

# Promising Practices



**Suggestions for Program Improvement  
from Ohio Aspire Practitioners**

**Revised Edition**

**February 2010**

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**Aspire**  
LEARN MORE. EARN MORE.

Adult Basic and Literacy Education (Aspire) programs are in the business of helping adults acquire the foundation skills they need to pursue better employment, to prepare and persist in postsecondary education and training, to participate more fully in American society and culture, and to parent more effectively by advancing in their own skills and by learning ways to assist their children in their educational development.

These are critical goals for individuals and our society. The success of any Aspire program in helping its students achieve these goals depends on its effectiveness in meeting the instructional and program management challenges it encounters. This document presents several challenges identified by a wide range of local Aspire programs and state-level Aspire committees, offers suggestions and strategies for meeting those challenges, and provides other insights related to the challenges gleaned from the professional literature and research. It is our hope that the ideas expressed herein will offer a starting point for Aspire programs facing similar challenges.

This Revised Edition adds new Promising Practices to those in the original edition of May 2008. Promising Practices contain the same information, describing challenges, suggestions, strategies, and insights. Descriptive substantive titles have been added to all the Promising Practices in the document to show at a glance the main focus of each Promising Practice.

I want to thank all the Aspire staff statewide—local Aspire program staff, state-level Aspire committees, the Aspire Evaluation and Design Project Advisory Committee, and the Ohio Aspire Resource Center Network—who took time to share their professional wisdom, suggestions, and support to make this document possible. Finally, I want to express my thanks to the staff of the Aspire Evaluation and Design Project at the Center on Education and Training for Employment, The Ohio State University, for their fine work in collecting and compiling information from Aspire staff and for producing this final document.

Jeffrey Gove, Acting State Aspire Director

# Acknowledgements

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This document is the result of input and insights from Aspire staff across Ohio. As shown below, contributors from a wide range of local Aspire programs and state-level Aspire committees provided information about challenges they faced in delivering high-quality services to their students, responses used to address those challenges, and other insights related to the challenges gleaned from the professional literature and research.

Particular words of thanks go to the staff at the state Aspire Office, currently at the Ohio Board of Regents (OBR) and formerly at the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) office and to staff at the Ohio Aspire Resource Center Network for their guidance, suggestions, and support.

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Eastland-Fairfield Career and Tech Schools  
Garfield Heights Community Center  
Godman Guild Association  
Lawrence County Joint Vocational School District  
LEARN of Summit County  
Literacy Council of Medina County  
London City Schools  
Marietta City Schools  
Mid-East Career and Technology Centers  
Northeast Resource Center, Euclid City Schools  
Northwest Resource Center, Owens State Community College  
Ohio Aspire Reading and Writing Steering Committee  
Ohio Aspire Special Needs Steering Committee  
Ohio Aspire ESOL Summit  
Ohio Aspire Technology Task Force  
Ohio Aspire Family Literacy Task Force  
Ohio Hi-Point Joint Vocational School District  
Ohio Literacy Resource Center, Kent State University  
Polaris Joint Vocational School District  
Putnam Educational Service Center  
Southwest Resource Center, Sinclair Community College  
Switzerland of Ohio Schools  
Sylvania City Schools  
Toledo City Schools  
Tolles Career and Tech Center  
Vantage Joint Vocational School District  
Warren County Vocational School  
Washington Local Schools  
West Central Community Correctional Facility  
Youngstown City Schools

## Acknowledgements

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Funds for producing and distributing this publication were provided by the Ohio Board of Regents under authority of Section 223 of the Workforce Investment Act, 1998. Opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the Ohio Board of Regents or the U.S. Department of Education, and no endorsement should be inferred.

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Do you ever find yourself in a situation where you have a quick question and aren't sure who to call for the answer? This document may help.

Administrators, teachers, and support staff members were asked to discuss typical Aspire situations. Then, another group of Aspire practitioners were asked to give suggestions to address the situations.

Created for Aspire practitioners, this document presents realistic issues and realistic solutions suggested by Aspire practitioners. Think of the information on the following pages as an Aspire advice column. The suggestions in this guide may be used “as is,” adapted, or not used at all, depending on your program's needs.

***This document contains 27 Promising Practices, organized by these 11 themes, loosely following the structure of the Student Experience Model:***

- Orientation
- Goal Setting/Review
- Curriculum/Instruction
- Technology
- Monitoring Performance
- Retention
- Follow Up
- Data
- Program Management
- Recruitment
- Partnerships

Each Promising Practices has a descriptive substantive title to show at a glance the main focus of the Promising Practice.

***Each Promising Practices contains the following sections:***

Program Puzzler—scenarios that present typical issues arising in Aspire programs.

Peer Perspective—advice from Aspire practitioners to address the Program Puzzlers.

Timely Tips—specific suggestion(s) offered by Aspire practitioners to address the Program Puzzlers.

Added Insights—additional suggestions, AspireLink reports, or both. Additional suggestions are informed by research, policies and professional wisdom to support or extend the Peer Perspectives. AspireLink reports containing data that can help address the Program Puzzler may also be listed.



## Orientation That Brings Students Back

### Promising Practices 1

#### Program Puzzler

Aspire Program X begins orientation by giving students the Student Registration Form, the Release Forms, the goal sheet, and the learning style inventory to complete. After paperwork is completed, students are assessed. After the instructor conducting the orientation explains program rules and class schedules, students are allowed to leave. The program director is pleased that the paperwork requirement is gotten out of the way when students first come to the program, but she is concerned that a large number of the students never return for instruction. What changes can be made in the orientation process to encourage more students to return for instruction?

#### Peer Perspective

##### Information Offered

- Begin by designing activities that focus on the program’s purpose so that potential students make informed decisions about participation.
- Inform students of all services offered (e.g., postsecondary education preparation, General Educational Development [GED] practice/testing) and partner services (e.g., childcare, transportation, career preparation).
- Thoroughly explain the purpose and importance of assessment and your program’s testing process.
- Have representatives from postsecondary education programs and local employers speak to students to inform them of opportunities. This would be particularly helpful for students whose long-term goals extend beyond the GED.

##### Orientation Process

- Allow students to be active in and provide input to the process.
  - Avoid teachers talking “at” students to maintain student engagement.
- Use icebreakers to help make students feel a part of the process. This tactic can encourage students to get to know and rely on each other for support.
- Choreograph the orientation so that activities are varied.
  - Alternate form completion with other group activities.
  - Talk through each form and its purpose before moving on to other activities. This supports students in form completion, making orientation more than a paperwork session.
  - Have student create a timeline of where they have been and where they hope to be. This could be part of the goal-setting process.

#### Timely Tips

Share Annual Performance Report (APR) information with potential students to demonstrate your program’s successes and students’ successes from the previous year. Showing students the number of successful students can help them see that their own success is possible.

Invite a graduate to talk to the students. The former student could talk about his/her experience in the program, achievement toward goals, and current situation.

Use student success stories to “sell” the program!

- Take a team approach. This allows students to meet multiple staff members and may help to create a personal connection that will transfer when moving from orientation to the classroom






### Added Insights

Creating connections between students can go a long way to improving retention in your program. Make sure to allow time for students to get to know each other. Allow them to create their own learning community in your classroom.

A variety of suggestions are offered in the literature concerning student orientation. Specifically, successful orientation includes building support systems and relationships in the classroom, discussing goals and concerns, and getting acclimated to the program. In addition, engaging students with other students is key. Programs should consider asking current students to act as role models and mentors for incoming students. Or, programs may consider having new students work in small groups on activities that explore learning strategies and interests, perceptions of learning/school history, and short- and long-term goals. The *Program Administrator's Sourcebook* (National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy, 2005) offers each of the following suggestions:

- Find out about students' purposes for attending during orientation and connect these purposes to their specific and broad goals. Help students recognize how achieving their goals is a step toward succeeding at their broader purposes for participating in the program.
- Ask students to identify benchmarks for success. During orientation or the first weeks of class, establish ways for students to determine how they will know that they are successful and how they will document their progress.
- Help potential students consider goals and life demands that might stand in the way of reaching their goals. Discuss plans they feel they need to make in order to participate. If some feel their life demands are too great for participation, discuss what may need to happen before they feel they will be able to enroll in the program. Help students rethink goals to make them more realistic or to secure the support services they believe they will need before they can attend.
- Provide enough information so that potential students can make an informed decision about enrolling. Communicate what students might expect to gain by participation with what kind of time requirements and level of commitment.

### AspireLink Accompaniments

-  Attendance by Class by Month
-  Attendance by Site by Class by Month
-  Students Without Attendance In The Last 90 Days
-  Students Who Left Before 12 Hours and Reasons Why
-  Students With Less Than 12 Hours by Site

## Realistic and Encouraging Goals

[Promising Practices 2](#)

### Program Puzzler

Your program conducts new student orientation once a month at the main site. During the orientation goal-setting activities, one student intends to enter the military in the next six months and needs a General Educational Development (GED) credential. When the student is given a Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) locator, she barely tests into Level M. She is then given the Level M full battery pretest and places in Educational Functioning Level (EFL) 3, Low Intermediate. The teacher conducting orientation is concerned that the student may not be capable of completing the goal within the program year, but he does not want to discourage her from her GED goal. How can the teacher best handle this situation?

### Peer Perspective

#### Initial Goal Setting/Form Completion

- Conduct testing first to inform realistic goal setting with students.
- Explain what the actual TABE scores mean and the scores needed to attain the goal of GED.
- Work with students individually to set smaller, attainable goals that are part of the larger long-term goal.
  - o Set a short-term goal of attaining placement in EFL 6 before taking the GED practice test.
- Use an interest inventory for goal setting, particularly with those wanting to enter postsecondary.
- Mark “to improve basic skills” as the primary goal on the Student Registration Form, and explain this initial goal as short-term and that a long-term goal can be passing the GED.
  - o Make sure to work through the entire goal-setting process with students to help them understand and set long-term and short-term goals and to establish concrete steps to accomplish goals.

