD
6. Develop Clearer Communications

Then, in response to the challenges implicit in the six priorities listed above, the Association of Adult Literacy Professional Developers (AALPD) sponsored a Pre-conference on PD at the COABE Annual Conference in Dallas, Texas in April 2016. Attendees brainstormed ways to make each of these six priorities a reality. The session was

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<sup>1</sup> *Moving PD Closer to the Top* can be accessed at <http://ncalamerica.org/blog/moving-pd-closer-to-the-top>

<sup>2</sup> *Throwing Down the Gauntlet for PD* is at <http://sites.ed.gov/octae/2015/09/24/throwing-down-the-gauntlet-for-pd/>

introduced by a video speech from Johan Uvin.<sup>3</sup> To encourage a still broader discussion, NCAL posted a second follow-up Blog, *Picking Up the PD Challenge*.<sup>4</sup> Simultaneously, related discussions were held on OCTAE’s Literacy Information and Communications System (LINCS) – on four different listservs, Evidence-Based Professional Development, Reading and Writing, Career Pathways, and College and Career Standards.<sup>5</sup>

Drawing on the above blogs, meetings, and discussions, this paper provides a “putting it all together” analysis and summary. It offers a simple set of common-sense suggestions for addressing the six priorities listed, including this author’s principal recommendation for a new Center devoted to professional development.

## **PRIORITY #1 — CONSULT WITH THOSE WHO PROVIDE THE SERVICES**

**Identify and collaborate with all stakeholders.** Collaboration can be an effective tool for achieving goals and delivering services that agencies or individuals may not be able to accomplish on their own, whether those services are offered in an urban or rural area. A critical first step in creating a comprehensive system of PD for adult educators is to identify and collaborate with partners at the local, state, and national levels that provide services to the same adult populations. This would include occupational/job training programs, libraries, health care providers, employers, disability and rehabilitation services, ESL programs, young adult service programs, schools, community colleges, and others. And often it will need to include use of technology, which may be especially valuable to overcome limited resources in isolated areas.

**Get all stakeholders to the table.** To start the collaboration process, adult education agencies will need to develop a plan for marketing to and networking with appropriate partners, including hosting meetings. (The marketing and networking plan must be part

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<sup>3</sup> To hear the Uvin speech, go to <http://www.ncalamerica.org/UvinCOABE2016v610.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> *Picking Up the PD Challenge* is at <http://ncalamerica.org/blog/picking-up-the-pd-challenge>

<sup>5</sup> The LINC’s Evidence-based Professional Development discussion can be viewed at <http://www.ncalamerica.org/LINCSPDDiscussionJune2016.pdf>.

of a larger communications plan, as discussed in Priority #6.) Networking meetings are especially effective in drawing attendance when personal invitations are issued by a local leader, a city or county executive, or the governor. The meetings should be led by a facilitator skilled in encouraging discussion among all parties, with the goal of developing a joint action plan. Conveners of the meetings, which can be in person or in some cases via video-conferencing, can make the case that all parties have a stake in increased student/client achievement and that they will all benefit from being at the table. Adult education partners have a special responsibility to demonstrate at those meetings the research-based connections between development of quality teachers and the positive effect this has on student achievement.

**Focus on the advantages of collaboration for all partners.** At the networking meetings, the facilitator can document and lead discussions on the types of PD or talent management each stakeholder participant needs as well as the resources they themselves can provide to support the PD, or talent management, of employees across the group. Besides providing basic skills training for clients of other agencies, adult education can offer training for *staff members* on topics such as adult learner needs, student-centered learning, and differentiating instruction for a diverse student/client population. (Note: In Illinois, adult educators market their services to other agencies with the message “**We** are the *education* partner.”)

In return, participating agencies might provide resources (space, materials, food, technology, or funds) for the professional development of adult education practitioners. Because collaborating agencies must be able to see some return on their investment, the field must have (or develop!) a system for collecting data on professional development activities.<sup>6</sup> (See Priority #5). And stakeholder groups should share and report on the results of the PD in terms of changes in teacher behavior and student learning gains.

