The History of the ABE Authorization

Professionalization of the field of adult basic education and development of a highly qualified workforce have long been concerns at both the national and state levels. Although Colorado has many years of experience providing professional development and training to adult education teachers through its state adult basic education office and its statewide professional organization for adult educators, the ABEA is Colorado's first State Board-governed certification program for adult educators.

The need for such a program was reinforced and brought to the forefront by the passage of the federal 'Literacy Involves Families Together (LIFT) Act of 2000', which reauthorized and amended Even Start to include staff qualifications (including adult education instructors) as a new required program element. To align all CDE-administered federally-funded programs serving Colorado adults and families with this new requirement, the Colorado Family Literacy Consortium convened a work group of practitioners and administrators to develop and implement a certification process for adult educators. The certification work group identified the competencies needed by teachers of adults, recommended courses and course content, negotiated a coursework delivery system with Colorado Community Colleges, and developed an alternative route to certification (the portfolio process).

September 2002

The Colorado Family Literacy Consortium in conjunction with the Colorado Department of Education organized an Adult Education Certification Workgroup. The Workgroup was charged with identifying the essential skills and knowledge that an adult education teacher must be able to demonstrate.

Workgroup Members:

- Harold Deselms, Group Facilitator, Former Provost of Trinidad State Junior College
- Lisa Cheney-Steen, CCCOnline
- Debra Fawcett, Consultant, CDE
- Frank Fielden, Even Start State Coordinator, CDE
- Bill Furney, Consultant, CDE
- Kathy Holmes, ABE/GED Program Specialist, Adult and Family Education Colorado Springs SD 11
- Virginia Howey, Executive Director, The Pinon Project
- Leigh Jordan, Family Literacy Coordinator, Community Partnership for Child Development
- Susan Lythgoe, Executive Director, Learning Source for Adults & Families
- Marcia Pittleman, ESL Instructor, Glendale Public Library
- Laura Pless, ABE Instructor, Colorado Mountain College
- Anthony Romero, Colorado Department of Corrections
- Kathy Santopietro-Weddel, Consultant, Northern Colorado Literacy Resource Center
- Lee-ann Short, Even Start Coordinator, Colorado Mountain College
- Pam Smith, State Director of Adult Education, CDE
- Mary Willoughby, Consultant, CDE
- Mimi Zappanti, Director, Adult Education Services, Trinidad State Junior College

Literacy Instruction Authorization (LIA) course competencies were derived and adapted from available current research including the Pro-Net Instructor Competencies and Performance Indicators for the Improvement of Adult Education Programs, TESOL's Standards for Teachers of Adult Learners, and other states' teacher competencies and standards.

January 2003

A sub-committee on Alternative Routes to Certification within the Adult Certification Workgroup formed. Chair: Leigh Jordan; Members: Lee-ann Short, Debra Fawcett, and Virginia Howey.

Fall 2003

The first LIA courses, EDU 131, 133, and 134, were offered through CCCOnline. Eleven scholarships for these courses were awarded to staff members of AEFLA funded programs by CDE's Office of Adult Education and Family Literacy through AEFLA State Leadership funds.



May 2004

HB 04-1104 was approved, which repealed and reenacted with amendments CRS 22-60.5-111 (Authorization) of the Colorado Educator Licensing Act of 1991. Among the amendments was the creation of several teacher authorizations, including the literacy instruction authorization.

"The Department of Education may issue a Literacy Instruction Authorization to an applicant who provides documented evidence of literacy training and experience. A school district may employ a person who holds a Literacy Instruction Authorization to work as a literacy instructor in a literacy program operated by the school district before, during, or after regular school hours. A Literacy Instruction Authorization is valid for five years from the date of issuance. The Department of Education may renew the Literacy Instruction Authorization for successive five-year periods upon receipt of documented evidence that the person holding the authorization has completed additional literacy training or practice and any other renewal requirements specified by rule of the State Board of Education." [CRS 22-60.5-111 (13)]

September 2004

The first LIA Portfolio Committee Meeting was held.