#### Timely Tips

Use a mastery checklist of what needs to be completed before taking the GED test.

Use a visual to explain types of goals and illustrate the relationships between them.

#### Data Quality Controls

- Establish procedures like those described in Initial Goal Setting/Form Completion so that all staff members assisting students during orientation follow the same process.
- Double check forms to ensure that goals are realistic based on test scores and EFLs.
- Highlight problems or discrepancies on forms so that issues can be discussed at monthly staff meetings.
- Maintain clear, regular communication between the administrator, the AspireLink person, and the classroom staff.
- Refresh skills in goal-setting instruction (e.g., methods to engage students in the goal-setting process) on a regular basis.

### Added Insights







Remember that the GED is not the end of education for most students. To one degree or another, we all become life-long learners. Encourage all students to consider postsecondary education options among other potentially long-range goals

Advising students on goal setting and other issues is a program must. Advising allows for check-in with students, helps students identify impediments to success and ways to deal with them and provides opportunities to discuss and adjust goals. Advising students in setting goals should include activities to make goals detailed, specific, and achievable. Students should identify actions or strategies that will help them achieve their long-term and short-term goals and build self-confidence

A variety of suggestions are offered in the literature concerning student orientation. Specifically, successful orientation includes building support systems and relationships in the classroom, discussing goals and concerns, and getting acclimated to the program. In addition, engaging students with other students is key. Programs should consider asking current students to act as role models and mentors for incoming students or having new students work in small groups on activities that explore learning strategies and interests, perceptions of learning/school history, and short- and long-term goals. The *Program Administrator's Sourcebook* (National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy, 2005) offers both of the following suggestions:

- Help students clearly identify their goals and develop an action plan to achieve those goals.
- Reassess students on a regular basis and communicate the results to students.

### AspireLink Accompaniments

-  Latest Progress Recorded for Students, by Class
-  Latest Progress Recorded for Students, by Site
-  Latest Progress Recorded for Students, by Teacher
-  Practice GED Test/Official GED Test Student info
-  Students Who Passed The GED Test
-  Students Who Passed The GED Practice Test

## Changing Students, Changing Goals

[Promising Practices 3](#)

### Program Puzzler

As a program administrator, you tell teachers that they need to regularly review goals with students since it is not uncommon for a student's goal to change during the course of the program year. You find, though, that teachers only review goals every few months. Often, too, the review process is very casual, with teachers reporting that they learned of a student's goal change as a result of an informal conversation. It is not uncommon for teachers learning of goal changes in this way to forget to formally modify the goal in AspireLink. What can you do to improve the goal monitoring process in your program?

### Peer Perspective

#### Program Management

- Involve all staff members in determining the process and timing of goal setting and review.
- Establish a dedicated time (e.g., every month or 90 days) for teachers and students to review goals.
- Consider a backup plan for when regular reviews are not possible. A simple form to record changes could be used when the teacher does not have time to make more formal notes for the portfolio. This can provide a snapshot to jog the memory when there is time to more formally review goals.
- Develop forms to track awards, goals, jobs, and other accomplishments. Information could be tracked on the back of the student's Individual Learning Plan (ILP).

#### **Timely Tips**

Create a monthly report for teachers to note goal changes, advancements, and goal achievements. Include program targets so all staff members are aware of the program's goals.

Have the AspireLink person provide data so that along with the monthly reports all staff members understand the big picture.













#### Student Responsibility

- Involve students in the goal review process. Review not only the goal sheet, but also the learning style inventory, goals achieved (non-academic and academic) and the ILP to show progress.
- Have students complete reflection logs. These can be turned in for teacher review or kept in the student portfolio.
  - o Ask student to copy down or record goals and later reflect on progress (e.g., what worked, what was learned, what are new or changed goals, what additional assistance is needed).

### Added Insights

Advising students in setting goals should include activities to make goals detailed, specific, and achievable. Students should identify actions or activities that will help them achieve their long-term and short-term goals and build self-confidence.

### AspireLink Accompaniments

-  Goal of Basic Skills met without matching Reason
-  Goal of Completed Level met without matching Reason
-  Goal of English Language met without matching Reason
-  Goal of Enrollment in Post-Secondary met without matching Reason
-  Goal of Obtained Citizenship Skills met without matching Reason
-  Goal of Obtained Employment met without matching Reason
-  Goal of Obtained GED met without matching Reason
-  Goal of Removed from Assistance met without matching Reason
-  Goal of Retained Employment met without matching Reason
-  Goal of Voted met without matching Reason
-  Student Who Passed The GED Practice Test
-  Student Who Passed The GED Test

## Test Results Should Inform Teaching

Promising Practices 4

### Program Puzzler

Standardized testing is used to determine students' Educational Functioning Levels and to monitor their progress, but you are discouraged that your teachers do not seem to use the test scores to inform their teaching. Because the teachers have completed regional trainings on testing, you decide that some form of internal professional development is needed to address this problem. You also want to have specific documents to aid the teachers in using testing information as they develop lessons. As a director, how should you proceed?

### Peer Perspective

#### Professional Development

- Follow-up Resource Center Network (RCN) trainings with a local back to basics or boot camp around portfolios, tests, and alignments to reinforce basic concepts and to avoid a teaching-to-the-test approach in the classroom. Your local training could include:
  - o Having teachers take the test to become more familiar with the question types, time constraints, and general test content.
  - o Using samples of teachers' completed paperwork and student documentation to explain program practices and suggest improvements to processes.
- Emphasize the importance of using the diagnostic profiles that result from testing. Profiles along with informal monitoring (e.g., through the use of writing samples and quizzes) can provide valuable information throughout the assessment process.
- Provide concrete examples linking test results to planned lessons.

#### Timely Tips

Ask peers to coach other teachers. This can be an informal or formal process involving teacher to teacher conversations, classroom observations, sharing of documents, etc. Coaching can be especially helpful with new hires.

Make networking and sharing a priority in your program. Encourage students to share with one another. Give teachers time to share with each other, too.

Review the Aspire Professional Development (PD) catalog to identify trainings focusing on linking assessment results to lesson planning.

### Added Insights

Remember that test results are not the only indicators of student learning. Think of your student's test results as one piece in a more complex puzzle, a puzzle that also includes learning style information, goals, interests, and previous experiences.













Much has been written about the necessity of a comprehensive assessment policy (including formal and informal assessments) for diagnosing and placing students when they initially enter the program and for evaluating their progress in reaching goals and determining their achievement at a later point in their education.

- Refer to *Connecting Policy and Practice: A Guide to the Aspire Portfolio System* (October 2009) on the Ohio Board of Regents (OBR) Aspire website (<http://uso.edu/network/workforce/able/reference/standards/abe/Portfolio-Connecting-Policy-and-Practice-Oct-2009.doc>) for specific information about Ohio's portfolio system and how the portfolio can aid you in monitoring student progress and planning instruction.

The *Program Administrator's Sourcebook* (National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy, 2005) offers each of the following suggestions:

- Work with teachers to use program data to assess effects of instructional change. Looking at assessment or retention data may help you and your teachers make decisions about effectiveness of instructional or curriculum approaches.
- Recognize innovative, research-based practice. When teachers make instructional or curriculum changes, recognize their efforts in staff meetings, newsletters, and so on.
- Work with teachers to use program data to assess effects of instructional change. Looking at assessment or retention data may help in making decisions about effectiveness of specific instructional or curriculum approaches.

### AspireLink Accompaniments

-  Annual Report Table 4 Educ. Gains and Attend. By Educ. Functioning Level
-  Latest Progress Recorded for Students, by Class
-  Latest Progress Recorded for Students, by Site
-  Latest Progress Recorded for Students, by Teacher
-  Progress Report – BEST
-  Progress Report – CASAS
-  Progress Report – PEP
-  Progress Report – TABE
-  Progress Report – WorkKeys
-  TABE Test Scores by Site by Student
-  TABE Test Scores by Site by Teacher by Student
-  TABE Test Scores by Student



## Modifying Your Curriculum for New Standards

Promising Practices 5

### Program Puzzler

When the Aspire content standards were revised, each teacher in your program received a copy of the new content. In addition to this, your program keeps examples of activities in binders at the main site, and the administrator has purchased a series of textbooks for you to use. Teachers need to make sure instruction matches the standards while still maintaining their own teaching styles. Often, though, teachers do not know how to bring instruction, the program's materials, and the standards together in a way that will be flexible enough to work in the classroom. How could teachers be helped?

### Peer Perspective

#### Professional Development

- Use a comprehensive approach, including: support from coworkers; program peers; and regional, state, and national colleagues.
  - Become familiar with state materials and guidelines (e.g., standards, benchmarks).
  - Establish a lead teacher in your program. This teacher could observe classes and provide feedback to other teachers. In addition, this teacher could invite teachers to observe his or her classroom in action.
  - Include coaching in your program's local professional development efforts.
  - Take advantage of locally-developed resources (e.g., lesson plan binders, alignments).
  - Visit another Aspire program. This could be a neighboring program, one with a similar set up to your own (e.g., similar program size, components offered).
  - Ask other programs to share their materials and gather standards correlations from online sources. Reviewing samples can be a good way to see how others translate requirements into practice.
  - Participate in Resource Center Network trainings and take advantage of resource center materials (e.g., sample lessons, book sets).
  - Review standards and support materials from other states (e.g., Arizona, Texas, Florida).

#### **Timely Tips**

Know that you are not alone. Start a curriculum committee in your program. This way as a team you can make decisions about materials and standards. This may be a good way to share instructional techniques and other ideas too.

Review the Aspire Professional Development (PD) catalog to identify trainings focusing on linking standards, lessons, and materials.

### Added Insights

What is your definition of curriculum? Make sure you understand your program's definition of curriculum and its curriculum development process.