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<sup>6</sup> See two publications by the Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy, *Invitation to a Roundtable* and *Stepping Up to ROI*, at <http://www.caalusa.org/InvitationtoRoundtable.pdf> and <http://www.caalusa.org/SteppingUptoROI.pdf>

## **PRIORITY #2 — DEFINE WHAT CONSTITUTES AN EFFECTIVE ADULT EDUCATION TEACHER**

According to work done by the National Research Council in 2012,<sup>7</sup> preparation of adult literacy instructors is widely varied, and, as professionals throughout the field know well, professional development opportunities are limited. Other recent reports emphasize the need for a more consistent and cohesive approach to professional learning for teachers with the aim of improving instruction for adult learners. To develop such an approach, we must define the characteristics of an effective adult education teacher.

**All states should put some teacher certification process in place.** Nationally developed professional standards and competencies for adult education teachers exist, but unfortunately not all states use them. And few states have a process in place for certifying adult education teachers. Research indicates that *inputs* to teacher effectiveness (certification status, degree, subject area major) do not by themselves greatly impact student achievement.<sup>8</sup> *Outputs* (teacher behaviors, attitudes, rapport with students) matter as much, if not more, as measured by contributions to student growth and learning. In short, content expertise is certainly critically important—but it isn't enough.

Teachers working with adults need to be knowledgeable about adult learning theories as well as student-centered learning so that their teaching resonates with and involves adult learners as active participants. They need to be versed in differentiating instruction to meet the needs of a diverse learner population. They should engage in effective lesson planning and employ formative assessment techniques and questioning strategies that lead to deeper learning. And they need to understand how to encourage

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<sup>7</sup> *Improving Adult Literacy Instruction: Options for Practice and Research*, Washington, DC; National Academies Press, 2012, at <http://www.nap.edu/read/13242/chapter/1>.

<sup>8</sup> *Separation of degrees: State-by-state analysis of teacher compensation for masters degrees*, Center on Reinventing Public Education, M. Roza and R. Miller (2009), retrieved August 1, 2016 from [www.crpe.org](http://www.crpe.org).



students to become self-regulated learners, monitor their own learning, and adjust their strategies to ensure success.

The few states that do certify adult education teachers can work to ensure that participants learn about these concepts, but many states lack adult education teacher credentialing programs and teachers may not be versed in these instructional skills and techniques.

**Implement measures to retain the teaching staff.** The flip-side to identifying and hiring effective teachers is the need to *retain* them after they have been hired. There is a significant ongoing teacher turnover problem in adult education. Although there is no current or commonly cited percentage for adult education teacher turnover, various studies have estimated the rate to be between 20% and 40%.<sup>9</sup> The high attrition rate can be attributed largely to the part-time nature of the work and to scant or non-existent benefits, little or no paid prep time, and meager compensation for engaging in professional learning. *The turnover rate makes it difficult to provide continuity and depth in teachers' professional learning*, especially in rural areas. Facing a large percentage of new teachers each year, administrators have to focus their PD offerings on the basics, *i.e.*, how adults learn, their reasons for enrolling in adult education classes, their expectations, and ways that teachers can manage classes of students with diverse abilities, interests, and needs. To grow a highly skilled teaching force, adult education planners must be able to count on a relatively stable teaching staff.

**Develop and implement appropriate teacher benefit and reward systems.**

Retaining adult education teachers necessarily entails a system for incentivizing and rewarding them, e.g., instituting appropriate pay scales not only for actual teaching hours but also for prep time and time spent in professional learning; providing a differentiated (higher) salary for master teachers, depending on degree and state; developing career pathways for teachers and administrators. To give just two examples:

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<sup>9</sup> One such study is *The Characteristics and Concerns of Adult Basic Education Teachers*, C. Smith and J. Hofer (2003) at <http://www.ncsall.net/fileadmin/resources/research/brief26.pdf>

Pennsylvania offers teacher incentives by requiring that teachers work 80% time and spend the remaining 20% time in planning and professional development.<sup>10</sup> Illinois offers a certification process for adult education teachers that uses a scaffolded program of career pathways leading to certification as teacher, specialist, or trainer.<sup>11</sup>

**Research funding is vitally needed.** We know from K-12 research that the behavior of teachers significantly affects student achievement. But there is no comparable research that examines teacher effectiveness in adult education—and there is a great need for it. To address this priority, *funding for research* is a critical need. Research efforts could include (1) the examination of the characteristics of effective teachers of adults; (2) the development of guidelines for the professional development of adult literacy teachers, including a scope and sequence of skills that a comprehensive PD program should include; (3) a policy paper on the importance of state colleges’ establishing adult education teacher certification programs tied to the College and Career Readiness Standards and then funneling graduates to adult education careers within the state; and (4) a comparison of, examples of, and guidelines for, teacher induction models – e.g., the Texas training-of-trainers model,<sup>12</sup> or the Pennsylvania professional learning communities and study circles for teachers.<sup>13</sup>

