

Follow-up Discussion

Professional Development Monthly Advisor and Planner (PDMAP)

Civic Participation and EL/Civics

July 2010

Discussion Questions:

1. Before you read the PD MAP articles, what were your thoughts about the role that civic participation could play for adult learners at your program? Have your thoughts changed as a result of what you read?
2. How can the teacher and adult learners identify a civic participation initiative to engage in? How do you balance the learners' input regarding their interests and needs with the teacher's knowledge of civic opportunities?
3. Many of the resources focus on civic participation for new immigrants to the U.S. What value can civic participation projects have for ABE/ASE learners?
4. The Nash article *Integrating Civic Participation and Adult ESOL* describes two philosophical stances to democracy that influence how adult education teachers approach civic participation with their learners. The first stance is that our democratic system is functional and works well, so the role of teachers is to help learners understand the system as it is and learn how to access it. The second stance is that our democratic system creates inequities and injustices, so the role of teachers is to help learners critically examine the system and advocate for systemic change. Which approach have you taken? Which approach fits your learners best?
5. The same article defines three types of citizens - personally responsible, participatory, and justice-oriented – and suggests that adult education materials and programs typically see these as occurring in an orderly progression. Low level learners learn the basics of being a responsible community member, intermediate learners become actively involved in the greater community, and advanced learners *possibly* moving toward the more abstract justice-oriented content. Do you agree that this is the typical progression? Do you think this *should* be the typical progression?

6. Some teachers consider civic participation projects as an “add on” to the “real” work of teaching adult learners the essential literacy, numeracy, and life skill or academic content. Other teachers find ways to make the preparation for and implementation of civic projects be the content through which adult literacy, numeracy and life skill or academic content is learned. What does it require of teachers and adult education programs to make this kind of paradigm shift?
7. Which of the PD MAP resources for use with adult learners did you browse? Do you already use any of these resources with your learners? Which resources were new to you that you think would be a good fit for your learners?
8. What are the barriers your program, teachers, and adult learners face when considering class-sponsored civic initiatives? What supports have you used or identified to help your program, your teachers, and adult learners overcome the barriers?
9. Describe civic participation projects that have been done by teachers and learners at your program. What was the goal? What were the benefits to learners? Consider such factors as using or learning adult education content, community building among learners, personal confidence, or learners’ feelings of connection to the community at large?