According to research, a program's curriculum design should be organized, focused on higher-level thinking, and learner-centered. A program's curriculum development process should include periodic reviews to make sure it is meeting student needs; the curriculum should be constantly monitored and modified as needed.

- Help teachers establish contact with other teachers in nearby Aspire program. Provide times for the teacher to call or otherwise communicate with area Aspire teachers, and encourage the teacher to do so. (*Program Administrator's Sourcebook*, National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy, 2005)

## Lesson Plans One Step at a Time

Promising Practices 6

### Program Puzzler

As a program administrator you have communicated to your teachers the need to do lesson planning. You find that not all teachers are comfortable with lesson planning and don't understand the need for it. Other teachers understand the need but complain that they don't have the time to do it. As a program administrator, how can you assist your teachers to plan for classroom instruction?

### Peer Perspective

#### Class Management and Structure

- Eliminate an “open door” policy in your program. Planning can be difficult when the number of students, the level of students, and the content areas the students are studying are all different. So, the more that you can control the classroom environment, the easier it is to create lessons.
- Develop lessons for whole group work and add customization by level needs. Know what works in your classroom – individual versus group dynamic.

#### Steps in the Planning Process

- Become familiar with Ohio’s content standards and lesson plan requirements.
- Review sample templates for formatting lessons. Decide what you like and what you would modify from the samples. Then, develop a simple and direct format that works for you.
- Review lessons from other sources (e.g., websites). Adapt those you like to your classroom setting and teaching style.
  - o Visit Eureka! AGORA (Assemblage of Great Online Resources for Adults) on the Ohio Literacy Resource Center’s website to get teaching ideas and sample lessons. Eureka! AGORA is available at: <http://literacy.kent.edu/eureka/index2.html>
- Develop several lesson plans to fit the individual students’ need

#### Timely Tips

Start to develop lessons by first asking students what they want to learn in class. This helps you to establish themes and allows students to direct their own learning.

Partner with other teachers to develop lessons that complement one another.

Establish and maintain a bank of lessons within your program. This becomes a standard set of teaching ideas for all to use.

Review the Aspire Professional Development (PD) catalog to identify trainings focusing on lesson planning.

### Added Insights

Lesson plans are not “one size fits all.” Programs and teachers have flexibility in designing lessons that meet student needs. Remember a lesson plan is a teaching plan. It is not a student’s learning plan; rather, it is a guide for teachers to help them organize what they are going to do, when they are going to do it, and

why they are going to do it. Also, remember that not all lessons will work. The key is to reflect afterward on what worked, why, and how you might change your plan if you present that lesson again.

According to research a program's curriculum design should be organized, focused on higher-level thinking and learner-centered. A program's curriculum development process should include periodic reviews to make sure it is meeting student needs; the curriculum should be constantly monitored and modified as needed.

- Refer to the "Curriculum and Instruction" section of *The Ohio Performance Accountability System (OPAS) Manual* (August 2009) on the Ohio Board of Regents (OBR) Aspire website ([http://uso.edu/network/workforce/able/reference/accountability/OPAS\\_Manual.pdf](http://uso.edu/network/workforce/able/reference/accountability/OPAS_Manual.pdf)) for specific information about lesson planning and the instructional process.
- Create mechanisms for teachers to share new instructional activities and materials. Ask teachers to document lesson plans of new instruction. Set up resource boxes or file cabinet space for teachers to store teacher- and student-developed materials that support new instructional approaches in reading, adult multiple intelligences, and meaning-making instruction so that other teachers can see and use these activities. (*Program Administrator's Sourcebook*, National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy, 2005)

## Managed Enrollment and the Open Schedule

Promising Practices 7

### Program Puzzler

Your classroom has an “open schedule,” meaning students can come in to study whenever the classroom is open. While this accommodates students’ varying schedules, you often have a classroom full of students working in multiple subject areas at varying educational functioning levels. You sometimes find it difficult to manage the classroom and find it challenging to switch gears between students. What could be done to help manage or change this situation?

### Peer Perspective

#### Overall Advice

- Get organized (e.g., forms, Individual Learning Plan [ILP] documents, and worksheets kept in notebooks in the classroom).
- Don’t be afraid to experiment to find what works!

#### Staffing

- Get help (e.g., tutors, aides, volunteers).
- Experiment with team teaching.

#### Class Management and Structure

- Create an attendance policy (e.g., start times, allowable absences).
- Use varying configurations of peer work, individual work, work with computers, and whole group work.
- Develop lessons for whole group work and add customization by level needs.
- Start group work together as whole class. Then, work by level of need (e.g., high, middle, low).

#### **Timely Tips**

Build a sense of community within the classroom; empower students in their own learning. You may find that some students are very willing to help others. This draws on your students’ skills and talents.

Develop a managed enrollment process. This could include specific classes running for a period of time (e.g., a six-week reading class) in which additional students are not admitted to the class. Rather, new students attend lab or tutoring sessions until the class opens again for the next session.

### Added Insights









Literature related to class management indicates the merits of managed enrollment. In particular, it is difficult for teachers to monitor students when the membership is always in flux; it is difficult for teachers to assign projects and work on higher-level materials. Also, continuous enrollment is detrimental to maintaining a classroom community. A sense of respect is created by the inclusion of an attendance policy. The classroom community is enhanced through respect for others’ opinions, values, expressions, willingness to help, and overall class engagement. In addition, a small staff to student ratio can aid in class management; it allows for individual attention for each student. Some programs have seen an increase in

enrollment and retention after implementing a managed process. The process increased the perceived value of enrolling in the program, thereby creating a demand for the product (the program).

Finally, the classroom experience can be improved through attention to the class structure. Here, it may be best to split classes by levels (beginning, intermediate, advanced). A variety of instructional approaches (e.g., oral and visual presentations, demonstrations, media- and technology-based instruction, project-based learning) can be beneficial as well.

- Implement managed enrollment. Offer classes for a predetermined length of time. Only let students enter at the beginning of the cycle. (*Program Administrator's Sourcebook*, National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy, 2005)

### AspireLink Accompaniments

-  Attendance by Student by Site by Class by Month
-  Program Overview - Enrollment by Site, Teacher, Class
-  Roster by Site, Class, Student Last Name
-  Student Information by Site
-  Student Information by Site by Class
-  TABE Test Scores by Site by Student
-  TABE Test Scores by Site by Teacher by Student
-  TABE Test Scores by Student

## Reluctant Readers

Promising Practices 21

### Program Puzzler

In your Aspire program, you and other instructors notice that students are reluctant to read outside of class. Students admit that they do not like to read and only read in class because they were told by the teacher to read. Because of the lack of practice, students' progress in reading has been hindered. What can you and other instructors do to help encourage these reluctant readers?

### Peer Perspective

- Establish a classroom library with a wide variety of books available. This can help students find topics that interest them.
- Think about your classroom routine. Do you include specific time for reading? Or does reading only come from worksheets? Consider setting aside a time for independent or group reading in each session. This can help build a commitment to reading that can carry over into time outside of class.
- Using your assessment results, make a class listing of student reading levels. Then seek out reading materials based on students' levels. Newspapers like ProLiteracy's *News for You* can help meet the needs of beginning and intermediate level readers.
- Consider reading to your students a few minutes each day. By modeling what reading should sound like, you can help build an interest in reading. This can also be extended to include books on CD or tape. Many teachers have had success reading popular titles to their students. Students may get hooked on a particular author or genre.
- Collaborative oral reading is another way to support students in their reading. First, you read a section; then, you ask different students to read in turn. Continue throughout the passage, including yourself in the mix of readers.
- Book talks or clubs are a great way to engage students with books when everyone is reading the same book. You could set formal times and dates or just ask informally in class, "What are we currently reading?"
- Some students are reluctant to read due to vision problems. Colored overlays and note cards used as guides can help sometimes, but you may need to refer some students to a vision care provider.
- Many students only think they are reading if they are reading a book. Help students connect the skills they are learning to their lives outside of class—create a bulletin board of other everyday

### Timely Tips

The library is a great place to take a class field trip. Work with your local branch to arrange a time and place for students to come and meet the staff, see the layout of the library, and learn about the services and materials available to them. Make sure everyone leaves with a library card!

Seek out book donations from local civic groups and other organizations so students have free books available to take home. Be specific in the types of books you are requesting (e.g., level, genre).

Set up a reading challenge between students and staff or among classes. Keep track of pages read and have a reward at the conclusion for all readers.

things we read including mail, signs, magazines, work information, food labels, advertisements, e-mails, text messages, or webpages. Encourage students to share where and what they read.

### Added Insights

Growing students as readers can have tremendous impact on their lives. Research indicates that reading is a gateway skill that is needed to help students with their academic, employment, and personal lives. It is estimated that 90% of what adults do in their lives involves some measure of reading.

By using some of the activities listed in this Promising Practices, instructors can also build students' interest in education. Many students increase their attendance in classes where reading a book is included because they want to see how the story ends. Additionally, more reading opportunities for students help to build their background knowledge. This aids students in making connections between what they see, what they experience, and what they read.

Last, studies show that parents who are reluctant readers are modeling that behavior for their children. Increasing adults' reading connections can translate into reading connections for their children. Family literacy experts encourage daily reading by children, by parents, and by children and parents together.

### Supports

The Ohio Aspire system has a number of supports to help programs and instructors with reading instruction and materials.

Southwest Aspire Resource Center  
800-558-5374  
<http://www.sinclair.edu/facilities/swable/index.cfm>

The Southwest Aspire Resource Center specializes in reading and writing instruction and materials. It offers online, face-to-face, and alternative trainings in reading as well as an extensive lending library of reading materials. Most materials are leveled and are available in multiple copies.

Ohio Literacy Resource Center  
800-765-2897  
<http://literacy.kent.edu>

The Ohio Literacy Resource Center features a searchable database (Eureka!) of instructional resources including strategies, lesson plans, lists of recommended trade books, and links to other resources.