### **PRIORITY 3 — IDENTIFY AND ADOPT/ADAPT GOOD TRAINING MODELS AND APPROACHES**

Adult education PD needs to emerge and mature from the prevalent model of one-shot “stand-and-deliver” workshops. Research indicates that they are not effective in changing teacher behavior. Single workshops are useful for transmitting knowledge and

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<sup>10</sup> Reported by a participant from PA at the COABE Pre-Conference.

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.thecenterweb.org/alrc/index.html>

<sup>12</sup> The Texas Professional Development System for Adult Education and Literacy – <http://www.twc.state.tx.us/files/partners/professional-development-model-twc.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.paadultedresources.org/newsletters/category/professional-learning-community>

raising awareness of issues, but real changes in teaching require longer-term approaches with follow-up feedback and coaching as teachers practice skills. Strong funding and policy support are needed at all levels to identify, adopt, and adapt good professional development models and approaches. At the national level, support is needed for many things—a strong national adult education professional development/training alliance; research on the economic, social, and emotional factors related to practitioner longevity in the field, and in other areas; and continued support for professional development best practices and communities of practice, such as that currently provided through LINCS (LINCS.ed.gov), or the online discussion groups provided by some states that allow teachers to share successes and to problem solve.

**At the state level**, ABE state staff have an important role in supporting adult teacher professional development and in helping local program administrators recognize and implement a comprehensive and systemic approach to PD for their teaching staffs. Local and state administrators should adopt or adapt proven PD models that...

- ***Provide sustained, ongoing, collaborative learning experiences*** that offer teachers opportunities for practice and follow-up, incorporate self-reflection as a way for teachers to evaluate and refine their practice, and lead to measurable changes in teachers' knowledge and skills;
- ***Implement and support mentoring and peer coaching***, including follow-up to face-to-face or online PD, e.g., Pennsylvania's teacher coaching model,<sup>14</sup>
- ***Integrate technology into PD***, including the use of blended learning to ensure follow-up to face-to-face professional development;
- ***Provide face-to-face, online, or blended adult basic skills new teacher orientation*** to the field with peer support persons to guide and help teachers grow. Among the many states currently doing this are Pennsylvania,

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<sup>14</sup> <http://www.paadulthoodresources.org/newsletters/teacher-coaching-activities-across-the-state>

Massachusetts, Vermont, and Connecticut. Some volunteer tutor programs also have solid training programs, such as Literacy New York's Intake to Outcomes facilitated training program<sup>15</sup> that is designed to train volunteer tutors to teach adult learners basic reading and English language skills.

- *Support shared learning for teachers through cluster meetings and professional learning communities (PLCs) or communities of practice (CoPs)* that set up a process enabling teachers to observe each other teaching, engage in problem solving, and provide peer coaching;
- *Support just-in-time learning*, e.g., short, live webinars archived for asynchronous training, or the use of the reading research-based LINCS/Learner Tutor Ready website for reading tutors.<sup>16</sup>

**At the program level**, administrators also have an important leadership role in implementing a good environment for teacher professional development—for example, by developing and adhering to sound criteria for hiring teachers, by evaluating the effectiveness of each teacher, and by including support in program budgets for the types of professional learning (see Priority #4) that they know will help their teachers grow, change practice, and ultimately, help students achieve greater learning gains. Administrators also must develop a communications and marketing plan (see Priority #6), include PD variables in their data collection systems (see Priority #5), and network and collaborate with other community agencies (see Priority #1). Community networking and collaboration could result in multiple benefits. For one example, state and community colleges can offer courses tied to the college and career readiness standards and the subsequent funneling of course completers to adult education careers. For another, adult education practitioner career pathways could be created or expanded to include awarding certificates of mastery of specific competencies.