Original members of the LIA PC:

- Frank Fielden, Even Start State Coordinator, CDE, Served 2004-2005
- Leigh Jordan, Family Literacy Coordinator, Community Partnership for Child Development, Served 2004-2005
- Vera Atilano, Adult Education Coordinator, Intergenerational Learning Center/Adams SD 14, Served 2004-2013
- Mary Kay Cook, Workforce Development, Section Manager, Colorado Works Program, CDHS, Served 2004-2012
- Kathy Holmes, ABE/GED Program Specialist, Adult and Family Education Colorado Springs SD 11, Served 2004-2011
- Debra Fawcett, Consultant, CDE, Served 2004-2010
- Pam Smith, State Director of Adult Education, CDE, Served 2004-2010
- Paula Buffington, LIA PC Staffer, CDE, Served 2004-2009

The "Red Book" (Literacy Instruction: Alternative Means of Authorization. Documents and Forms for the Portfolio Process 2004-2005) was released at the Fall 2004 (September 9-10, 2004) AEFLA Directors' Meeting. Feedback from participants was solicited. FAQs were developed as a result and distributed to the field.

November 2004

The rubrics were developed for the LIA Portfolio Process by Pam Smith, Bill Furney, Jane Miller, Vera Atilano and Karen Carr.

January 2005

Updates to the LIA process were released to the AEFLA program directors as Version 2 of the LIA.

The Authorization website was created by Debra Fawcett.

February 2005

The first three LIA Portfolios were passed by the LIA Portfolio Committee.

Shannon Kozak, Director of Boulder Valley Family Literacy, joined the committee filling the void in family literacy expertise. Served 2005-2007.

April 2005

Opal Yule received the first LIA from Educator Licensing.



July 2005

Joyce Johnson, Director of Field Operations, Workforce Development Program, Department of Labor and Employment, became a member of the LIA Portfolio Committee adding expertise in the areas of community colleges and workforce development. Served 2005-2010.

August 2005

Kathy Holmes was named the LIA Portfolio Committee Chair.

September 1, 2005

Version 3 of the LIA Portfolio Process went into effect.

January 2006

The Professional Development Advisory Group and the LIA Portfolio Committee collaborated to discuss how the authorization and professional development are interrelated.

April 2006

Guides for Portfolio Evaluators were created by Debra Fawcett, Kathy Holmes, Jane Miller, and Mimi Zappanti to assist evaluators in their evaluation of applicants on specific topics.

May 2006

LIA Study Links was created by Debra Fawcett and posted on the web. The LIA Study Links were developed to help LIA students, portfolio applicants, and portfolio evaluators or program managers find resources on the Web related to topics covered in the EDU course competencies. http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeadult/AuthorizationStudyLinks.htm

June 2006

The Executive Committee of the LIA Portfolio Committee was formed with the purpose of determining the roles and responsibilities of the LIA Portfolio Committee and to address administrative and policy issues referred by the LIA Portfolio Committee.

March 2007

Gwen Welch, Director of Family Literacy, Jefferson County School, becomes a member of the LIA Portfolio Committee to add expertise in Family Literacy. Served 2007-2012.

The LIA Portfolio Committee began planning for a fourth version of the LIA Handbook.

April 2007

Jean McDonald, Administrative Assistant for the office of Adult Education and Family Literacy, was named the new LIA Portfolio Committee Staffer.

July 2007

The LIA Portfolio Committee held a two day work session to begin changes to the LIA Portfolio Process. The groundwork was laid for how to best move forward in the development of a new and improved LIA Portfolio Process.

October 2007

The New Directors' Meeting was held. Kathy Holmes, Paula Buffington and Jean McDonald presented on the LIA, Portfolio Process and Coursework to bring directors new to AEFLA programs up to speed on the LIA.



November - February 2007-2008

Kathy Holmes and Paula Buffington conducted six focus groups to solicit opinions on the LIA and feed-back on the first draft of Version 4. The focus groups were held in:

- Pagosa Springs
- Glenwood Springs
- Metro Denver (2)
- Fort Morgan
- Pueblo

February 2008

Kathy Holmes, Paula Buffington and Pam Smith met with the Vice President/Provost of the Colorado Community College System (CCCS), Geri Anderson, to discuss the possible re-evaluation of the LIA required coursework and a facelift for the Certificate of Equivalency.

June 2008

Based on the feedback from the focus groups Kathy Holmes and Paula Gumina (formerly Buffington) made revisions to the LIA Handbook, Version 4, to present to the LIA Portfolio Committee.

Western State College offered EDU 134: Teaching ESL to Adult Learners as a one week intensive course for graduate credit.