Ohio Resource Center  
614-247-6342  
<http://ohiorc.org>

The Ohio Resource Center provides links to peer-reviewed instructional resources including content and professional resources. It also provides assessment and general education resources that will support the work of pre-K-12 classroom teachers and higher education faculty members.



## Reluctant Writers

Promising Practices 22

### Program Puzzler

In your Aspire program, you and other instructors find that students have low confidence in their writing ability and often avoid writing until the General Educational Development (GED) Practice Test is on the horizon. While discussing this topic at a recent staff meeting, one instructor commented that the only way to build confidence in any skill is to practice it—often. That comment launched further discussion about ways to incorporate more writing instruction into the classroom routine—not only to encourage students to write more often but also to help them improve their writing skills.

### Peer Perspective

- Students sometimes get writers’ block because they fear making mistakes in spelling, grammar, and mechanics. Teach students that writing is a process—that getting ideas down on paper comes first; spelling, grammar, and mechanics can be addressed later in the process.
- Have a daily writing prompt on the board when students arrive. They can respond to it first thing or later in the day. If you are ever at a loss for a topic, just do a Google search for writing prompts to find a wealth of websites. At <http://www.writingfix.com>, you will find daily creative prompts such as “When did you realize you couldn’t still do it? List ten things you could do when you were younger but can’t do anymore. Put one, some or all of them together in one piece of writing.”
- As with any instructional activity, explain why you expect students to write every day. Some reasons: writing is like any activity—the more you practice, the more you will improve; writing deepens our thinking—after all, writing is “thinking on paper;” being able to respond to a prompt is an important skill for the GED and college tests.
- Students are sometimes motivated to write when they know someone will read their work and respond to it. A dialogue journal is a written conversation in which a student and you communicate regularly over a period of time. Students may write as much as they choose on any topic. You write back regularly, responding to the student’s topics, introducing new topics, making comments, offering observations and opinions, requesting and giving clarification, asking questions, and answering student questions.
- When students have become more comfortable with putting their thoughts on paper, you can start assessing and addressing their strengths and weaknesses. Focus on improving one or two writing skills at a time; once the student has mastered those, as evidenced in his or her own writing, target the next area for improvement.

### Timely Tips

The Ohio Literacy Resource Center’s annual Beginnings Writers’ Conference provides an opportunity for Aspire students to have their writing published. Get involved in this event and help your students explore the power of writing. For more information, go to <http://literacy.kent.edu/beginnings/>

Purdue University’s Online Writing Lab is an award-winning website with over 200 free resources, including style guides for writing and teaching writing, grammar and mechanics, and ESL (English as a Second Language). Go to <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/> and [have a browse.](#)

### Added Insights

#### A Note About Grammar Instruction

Research shows that traditional grammar instruction (teaching parts of speech and grammar rules without a direct connection to students' own writing) is unlikely to improve the quality of students' writing. Yet instructors often rely on the workbook approach to grammar. One effective alternative is *sentence combining*, which has been shown to improve students' writing quality while at the same time enhancing syntactic skills.

#### Sentence Combining: One Approach to Grammar Instruction

Sentence-combining instruction involves teaching students to construct more complex and sophisticated sentences through exercises in which two or more basic sentences are combined into a single sentence. In one approach to sentence combining, students at higher and lower writing levels are paired to receive lessons that teach three techniques:

- Combining smaller related sentences into a compound sentence using the connectors and, but, and because
- Embedding an adjective or adverb from one sentence into another
- Creating complex sentences by embedding an adverbial and adjectival clause from one sentence into another

The instructor provides support and modeling, and the student pairs work collaboratively to apply the skills taught.

Graham, Steven, & Perin, Dolores. (2007). *Writing next: Effective strategies to improve writing of adolescents in middle and high school schools. A report to Carnegie Corporation of New York*. Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education. <https://all4ed.org/webinar-event/writing-next-effective-strategies-to-improve-writing-of-adolescents-in-middle-and-high-school/>

#### Sentence Combining Websites

About.com: Grammar and Composition

<http://grammar.about.com/od/tests/a/introsc.htm>

About.Com: Grammar and Composition provides explanations, examples, and learning activities for sentence combining as well as links to other grammar and composition websites.

Bright Hub.com

<https://www.brighthubeducation.com/author/trent/>

Bright Hub.com offers insights and lessons from real teachers in real classrooms. Writing teacher Trent Lorcher's series of ten lessons, Better Grammar Equals Better Writing, includes a *Lesson Plan: How to Combine Sentences*.

## Hearing-Impaired Students

Promising Practices 24

### Program Puzzler

A student with an obvious hearing impairment walks into your Aspire program and wishes to take classes. You have never had a sign language class and you've never had a hearing-impaired individual in your program in the past, so you have no experience in dealing with the student's needs.

### Peer Perspective

Here are some situations you might face in your classroom and some strategies for handling them.

There are over 40 people in the class.

- Devise a set of hand signals or gestures to get the hearing-impaired student's attention.
- Set up a buddy system pairing a hearing student with the hearing-impaired student to assist with questions and assignments.

### Timely Tips

Establish routines for beginning and ending class. For example: first, take attendance; second, check homework; third, share information. This allows everyone in the class to attend to the content and not worry about the circumstances of the environment.

The interpreter doesn't show up.

- Don't panic.
- Arrange for another student to take notes for the hearing-impaired student.
- Show a captioned movie or videotape.
- If possible, change the seating arrangement to allow the hearing-impaired student to sit closer to you.

The hearing-impaired student appears bored.

- Check on the student's understanding of what is going on in the class.
- Check to see if the goals and objectives for participation and learning are clear.
- Check the level of participation. The student may be unsure how to participate in class and may need some direction in order to become more involved.
- Arrange materials and assignments so that all students experience frequent small successes. That will make them eager to be involved in the class.
- Use visual enhancements as much as possible—charts, graphs, overheads, videotapes.
- Arrange chairs to be conducive to class interaction if interaction is part of the course.
- Realize that the student may simply not be interested.

The class is a lab, and you must lecture while students are performing an experiment.

- Request a note taker for the hearing-impaired student.

- Pause more frequently so the hearing-impaired student can look at the interpreter.
- Make an outline or provide additional reading materials for outside the class.

You are giving a written test and you know that English is not the hearing-impaired student's first language.

- Give the test orally.
- Rely on the integrity of the interpreter to sign the test without giving away any of the answers.
- Give the test as a take-home exam to allow sufficient time.

You are using slides as part of a presentation and must turn off the overhead lights.

- Think ahead and obtain a small light on a stand that will illuminate only the interpreter.
- Leave just the back lights on in the class.

You want to make sure that the hearing-impaired student really understands what is going on in class.

- Avoid asking questions that require a simple Yes or No answer. Ask open ended questions like, "What do you think?" or "What is your opinion?" These types of questions allow you to see if the question was accurately understood.
- Rephrase using different words if you think your question was not understood.
- Use as much visual stimulation as possible.
- Provide outlines of what will be covered in class.
- Encourage class participation on the part of the student.

By Veronica Rashleigh [rfrashle@wcnnet.org](mailto:rfrashle@wcnnet.org)  
Used with permission.

### Added Insights

#### Computer-Assistive Technology and Computer-Based Instruction

A variety of technology solutions, including computer-based instruction, are available to help meet the needs of hearing-impaired students in your Aspire classroom:

- Computer-aided note taking can allow a hearing typist to take notes on classroom lectures and share them with a hearing-impaired student through a simple local-area network of personal computers (PCs) and software.
- Communication programs convert speech into text and video sign language that can be viewed on a laptop or PC. Two-way programs also convert text into speech read aloud over the PC speakers or into video sign language.
- Visualization and presentation software programs like Inspiration, Microsoft PowerPoint, and Netscape Composer can integrate static or dynamic graphic media and text to help hearing-impaired students organize and present their thoughts in visual format.
- Digital video captioning technologies simplify adding captions to digital web videos that instructor develop or use.

- Teachers can provide technical support via smart phones to help students learn after class and at home.
- Computer-based instruction systems can provide powerful tools to meet the instructional needs of hearing-impaired students, including information activities with text, graphic images, and animations; in-class and out-of-class learning activities with detailed, step-by-step directions to students, adjusted to individual students' actual level of performance.

Information in this Added Insights is taken from the following sources:

Belcastro, F. P. (2006). *Computers and students and adults who are impaired*. Dubuque, IA.

Clark, S., & Baggaley, J. (2004, November). Assistive software for disabled learners. *International review of research in open and distance learning*, 5, 3, n.p.

Liu, C.-C., & Hong, Y.-C. (2007, July). Providing hearing-impaired students with learning care after classes through smart phones and the GPRS network. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 38, 4, 727-741.

Stover, D.L., & Pendegraft, N. (2005, November, December). Revisiting computer-aided notetaking technological assistive devices for hearing-impaired students. *Clearing house: A journal of educational strategies, issues, and ideas*, 79, 2, 94-97.

The Central/Southeast Aspire Resource Center, housed at Ohio University's Literacy Center focuses on special needs topics for Aspire students in Ohio. Information and resources for serving hearing-impaired students are available through the Center at <http://www.ouliteracycenter.org/>

Additional resources for serving hearing-impaired adults in Aspire are available through the Ohio Literacy Resource Center at Kent State University at <http://literacy.kent.edu/Oasis/deaf/>

## Advanced-Level ESOL Students

Promising Practices 26

### Program Puzzler

In 2006, NRS (the National Reporting System) changed the ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) levels, which eliminated the higher advanced-level students. As an ESOL instructor, you know that the population of students you once served has not disappeared just because the level has. Now you are faced with the predicament of non-native English speakers who place beyond the accepted NRS ESOL levels but still very much need ESOL services. Many are eager to enter postsecondary institutions, but they do not yet have the English language skills to succeed in that environment, nor do they seem to fit into a classroom full of native English speakers preparing to take the GED (General Educational Development) test. Where does this student population fit? How can your Aspire (Adult Basic and Literacy Education) program help students transition? What transition services could you offer?

