Follow-up Discussion

Professional Development Monthly Advisor and Planner (PDMAP)

Workforce Preparation for Adult Learners May/June 2011

Discussion Questions:

- 1. The Susan Imel article contrasts two groups of adults with different career development needs. Adults in the first group have good self knowledge, sufficient knowledge about employment situations and good decision making skills, so they only need information in order to make career decisions. In contrast, adult in the second group need to develop positive self-images, increase their knowledge of careers, increase their ability to use resources, and improve their decision-making skills before they can engage in career planning activities. To which of these two groups do most of your adult learners belong? How does that impact the approach you use during instruction? Did you find the lessons in the Oesch and Bower curriculum helpful?
- 2. The Kerka, Marshall, and Houghton articles describe how adult learner's attitudes and/or cultural practices may be at odds with cultural expectations of the mainstream American workplace. What have you learned from your students (either ESL or ABE/ASE) about differences in attitudes or culture that might impede their ability to find work, keep work, or advance in their work?
- 3. The Grognet and Marshall articles describe the SCANS report of 1992 which describes process knowledge what people do and how they do it. The articles identify several ways that an adult education classroom can simulate workplace expectations. Some of these are: 1) establishing behavioral expectations, 2) establishing classroom rules and routines, 3) generating learner involvement and responsibility, 4) include project-based activities in instruction, and 5) using teamwork to simulate a work environment. Which, if any, of those ways have you used, or would you like to use, with your learners, whether they be ESL or ABE/ASE?

- 4. The resource *Hard Work on Soft Skills* describes four model programs that focus exclusively on teaching skills such as work ethic, courtesy, teamwork, self-discipline, self-confidence, and conforming to the prevailing norms of a workplace. Do you think it is the adult education teacher's job to teach these skills? If not, why not? If so, how can a teacher incorporate these skills into the regular instruction in literacy/numeracy skills and English language skills? Is the curriculum from Michigan a useful resource for teaching soft skills?
- 5. The PD MAP includes links to curricula for a number of industry sectors. Have you ever used an industry-specific curriculum? Under what circumstances? Who were the learners? How effective was the curriculum for meeting your learner's workforce preparation goals?
- 6. Describe any workforce preparation partnerships in which your adult education program currently participates. These might be with a local workforce one-stop center, a community college, or another type of service provider. How does the partnership work? What are the goals and outcomes of the partnership?
- 7. The *Breaking Through Practice Guide* guide describes four "high leverage strategies" that community colleges can adopt to increase their success with low-skilled younger and older adults. These strategies are: 1) accelerated learning, 2) comprehensive support services, 3) labor market payoffs, 4) aligning programs for low-skilled adults. How does your adult education program incorporate any of these strategies?