July 2008

Feedback from the LIA Portfolio Committee generated more revisions to Version 4 of the LIA Handbook. Revisions were completed by Kathy Holmes and Jean McDonald and the draft that resulted was reviewed by a group of practitioners.

- Lisa Davey, Adult & Family Education School District 11
- Stephanie Moran, Durango Adult Learning Center
- Nita Bratt, The Learning Source for Adults and Families
- Callie Bradley, Lake County Family Literacy
- Kindra Plumb, Phillips County Family Education Services

Dialogue began with Colorado State University on adopting its graduate courses EDAE 620: Processes and Methods and EDAE 520: Adult Education, as graduate level courses for EDU 132 and EDU 131, respectively.

LIA Renewal information was published on the Authorization website.

The LIA application was made available on the Educator Licensing website.

August/September 2008

Final revisions were made by Debra Fawcett to the LIA Handbook, Version 4.

October 17, 2008

The LIA Handbook, Version 4, was released to the field through an LIA Specialist Training. The materials took effect January 1, 2009.

December 5, 2008

The LIA Portfolio Committee name was changed to the LIA Committee to reflect the wider range of responsibilities of the committee beyond reviewing LIA portfolios.

January 2009

Jessie Hawthorn, CDE/AEFL consultant, became the state LIA Specialist and joined the LIA Committee as the Co-Chairperson.



May 2009

Five years ago on May 8, 2004, the LIA was added to the list of approved authorizations issued by Educator Licensing. This date was recognized at the August 2009 CAEPA Rendezvous conference.

September 2009

The Colorado Board of Education approved that CDE Educator Licensing can accept transcripts for specific graduate courses offered by the Adult Education and Training department from Colorado State University (CSU) as evidence of completion of the required courses for the Literacy Instruction Authorization (LIA). This option became available to applicants in the spring 2010 semester.

February 2010

Pamela M. Smith, State Director of the Office of AEFL and leader of the process to establish the LIA, retired.

July 2010

Margaret Kirkpatrick was hired as the State Director of the Office of AEFL.

February 2011

Five new committee members were selected to join the LIA Committee.

- Carolyn Carter, ABE/ASE-GED Instructor, Served 2011-2012
- Sherri Durman, ESL Instructor, McLain Community High School, Served 2011-2012
- Callie James, Director and Instructor, Lake County Family Literacy, Served 2011-2012
- Karin McGuire-Hill, Director of Special Education, Colorado Department of Corrections, Served 2011-2013
- Julie Oliver, EDU course instructor, Morgan Community College, Served 2011

March 2011

CDE Educator Licensing no longer issues the authorization as an endorsement on a professional teaching license. Licensed teachers must renew the authorization separately from their license and it is issued as a separate document.

June 2011

Authorization applicants must submit applications electronically using eLicensing. Official transcripts must be uploaded to eLicensing and mailed to CDE Educator Licensing.

July 2011

The Standards of Quality (SoQ) for Adult Education Programs in Colorado were published. Standard #12: Teacher Credentialing and Professional Development (PD) Program supports a qualified teaching staff by helping teachers to obtain the Literacy Instruction Authorization (LIA) and by providing opportunities for all teachers to participate in on-going professional development.

January 2012

The revised LIA portfolio requirements were implemented.

July 2012

The Evaluation of Equivalent Coursework option was introduced. Applicants in the process of using the Previous Coursework option in the portfolio must submit the documents by the September deadline. Applicants must use the Evaluation of Equivalent Coursework option starting in October 2012.



August 2012

On August 8, 2012 the Colorado Board of Education approved a change to the rules in the Educator Licensing Act of 1991 to change the name of the authorization from Literacy Instruction Authorization to Adult Basic Education Authorization.

October 2012

The ABE Authorization Committee begins meeting bi-monthly rather than monthly via conference call.

November 2012

Forty-two adult educators from throughout Colorado participated in the first meeting on revising the ABE Authorization course competencies. Groups were formed to draft revised competencies for each course.

December 2012 - May 2013

Groups meet to draft revised competencies which were submitted to the CDE Office of Adult Education and Family Literacy.

July 2013 - August 2013

Feedback was solicited from the field via a web-based survey about the revised competencies.

July 2013

Decreased number of committee member candidates and increased efficiency of staff and process lead CDE/AEFL to rely on in-house resources for portfolio evaluation. Regular ABEA Committee meetings are suspended indefinitely. The committee's role becomes ad hoc advisory group.