### Peer Perspective

Students may attend any Aspire classes regardless of the status of how they are being tracked in AspireLink. A student who places into an ABE (Adult Basic Education) level but is a non-native English speaker may attend an ESOL class. For reporting purposes, the student must be tracked in ABE and, therefore, tested accordingly using either CASAS (Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems), the TABE (Test of Adult Basic Education) 9/10, or WorkKeys.

Start with goal-setting! Conferencing with the student about his or her goals allows teachers to determine where to appropriately place a student. ESOL students can transition to any of the following: ABE–basic skills or GED preparation classes, TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) preparation classes, postsecondary education, or the workplace. Some programs are offering a formal transition class to serve the advanced ESOL population. Transitions classes simulate a postsecondary environment in order to prepare students for entering college. Other programs are choosing to embed transitions strategies into existing classes.

### Timely Tips

Consult your program's NCTN (National Career Transitions Network) Toolkit, which addresses such topics as program models, partnerships and collaborations, recruitment, assessment, counseling, curriculum and instruction, and planning your program. The toolkit provides reproducible resources and planning tools on those topics for transitions work in the classroom.

### Transition Strategies

- Provide academic skills such as essays, high vocabulary, reading, critical thinking skills, note-taking, study skills, and advanced listening and speaking skills.
- Use a class syllabus so students know what is being taught each class period.
- Consider managed enrollment such as an eight-week class where students can see the class has a beginning and end date.
- Assign regular homework.
- Invite guest speakers from the local college and have college information available in the classroom.

- Provide advising services for postsecondary preparation such as helping students understand the education system and financial aid and visit colleges.
- Teach interviewing skills and orienting to the workplace culture.
- Integrate computer instruction into the curriculum.

### Added Insights

The *Ohio Aspire Transitions Framework* is available for programs to help students transition from Aspire to postsecondary education and training and/or to work.

To download a copy, visit the Ohio Board of Regents (OBR) Aspire website at <http://uso.edu/network/workforce/able/reference/transition/Transitions-Framework.pdf>

The NCSALL (National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy) models provide more examples of transition components that teachers can integrate into ESOL classes. Basically, creating a classroom that simulates a community college environment, contextualizing teaching and learning to reflect necessary skills and current trends in the workplace, and ultimately providing intensive learning opportunities will all better prepare students for a transition.

For more information, visit [http://www.ncsall.net/fileadmin/resources/research/op\\_collegetransitions.pdf](http://www.ncsall.net/fileadmin/resources/research/op_collegetransitions.pdf)

“The Transition from Adult Literacy ESL Programs to Academic Reading and Writing: Next Steps for English Language Learners.”

By Lisa Gardner Flores, April 2007. *Literacy Links*, 11(1). Available from the Texas Center for the Advancement of Literacy and Learning (TCALL), Texas A&M University, College Station, TX. <https://tcall.tamu.edu/library.html>

*Supporting Adult English Language Learners' Transitions to Postsecondary Education..* CAELA Brief

By Julie Mathews-Aydinli, September 2006. Available from the Center for Adult English Language Acquisition (CAELA), Center for Applied Linguistics, Washington, DC. [www.cal.org/caela/esl\\_resources/briefs/transition.html](http://www.cal.org/caela/esl_resources/briefs/transition.html)

*Academic Encounters*

Cambridge University Press academic preparation series available at <https://www.cambridge.org/us/cambridgeenglish/catalog/skills/academic-encounters-2nd-edition>

## Getting Up to Date with Classroom Technology

Promising Practices 8

### Program Puzzler

Your program has several up-to-date computers, but you have little in the way of educational software. You know you should make better use of computers in the classroom particularly since you have several younger students who are comfortable with technology. How should you and your program staff proceed to learn more about how to best integrate technology in the Aspire classroom?

### Peer Perspective

#### Professional Development

- Attend professional development sessions where software suitable for use in adult education is discussed. Schedule time to share information you obtain with your staff members.
- Contact a software sales representative to present to your program. Often sales representatives will come to your location and demonstrate their products.
- Contact the State Aspire Office to learn more about distance education opportunities for Aspire program.
- Have staff members take the online survey [AdultEdonline.org](http://AdultEdonline.org) to determine the level of their technology knowledge and to generate a professional development plan.
- Explore a variety of technology options before designing a computer-enhanced curriculum.
  - o Software suggestions include:
    - ◆ WorkKeys
    - ◆ SAMS (Contemporary)
    - ◆ Skills Tutor
    - ◆ Access (Steck-Vaughn pre-GED)
    - ◆ Mavis Beacon typing
    - ◆ Math Problem Solver
  - o Online suggestions include:
    - ◆ Virtual Learning (University of Utah)
    - ◆ Online curriculum (Ohio Resource Center math modules)
  - o Presentation equipment suggestions include
    - ◆ Overhead projectors
    - ◆ Smart boards
    - ◆ LCD projectors

#### Timely Tips

Pair with a neighboring program to organize a technology day where multiple vendors come to demonstrate their products.

Regularly expose students to available technology. For example, have students read a local or national newspaper online.

Create a blog for student reflections on current events or to post assignments.



## **Added Insights**

A wealth of technology resources are available as professional development for teachers as well as samples to be used in the classroom. For example, teachers can access web-delivered curriculum products, interactive online reading materials, and online interactive lessons with an immediate online answer-check features. Examples of technology resources and projects are available at: <http://www.ncsall.net/?id=309>.

## Email and Technology

### Promising Practices 23

#### Program Puzzler

Your Aspire program wants to improve communication between all levels of staff. Staff members are spread out in different sites and work at different times. Additionally, more and more professional development, program supports, and even student resources are offered via the Internet. These often ask for an e-mail address to log in. How can you encourage staff to create and actively use an e-mail account?

#### Peer Perspective

- Set a deadline for all staff to have an e-mail account to send and receive work-related correspondence. If possible, this account can be maintained through a program server. If not, investigate Internet-based accounts that can be accessed from any Internet-capable device including computers, laptops, PDAs (personal digital assistants) and cell phones.
- Establish a routine for e-mail. This will help staff get used to regularly checking for new messages.
- Offer professional development to staff including:
  - o Managing e-mails (sorting, saving)
  - o E-mail etiquette (replies, capital letters)
  - o Using distribution lists (staff, students)
- Provide support as staff use these skills.
- Establish program guidelines for using e-mail. This is especially important on work-sponsored accounts. For example:
  - o Do not open attachments unless they are from a known sender.
  - o Do not use work e-mail for personal correspondence or shopping.

#### Timely Tips

Google (<http://www.google.com>) and Yahoo (<http://www.yahoo.com>) are two commonly used sites that offer free, Internet-based e-mail accounts.

If e-mails are managed on a work server, have a back-up plan for lost or forgotten passwords. Maintain this list in a secure location.

Learn to use the subject line as a quick means to sort e-mails.

Many work-sponsored e-mail providers have limits on storage capacity. Deleting or archiving e-mails (both sent and received) will help keep your inbox from getting full and preventing new incoming e-mails.

#### Added Insights

Internet use is increasingly becoming an intrinsic part of individuals' work and home life. (See, for example, *Generations Online in 2009*, published by Pew Internet and American Life Project and available at <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2009/01/28/generations-online-in-2009/>) It is essential that all Aspire staff be proficient in basic online activities such as e-mailing, downloading files, and web searching. Such skills are needed not only for communicating with colleagues and obtaining professional development information but also for instructional purposes. Increasing emphasis will be placed on Aspire programs helping students acquire at least a basic familiarity with computers and their use, including online applications. Unless Aspire staff are comfortable themselves with online applications, they will be unable to assist students in this important aspect of their academic development.

Luckily, numerous resources are available to assist individuals in acquiring basic Internet and computer skills. Libraries and book stores usually offer an array of easy to understand books on topics such as e-mail use, web searching, and other Internet applications. The Dummies, Idiot, and Teach Yourself Visually book series are some of the more popular and readily available books, but there are many others.

### Online Tutorials

For hands-on instruction, several free online tutorials are available:

- Goodwill Community Foundation at <http://www.gcflearnfree.org>
- Cambridge Online at <https://cambridgeonline.org.uk/about-2/>

Tutorials are also available for Microsoft Outlook:

- Microsoft Office Online at <http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/training/default.aspx>
- Learning Express Library at <http://www.learnatest.com/LEL/index.cfm/>

## Information and Program Progress: The Big Picture

Promising Practices 9

### Program Puzzler

As an Aspire administrator, you understand that your program's effectiveness is determined in part by the success of students in meeting the Minimum Performance Levels within the Educational Functioning Levels. However, teachers are focused on their teaching and often do not see the relationship between their instruction, assessment, and program progress. Too, your staff member responsible for AspireLink is focused on accurately inputting whatever information appears on the forms without questioning data that might be in error. How can you get all staff members to see the connection among testing, accurate information on forms, review of information after it is inputted into AspireLink and program progress?

### Peer Perspective

#### Professional Development

- Provide staff training on how instruction and posttesting fit together to create the "big picture." This could be done as a part of regular staff meetings.
- Encourage veteran teachers to work with new teachers.
- Cross train staff members. Not only does this allow them to "walk in the other's shoes," but it gives the program a contingency plan when staff shortages occur.
- Use scenarios of fictitious student cases to use at staff meetings. These can help show how improper information can cause havoc in AspireLink.

#### Timely Tips

Create a flowchart for new and existing staff to explain the program's "big picture" (e.g., funding, Annual Performance Report [APR]).

#### Classroom Structure

- Assign volunteers or aides to assist with testing and paperwork. This can help to ensure students do not "slip through the cracks."
- Have another person (e.g., teacher, aide, volunteer) in the classroom to assist the teacher.