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<sup>15</sup> Go to <http://literacynewyork.org/index.php/our-programs/instruction.html>

<sup>16</sup> [https://www.learnerweb.org/LearnerWeb/LearnerWeb.html?region=literacyworkslincs&locale=en&#REGION\\_HOME\\_PAGE](https://www.learnerweb.org/LearnerWeb/LearnerWeb.html?region=literacyworkslincs&locale=en&#REGION_HOME_PAGE)

## **PRIORITY 4 — BUILD PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EXPLICITLY INTO ADULT EDUCATION PLANNING**

State and local program administrators exert considerable influence on program culture, including the quality of professional learning of staff members. Administrators make decisions that determine the focus and structure of professional development. For example, will the PD be standards-based? Will it be collaborative, characterized by teacher teams engaging in problem solving with the aim of refining practice? How will the PD learning be embedded in teachers' work? Will the effectiveness of PD experiences be measured by changes in teaching practice and by increases in student learning? Clearly, administrators must have a strong commitment to providing quality PD experiences for their staff members, and this includes budgeting for quality PD.

**We must have secure and adequate budgets.** During lean economic times, professional development is often the first budget line item to be cut. In fact, in many cases, PD is often an afterthought in budget planning—i.e., funds allotted for PD typically are those remaining after all other budget line items have been populated. Yet, if we recognize the research that points to teacher effectiveness as a leading contributor to student achievement, then PD must be viewed as critical to program success and must be built explicitly into budget planning. But, even with a line item dedicated to PD, the question remains: Do program administrators have the knowledge about PD or the skills necessary to plan effective PD experiences?

**PD planning needs to inform action and preparation of state budgets.** In planning their budgets to include PD, it would be beneficial for administrators to have some guidelines that outline various PD models (e.g., face-to-face, distance, blended learning, teacher inquiry/action research) along with suggested time, personnel, and materials needed for each model so that administrators can plan realistic budget line items for PD. In fact, it might be helpful for administrators to participate in a training session that provides an overview of the qualities of effective PD and the various models of PD, as well as a suggested scope and sequence of the PD content for teachers

of adults. Leadership for this kind of work could be provided by a newly formed national training alliance, if such an entity were to be established (see p.14).

**Collaboration Among State Entities is Needed and Should Include Ongoing**

**Attention to PD.** Funding available to the states through WIOA Title II is not adequate to provide the kind of ongoing, sustained, collaborative, research-based, and job-embedded PD for adult educators that we need to have to produce changes in teacher behavior and result in student achievement gains. Adult education needs quality professional development opportunities to ensure that the field has highly skilled teachers who can foster student success, and this, in turn, will benefit *all* agencies and the state in general. Priority #1 focuses on collaborating with other agencies that provide services to the same population. This collaboration might well include a formal agreement among agencies detailing a plan for sharing of resources to develop a quality PD system. The plan also should include a process for sharing results of PD in terms of changes in teacher behavior and increases in student learning gains.

**PRIORITY 5 — IMPROVE DATA COLLECTION FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

**We need data!** Along with the need for more and better data collection and sharing in Adult Education general, practitioners agree that we need better information on the effects of professional development—both on teacher behavior and on student achievement. The availability of such data would help program managers and professional developers identify the types of PD that are working well and those that need to be modified. In addition, trend data that looks at the effects of teacher PD on student achievement over a number of years would provide a wealth of information to support program planners’ decisions on the type and structure of PD to offer.

**The NRS can help!** Currently, the National Reporting System (NRS) requires programs to report the number of paid, full- and part-time adult literacy teachers who are certified in Adult Education, K-12, Special Education, and Teachers of English to

Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). The NRS could go a step farther and require states to report the types and extent of PD that teachers receive so that the effect of that PD on student outcomes can be measured, particularly over time. One such example is a North Carolina study, *The Impact of Certified Basic Skills Instructors on Student Outcomes*, which found a positive link between teacher certification and student outcomes.<sup>17</sup> The NRS project could develop guidelines for refining and expanding state data systems to include professional development variables.

## **PRIORITY #6 — DEVELOP CLEARER COMMUNICATIONS**

When advocating for funding, adult education traditionally has not done a good job communicating its needs. For example, the adult education message generally focuses on results—that is, student successes and number of students currently served as well as the potential number of students that could be served with additional funding. But it has not focused on *infrastructure* costs related to equipment and building maintenance, curriculum and materials development, or professional learning and growth of its teaching staff.