#### Classroom Management

















- Keep monthly reports of levels completed, year-to-date totals, and program targets for your students.
- Record all students that have been tested and chart milestones for retesting.
  - o Establish retesting intervals based on 90-day review, finished percents.
- Create a regular schedule for tracking student progress within your classroom.
- Develop a team approach or designate specific staff for processes such as orientation and testing.  
For example:
  - o Specific staff members are assigned to orientation to explain their different responsibilities within the program (e.g., AspireLink staff explains his/her role, teacher explains his/her role).
  - o Orientation is set up to cover multiple days of activities (e.g., three hours sessions offered in morning and afternoon over two days).
  - o One person is responsible for posttesting, and the program dedicates a "testing week" once a month to complete testing activities.

## Program Management

- Involve staff in developing program management procedures.
- Maintain clear, regular communication between the administrator, the AspireLink person, and the classroom.
- Designate a fulltime, dedicated AspireLink person.
- Use fulltime staff to run the office.
  - o Office staff can also assist with tracking current students and potential students (e.g., track names of callers to make connections when they enter for orientation, link information with students).
  - o Office staff can be trained to administer assessments.
- Keep a running list of who completes orientation, separate from AspireLink to be able to link information with students.
- Establish procedures for regular reporting (e.g., monthly AspireLink reports created and sent to teachers to show posttesting rates, retention).
- Generate monthly classroom reports on attendance for administrators and teachers to compare with posttest rates.
- Create monthly report of student information (e.g., hours attended, student testing information—posttesting and progress testing gains) for each teacher and/or site.
- Create a report for each teacher by class and based on the number of students at each Educational Functioning Level (EFL).
  - o List all students after 12 hours of enrollment. Include testing information. Maintain a sheet for each EFL. Each month have the teachers figure percentages of improvement and turn in the reports to the director.






## **Added Insights**

### **AspireLink Accompaniments**

-  Annual Report Status
-  Annual Report Table 1 Participants by Entering Educ. Functioning Level
-  Annual Report Table 3 Participants by Program Type and Age
-  Annual Report Table 4 Educ. Gains and Attend. By Educ. Functioning Level
-  Annual Report Table 5 Core Follow-up Outcome Achievement
-  Annual Report Table 6 Participant Status and Program Enrollment
-  Annual Report Table 8 Outcomes for Adults in Family Literacy Programs
-  Annual Report Table 9 Outcomes for Adults in Workplace Literacy Programs
-  Annual Report Table 10 Outcomes for Adults in Correctional Educ. Programs
-  Annual Report Table 11 Secondary Outcomes Measures (Optional)
-  Annual Report Table 13 Core...Prior Reporting Year and Unintended Outcomes
-  Annual Report Table 14 Optional Goals
-  Error Validation by Teacher
-  Latest Progress Recorded for Students, by Teacher (\*)
-  Program Overview - Enrollment by Site, Teacher, Class
-  Students without Initial Tests by Teacher (\*)

## Monitoring Performance

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-  Students without Post-Tests by Teacher (\*)
-  Teacher Overview Page 1
-  Teacher Overview Page 2
-  Teacher Overview Page 3
-  Teacher Overview Page 4

## Accommodating Student Testing in the Classroom

Promising Practices 10

### Program Puzzler

Your program has limited space. You share space with another agency and many times do not have dedicated classrooms. In addition, you conduct orientation and student testing during class time. With limited space and multiple activities happening simultaneously, it is difficult to balance test administration procedures and policies with the realities of your program. At times, some students are not posttested properly (i.e., in accordance with test administration guidelines or Ohio Board of Regents (OBR) requirements) and/or the results are not shared with them. What could be done to help manage or change this situation?

### Peer Perspective

#### Classroom Structure

- Get creative with available space (e.g., utilize “nontraditional” classroom space such as a cubicle or kitchen).
- Share space with a partner (e.g., One-Stop).
- Use partitions to create quiet, private area for testing.

#### Timely Tips

Have a trained volunteer sit with students during testing to proctor and monitor the process.

#### Program and Classroom Management

- Allow for flexibility in posttest scheduling based on professional wisdom and the student’s progression within the class.
- Make sure to share test results with students in a timely manner.
- Realize that one person cannot conduct orientation, classroom instruction, and testing at the same time. Make staffing adjustments as needed.
- Create a class schedule that separates different activities into different weeks or designated days (e.g., a week of orientation, followed by a week of testing, followed by instruction; a six-hour orientation conducted on Saturday).
- Build in incentives to help retain students for posttesting at designated times (e.g., every eight weeks award prizes to students who have attended class for two weeks or more).






















### Added Insights

Much has been written about the necessity of a comprehensive assessment policy (including formal and informal assessments) for diagnosing and placing students initially and as they progress in reaching goals and determining their achievement at a later point in their education.

- Refer to the “Assessment” section of *The Ohio Performance Accountability System (OPAS) Manual* (August 2009) on the OBR Aspire website

([http://uso.edu/network/workforce/able/reference/accountability/OPAS\\_Manual.pdf](http://uso.edu/network/workforce/able/reference/accountability/OPAS_Manual.pdf)) for specific information about assessment policy, testing procedures, and monitoring performance.

### AspireLink Accompaniments

-  Annual Report Table 4 Educ. Gains and Attend. By Educ. Functioning Level
-  Latest Progress Recorded for Students, by Class
-  Latest Progress Recorded for Students, by Site
-  Latest Progress Recorded for Students, by Teacher
-  Progress Records With Zero Levels
-  Progress Report – BEST
-  Progress Report – CASAS
-  Progress Report – PEP
-  Progress Report – TABE
-  Progress Report – WorkKeys
-  Students without Initial Tests
-  Students without Initial Tests by Class
-  Students without Initial Tests by Site
-  Students without Initial Tests by Teacher
-  Students without Post-Tests
-  Students without Post-Tests by Class
-  Students without Post-Tests by Site
-  Students without Post-Tests by Teacher
-  TABE Test Scores by Site by Student
-  TABE Test Scores by Site by Teacher by Student
-  TABE Test Scores by Student



## Portfolios and Student Testing

Promising Practices 11

### Program Puzzler

A student has been attending class regularly and has accumulated a lot of work in her portfolio. You have encouraged her to take some papers home and only keep the best ones in her folder. She has asked you why she is supposed to keep this portfolio when she is going to be retested anyway. How do you respond?

### Peer Perspective

#### For Students

- Create a process for explaining the portfolio to students.
  - o Use a conference period during orientation to begin explaining the portfolio process.
  - o Talk through all the assessments including the portfolio before beginning instruction.
  - o Repeat and reinforce the portfolio process and its value throughout the student's experience in your program, explaining that it provides information on what has been learned and what still needs to be learned.
  - o Use the portfolio daily.
    - ◆ Create the expectation that the students pick up their portfolios as soon as they enter the class each day.
    - ◆ Reinforce that student access to the portfolio equals student ownership. The portfolio can be used to reinforce achievements over time and helps to show work accomplished. Students see smaller, quicker steps toward goal achievement.
  - o Explain the portfolio as a living document that will help to inform both the teacher and the student as the learning and instruction happen in the classroom.
  - o Review portfolio documents and discuss progress toward goals regularly.

#### Timely Tips

Establish a monthly informal goal review and portfolio "clean out" (e.g., time to purge the portfolio and retain only those pieces that inform the learning process.)

Use this time to set new goals or revise the timeline for goals that were not met.

#### For Staff

- Create your program's internal process for the portfolio and build awareness for staff. This is especially helpful when there is a substitute in the classroom or a student returns to the class after some time away. The portfolio:
  - o Needs to be in place during orientation so that students and staff understand its function.
  - o Is a process between the student and the teacher. The program needs to determine the extent of individual and group activities associated with the portfolio.
  - o Helps teachers and students keep up with the learning process.
  - o Provides understanding of the testing process and results.
  - o Provides information for retesting.

- Helps to create targets for understanding. When the student scores low on a test and the teacher knows this is not reflective of the student's skills, the portfolio can be used to determine next steps with teaching.

### Added Insights

Much has been written about the necessity of a comprehensive assessment policy (including formal and informal assessments) for diagnosing and placing students initially and as they progress in reaching goals and determining their achievement at a later point in their education.

- Refer to *The Ohio Performance Accountability System (OPAS) Manual* (August 2009) on the Ohio Board of Regents (OBR) Aspire website ([http://uso.edu/network/workforce/able/reference/accountability/OPAS\\_Manual.pdf](http://uso.edu/network/workforce/able/reference/accountability/OPAS_Manual.pdf)) for specific information about Ohio's portfolio system.

## Testing ESOL Students

Promising Practices 27

### Program Puzzler

Standardized tests can provide valuable diagnostic information to guide instruction. In addition, all Aspire (Adult Basic and Literacy Education) programs are required to administer a standardized assessment to pretest and posttest students for accountability. There are a variety of assessments available, but how do you know which one to select? What are the tests that are approved for ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) students?

### Peer Perspective

#### Tests Approved by the Ohio Board of Regents

The Aspire Program at the Ohio Board of Regents has approved the following standardized tests for pretesting and posttesting Aspire ESOL students in Ohio:

- BEST (Basic English Skills Test)
  - o BEST Plus, which assesses listening and speaking skills
  - o BEST Literacy, which assesses reading and writing skills at National Reporting System (NRS) levels 1-5 only
- CASAS (Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems)
  - o CASAS Life and Work Reading and Reading for Citizenship assess reading skills
  - o CASAS Listening assesses listening skills

#### Timely Tips

Create an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) with your student. Allow time during orientation or class to have student-teacher conferences and complete goal-setting forms together. Then, plan to assess the student after you and the student are comfortable with his or her goals.

The TABE (Test of Adult Basic Education) 9/10 test is not an ESOL test and therefore is not part of the allowed list.

#### Training Needed for Tests

BEST Plus requires training for each test administrator. CASAS requires one person per program to attend training. There is no formal training for the BEST Literacy test. There is a BEST Literacy Test Manual that test administrators should review prior to administering tests.

#### Base Your Choice on the Student's Goals

Determining which standardized test to administer to your students should be based on the student's goals. Conducting goal-setting with your student can unravel any myths about the student and his or her educational and cultural background, personal history, and reasons for attending class.

For example, students who have lived in the United States for a while and have good command of the spoken language may not be able to read or write in English. Therefore, their goals would reflect improving reading and writing skills. An appropriate test for this type of student would be BEST Literacy.

Students with goals of improving all skill areas—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—need multiple assessments to place them at appropriate levels of instruction and to diagnose their strengths and weaknesses.

### Tests for Other ESOL Purposes

Other students may have advanced ESOL skills but still need ESOL services. The CASAS test is a good choice for this population as the test scale scores span NRS levels for ESOL through ABE/ASE (Adult Basic Education/Adult Secondary Education). Therefore, a student could begin in an ESOL class and smoothly transition into ABE/ASE classes without having to be retested. The student's progress would simply be tracked using CASAS no matter the students' NRS level.

### **Added Insights**

Goal-Setting Forms and Lesson Plans for ESOL and ABE Students

Available from the Ohio Aspire website at

<http://www.ohioaspire.org/files/ESOL%20Goal%20Setting%20Packet.pdf>

English as a Second Language Orientation Booklet

Available from the Ohio Aspire website at

[http://www.ohioaspire.org/files/Orientation\\_Booklet.doc](http://www.ohioaspire.org/files/Orientation_Booklet.doc)

## Breaks That Bring Students Back

[Promising Practices 12](#)

### Program Puzzler

Your program is a week away from closing for a three-week winter vacation and you are concerned that some students may not return after the break. What can you do to encourage students to return to your program?

### Peer Perspective

- Give small homework assignments to maintain engagement (incentive for completion).
  - o Use Flashmaster or some handheld tool that encourages practice in a fun way.
  - o Clarify that effort before holiday should translate into progress when tested after.
- Follow up after holiday if student does not return.
- Give students a list of websites that apply to their assignments so that they can research additional information while the program is closed.

### Timely Tips

Put together a booklet of “a little something for every day” to help students keep their skills sharp while they are away from class.

### Added Insights

Literature suggests that monitoring student information can help to identify trends in persistence and guide improvement in services to better meet student needs and increase retention. Items to monitor include:

1. persistence—participation beyond initial sessions;
2. attendance—hours offered versus hours student attended;
3. completion—of levels or program in general; and
4. achievement—extent to which student goals are met.

It is also good to track students who do not return and their reasons for leaving.

The above information can be used to understand:

1. what the program is doing that helps or inhibits persistence;
2. characteristics of students who persist;
3. characteristics of those who leave or who do not return;
4. obstacles to participation;
5. when in the program students are most likely to withdraw;
6. when in the program students are most likely to reach learning plateau; and
7. the effectiveness of the support service interventions being used by the program.

In addition, methods have been suggested for increasing persistence. These include:

1. increasing self-efficacy through a supportive environment and belief in students’ ability to be successful;

2. having a good orientation process where schools acknowledge the doubts, hesitations, or anxieties of students and encourage them and convey belief in their ability to learn; and
3. providing constructive feedback on performance, addressing students' identified needs, recognizing students' successes, and providing support services.

## Practices for Persistence

[Promising Practices 13](#)

### Program Puzzler

One of your classes is held at your main site, three days a week for six hours a day. Students may come in to study whenever the classroom is open. The instructor provides the students with materials to work on and is always willing to help when students have questions. You have noticed that although several students attend the class a few times, few persist for more than a few weeks. What modifications could be tried that would encourage student persistence?

### Peer Perspective

- Interview some current and former students of the class to ascertain why they did not persist.

### Orientation

- Focus on rapport-building between teacher and student and between students in the class.
  - o Use ice-breakers during orientation and during class (e.g., pass out pennies and have students tell what they were doing on the year of penny).
- Provided one-on-one goal setting.

### Timely Tips

Contact students who do not return to class (e.g., postcards, phone calls, contacts through partner agencies).

Collect student e-mail addresses and send “miss you” e-mails.

### Class Structure

- Provide added structure for students who need it. Do not wait for students to ask questions. Rather, be proactive.
- Encourage students to ask for help.
- Implement a buddy system so that students can help one another. A buddy system or peer teaching can empower students to take responsibility for the class and their own learning.
- Providing challenging materials and activities for students (e.g., General Educational Development [GED] score boost packets for homework).
- Use a mix of small group activities and large group lessons.

### Class Management

- Structure class similarly to postsecondary requirements.
  - o Implement attendance policy.
  - o Students need to know requirements of starting over.
- Shorten class time to decrease availability and increase demand.

### Professional Development

- Improve communication between teacher and administrator.
- Rely on advice and coaching from a peer teacher.

- Have the administrator observe the class and offer insights afterwards.

### Added Insights








Literature related to class management indicates the merits of managed enrollment. In particular, it is hard for teachers to monitor students when the membership is always in flux; it is difficult for teachers to assign projects and work on higher-level materials. Also, continuous enrollment is detrimental to maintaining a classroom community. Some programs have seen an increase in enrollment and retention after implementing a managed process. The process increased the perceived value of enrolling in the program, thereby, creating a demand for the product (the program).

Literature suggests that monitoring student information can help to identify trends in persistence and guide improvement in services to better meet student needs and increase retention. Items to monitor include: 1) persistence – participation beyond initial sessions; 2) attendance – hours offered versus hours student attended; 3) completion – of levels or program in general; and 4) achievement – extent to which student goals are met. It is also good to track students who do not return and their reasons for leaving.

The above information can be used to understand 1) what the program is doing that helps or inhibits persistence; 2) characteristics of students who persist; 3) characteristics of those who leave or do not return; 4) obstacles to participation; 5) when in the program students are most likely to withdraw; 6) when in the program students are most likely to reach learning plateau; and 7) the effectiveness of the support service interventions being used by the program.

- Provide ways for students to see success early in program participation. During the first three weeks (the most critical for persistence), focus on one area in instruction where students are most in need of improvement. Then retest the student after three weeks, to show gains and allow them to experience an immediate success. (*Program Administrator's Sourcebook*, National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy, 2005)
- At intake, help potential students consider goals and life demands that might stand in the way of reaching their goals. Discuss plans they feel they need to make in order to participate. If some feel their life demands are too great for participation, discuss what may need to happen before they feel they will be able to enroll in the program. Help students rethink goals to make them more realistic or to secure the support services they believe they will need before they can attend. (*Program Administrator's Sourcebook*, National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy, 2005)

### AspireLink Accompaniments

- |   |   |
|---|---|
|  Attendance by Class by Month                    |  Student Without Attendance In The Last 90 Days    |
|  Attendance by Site by Class by Month            |  Students Who Left Before 12 Hours and Reasons Why |
|  Attendance by Student by Site by Class by Month |  Students With Less Than 12 Hours by Site          |
|  Primary Reasons for Attendance - by Site        |   |



## Data Entry Is Just the Beginning

Promising Practices 14

### Program Puzzler

On reviewing data match information you notice that data match numbers for students entering postsecondary education and obtaining a job are higher than what your program reported on the APR. What should be done?

### Peer Perspective

#### Data Quality Control

- Have AspireLink staff run reports according to the outcomes. Work with students who achieved outcomes for which they currently do not have goals to determine whether goals should be changed.
- Run your AspireLink reports by area.
  - o Gain/retain employment
- Double check Student Registration Forms.
  - o Look for misspellings.
  - o Check for accuracy of social security numbers.
  - o Ensure that required areas are completed.
- Have staff sign-off on Student Registration Forms and data entry to verify completion of forms.

#### **Timely Tips**

Establish a schedule for checking reports.

Run AspireLink reports on a regular basis to check for validity.

Remember to involve students in regular, formal goal reviews.

#### Partner Follow Up

















- Check with partners (e.g., job listing).

#### Professional Development

- Conduct professional development with staff to ensure proper data procedures.
- Make sure all staff members understand the impact of data on program outcomes.
- Make sure all AspireLink staff members go to training.
  - o This may be done effectively with a team training.
  - o It would be good for the same team to go to Understanding Your Desk Review to see how the data can be/is used.

**Added Insights**

**AspireLink Accompaniments**

-  Annual Report Status
-  Duplicate Students by Full Name
-  Duplicate Students by SSN
-  Error Validation - Supplemental Report
-  Error Validation by Site By Class
-  Error Validation by Teacher
-  Goal of Basic Skills met without matching Reason
-  Goal of Completed Level met without matching Reason
-  Goal of English Language met without matching Reason
-  Goal of Enrollment in Post-Secondary met without matching Reason
-  Goal of Obtained Citizenship Skills met without matching Reason
-  Goal of Obtained Employment met without matching Reason
-  Goal of Obtained GED met without matching Reason
-  Goal of Removed from Assistance met without matching Reason
-  Goal of Retained Employment met without matching Reason
-  Goal of Voted met without matching Reason

## Realistic Data is High-Quality Data

Promising Practices 15

### Program Puzzler

During orientation, teachers and aides help students complete the intake forms. Student information is then given to the data entry person for monthly input into AspireLink. The data entry person enters data exactly as it appears on the forms. Sometimes the information is not correct on the forms but the data entry person does not realize it. What can be done to enhance the likelihood that accurate data errors are detected?

### Peer Perspective

#### Program Management and Quality Control

- Ensure that AspireLink staff is knowledgeable about the classroom environment and current students.
  - o Invite the AspireLink staff to the classroom to explain what he/she does.
- Make teachers responsible for screening and reviewing forms they complete with students before sending them to the AspireLink person for data entry.
- Develop mechanisms for AspireLink staff to alert teachers and other staff to incorrect form entries.
- Require teachers and other staff to correct their own mistakes on forms before entry/reentry into AspireLink.