**Develop a comprehensive communications plan.** It is important for adult education programs at the state and local levels to invest time and resources into developing a comprehensive communications plan. Although some may question the wisdom of allotting resources to such a task in times of austere budgets, there *is* a return on investment. The process of developing the plan serves at least three purposes—namely, it will help identify those agencies and audiences that the adult education message needs to reach; it will contribute to the development of a brand, or a clear message about adult education’s purpose and goals; and it will help identify the unique characteristics, needs, and motivations of various targeted audiences at all jurisdictional levels along with strategies for appealing to each.

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<sup>17</sup> See [http://www.nccommunitycolleges.edu/sites/default/files/data-warehouse/research\\_focus\\_report\\_bw.pdf](http://www.nccommunitycolleges.edu/sites/default/files/data-warehouse/research_focus_report_bw.pdf)

**Articulate the message(s) clearly and consistently, and with educational and economic goals in mind.** Clear and concise adult education messages can do a better job showcasing examples of successful programs and institutions in terms of their shared community resources and collaborative partnerships. They can ascribe the success of these institutions/programs, in many cases, to the development of a comprehensive professional development system that includes program administrators as well as teachers. A good communications plan should identify available policy levers to support the replication of the successes. A key message to be communicated is that the building of a quality PD system for adult educators feeds into the broader-purpose data systems that guide state economic development.

**Marketing to reach potential students.** In addition to reaching community agencies, a comprehensive communications plan should include a marketing component designed to reach potential students. Adult education programs currently serve only a fraction of the people who could benefit from program services. Many marketing efforts designed to reach and recruit potential students often focus on GED or high school completion. The result is that persons with low literacy skills may not enroll in adult education programs because they do not believe or see how they can complete high school or go on to postsecondary education and training.

A good marketing and communications plan will be designed to be inclusive of all adult education services, and marketing strategies should be differentiated to reach students with needs for everyday life basic skills as well as those seeking high school completion. Marketing directed to persons with low-level skills should communicate clearly that adult education can help them improve basic skills needed for everyday life and assure them that needed supports will be in place. The message should be clear: Basic literacy, ABE, and basic and intermediate ESOL/ESL are part of the “pipeline” to adult secondary education, high school completion, and college preparation, and “you can do it!”



**Develop strategies to retain students!** A solid plan should include strategies for not only attracting students, but also retaining them. This means that program structure may need to be varied. For example, students with low-level skills may need more structure than open-entry/open-exit programs allow, and they may not thrive in a setting where students work independently in books or on computers. To make progress, low-level students often need greater intensity and duration of instruction than students who are preparing for high school completion. Program structure should allow for and accommodate such student differences, and marketing strategies should make clear that various options are available.

**Program administrators need skills, too!** Program administrators may need support in learning skills required to lead the development of a communications plan that includes a clear message and guidelines for networking with other community agencies. They also may need support in learning to conduct a mid-course review to determine strengths, weaknesses, and obstacles and then creating and implementing new approaches. This is another area where a new national training alliance could be of invaluable assistance to the field.

## CONCLUSION

Many adult education planners and practitioners understand the kinds of change needed to establish the comprehensive professional development system that we must have to ensure a quality teaching force and increased student achievements. But the question is—how do we *effect* such changes?

**Create a National Adult Education Training Alliance.** Ideally, an independent national professional learning center should be created as a planning and coordinating mechanism through which to do the work called for above. Thus, this paper's major recommendation is to establish a *National Adult Education Training Alliance*, financed through a partnership of public, private philanthropic, and business interests.

The Alliance would be charged with developing and delivering a sequence of standards-based, evidence-based experiences for adult educators with the goal of enriching teachers' own qualifications and ensuring quality instruction for adult learners. It would work with states to certify teachers as they complete and master various levels within the sequence. It would develop and certify a cadre of trainers for each state to (1) ensure that its adult education teachers progress through the PD sequence, and (2) provide feedback and coaching. It also would develop and deliver training for administrators on the characteristics of effective PD and on strategies for developing a marketing, communications, and networking plan.

Modest funding would have to be made available for the work of the Alliance, as well as new funding for teacher benefits and prep time, but the return on investment would be powerful in terms of student gains. Federal and state funding sources, the business and philanthropic communities, and even individuals all have a role to play.

A strong professional development and learning system has long been a dream of adult educators. The time has come to build it, and to advocate for full-time teachers, appropriate pay scales and benefits across the country, and paid professional learning experiences that lead to increased student learning. Our teachers deserve it! Our students deserve no less!