#### Timely Tips

Color-code forms to track information (e.g., color codes by instructor as a way to track form completion and accuracy).

#### Professional Development

- Support professional development of AspireLink staff.
- Cross train staff (e.g., administrators attending AspireLink trainings, teacher sitting with AspireLink personnel and watching data entry).
- Actively involve AspireLink staff in presenting issues at staff meetings (e.g., bringing up consistent problems). Make AspireLink issues a regular part of all staff meetings.
- Review Support Staff Standards in the *Ohio Aspire Standards-Based Professional Development System* (<http://uso.edu/network/workforce/able/reference/development/PD-standards-overview-2010.pdf>) for guidance in determining professional development.
- Visit other sites to learn new methods.







#### Staffing

- Consider the following when hiring for an AspireLink professional.
  - o Candidates should be carefully screened to select for individuals who:
    - ◆ Can accurately complete data entry tasks.
    - ◆ Are able to analyze data during and after data entry.
    - ◆ Can understand and interpret data in the context of the program goals and policies.
    - ◆ Provide expertise in data reporting.

- ◆ Incorporate quality control process into the work.
- ◆ Can communicate data needs, issues, and results with all program staff.

## Added Insights

### AspireLink Accompaniments

-  Annual Report Status
-  Duplicate Students by Full Name
-  Duplicate Students by SSN
-  Error Validation - Supplemental Report
-  Error Validation by Site By Class
-  Error Validation by Teacher

## Monitoring Data Collection and Data Entry

Promising Practices 16

### Program Puzzler

It's early June and, as the program administrator, you decide that it is time to review program data from AspireLink for the year. You have had a feeling, which has been reinforced by comments from staff, that most students are progressing and as a result your program is achieving desired outcomes. However, as you now review your data, you discover that students only made minimum performance levels in half of the Educational Functioning Levels in which students were enrolled and only 39% of students were posttested even though the average contact hours for students was 65. What steps should you take as program director to monitor program data collection and entry?

### Peer Perspective

- Establish a regular schedule for data updates, data analysis, and review of data reports.
  - o Run reports weekly and watch for any red flags.
  - o Continually analyze the data; make changes and update as needed.
- Use multiple mechanisms to collect and ensure data is accurate (e.g., phone calls to gather student updates, follow-up survey for postsecondary education goal).

### Program Management and Quality Control

- Color-code forms to track information.
  - o Color codes by instructor as a way to track form completion/accuracy.
- Make teachers responsible for screening and reviewing forms they complete with students before sending them to the AspireLink person for data entry.
- Develop mechanisms for AspireLink staff to alert teachers and other staff to incorrect form entries.
- Require teachers and other staff to correct their own mistakes on forms before entry/reentry into AspireLink.
- Involve AspireLink staff and administrator in double checking the data input and reports.
- Make administrator aware of anomalies, irregularities, and data trends.

### Timely Tips

Have the AspireLink staff explain form completion to students during orientation (e.g., walk the students through filling out the forms) and have staff review the forms to ensure that all items are completed.

Check goals marked (teacher and student together) on a monthly basis.

Run a query on students who have passed pre-General Educational Development (GED) and the practice test. Search for these students on the website of the Ohio Board of Regent (OBR) website to find those if have passed the GED. Double check this information in AspireLink.

### Classroom Structure


























- Ensure that AspireLink staff is knowledgeable about the classroom environment and current students.
  - o Invite the AspireLink staff to the classroom to explain what he/she does.

## Staffing

- Remember the importance of careful screening of AspireLink professionals to ensure individuals possess necessary qualities and abilities. AspireLink is more than data entry. It includes reporting, analysis, error detection, updating, relationship building with students, etc.

## **Added Insights**

### **AspireLink Accompaniments**

-  Annual Report Status
-  Duplicate Students by Full Name
-  Duplicate Students by SSN
-  Error Validation - Supplemental Report
-  Error Validation by Site By Class
-  Error Validation by Teacher
-  Goal of Basic Skills met without matching Reason
-  Goal of Completed Level met without matching Reason
-  Goal of English Language met without matching Reason
-  Goal of Enrollment in Post-Secondary met without matching Reason
-  Goal of Obtained Citizenship Skills met without matching Reason
-  Goal of Obtained Employment met without matching Reason
-  Goal of Obtained GED met without matching Reason
-  Goal of Removed from Assistance met without matching Reason
-  Goal of Retained Employment met without matching Reason
-  Goal of Voted met without matching Reason
-  Latest Progress Recorded for Students, by Class
-  Latest Progress Recorded for Students, by Site
-  Latest Progress Recorded for Students, by Teacher
-  Practice GED Test/ Official GED Test Student Info
-  Program Overview - Primary Reasons and Goals Met
-  Program Overview - Secondary Reasons and Goals Met
-  Student Who Passed The GED Practice Test
-  Student Who Passed The GED Test
-  Students without Post-Tests

## Data and Program Success: See the Connection

Promising Practices 17

### Program Puzzler

Some of your staff members think that the sole purpose for AspireLink is to relay information to the Ohio Board of Regents (OBR). As an administrator, you believe that AspireLink and other sources of data, like student surveys, provide valuable information for program improvement. At this point, however, you are at a loss for communicating to your staff how this information is important and leads to program success. What can you do?

### Peer Perspective

#### Professional Development

- Create awareness within the program between staff members and reinforce a culture of continuous improvement.
- Explain how the data on program reports can inform practices.
- Visit a high-performing program to see how it incorporates information gained from data.
- Recognize and reward staff for contributions to a successful Annual Performance Report (APR).

#### **Timely Tips**









Reports can be customized. Poll the staff members about what information they would like to see generated from AspireLink.

#### Program Management

- Maintain a process for using data to inform practices.
  - o 1) Enter data; 2) Run reports (by sites); 3) Identify gaps in data; 4) Develop an action plan; 5) Implement plan; 6) Evaluation plan (formally and informally); 7) Repeat process.
- Use reports at staff meetings to organize the agenda.
- Use reports as motivational tools to inspire teachers and compare sites.
- Use reports to organize information when visiting various sites within the program.
- Reports can be sent to sites to show missing data.

## Added Insights

### AspireLink Accompaniments

-  Annual Report Status
-  Primary Reasons for Attendance - by Site
-  Program Demographic Information
-  Referring Agencies (How did you find out about this program?)
-  Student Information by Site
-  Student Without Attendance In The Last 90 Days
-  Students Who Left Before 12 Hours and Reasons Why
-  Students With Less Than 12 Hours by Site



## Timely and Effective New Staff Orientation

Promising Practices 18

### Program Puzzler

As the administrator, it seems like you are always in the process of hiring and training new staff. Specifically, you are acquainting staff members with how your agency functions and orienting them to Aspire. You rely on the New Teacher Orientation requirement to help out somewhat with bringing the staff up to speed. But, with increased expectations and a changing system, you find it hard to remain up to date and to keep your staff informed. How can you ensure that new staff members acquire critical information about program processes and procedures as soon as possible?

### Peer Perspective

#### Professional Development

- Have existing staff train new hires.
- Conduct staff meeting regularly to discuss new and ongoing issues.
  - o Include time for AspireLink discussions.
- Develop procedures so that staff members can indicate their awareness of policies.
  - o Create a document highlighting important policies, and have staff members mark that they have read and are aware of the policies.
- ◇ Set aside time at staff meeting to explain the organization of Aspire and the specialty areas of each agency (e.g., Ohio Board of Regents [OBR], Resource Center Network [RCN]) to staff.
- ◇ Cross train staff members so that they better understand each role in the program and can assist when needed.
- ◇ Include staff in completing the program's quality checklist and other program evaluations.
- ◇ Create a network across programs so that practitioners know who to call among their peers when a question arises.
  - o Take advantage of coaches sponsored through Central/Southeast Resource Center or develop your own list of mentors to utilize.

#### **Timely Tips**

Develop a program-specific staff handbook, including policies related to Aspire and the program's agency.

Update staff monthly with a program bulletin.

Create and maintain a program blog.

#### Communication

- Make staff members aware of information disseminated from OBR and RCN.
  - o Provide condensed communications from OBR with pieces highlighted.
  - o Pass on OBR communications (e.g., Friday Facts) in total.
  - o Encourage staff to sign up for e-mails and newsletters from the RCN.
- Use Individual Professional Development Plans (IPDPs) as a mechanism to communicate needs to RCN.

## Added Insights

Literature suggests that professional development (PD) should be multi-faceted. In particular, it should include expectations for participation and learning activities (e.g., local, regional, online). PD should also allow staff to participate in more decision making and increase opportunities for interaction and sharing with one another.














In addition, a wealth of technology resources are available as PD for teachers as well as samples to be used in the classroom. For example, teachers can access web-delivered curriculum products, interactive online reading materials, and online interactive lessons with an immediate online answer-check features.

Examples of technology resources and project are available at <http://www.ncsall.net/?id=309>.

The *Program Administrator's Sourcebook* (National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy, 2005) offers each of the following suggestions:

- Support joint planning time so that teachers can talk about which instructional activities work.
- Offer professional development within the program by organizing in-house professional development run by the teachers themselves.
- Assign teachers a mentor who is a more experienced teacher, and ensure that every new teacher is observed (with feedback) within three months of teaching.
- Provide teacher opportunities to visit other area programs.

### AspireLink Accompaniments

-  AnnualProgram Demographic Information
-  Program Overview - Enrollment by Site, Teacher, Class
-  Program Overview - Primary Reasons and Goals Met
-  Program Overview - Secondary Reasons and Goals Met
-  Program Overview - Student Demographics
-  Site Overview Page 1
-  Site Overview Page 2
-  Site Overview Page 3
-  Site Overview Page 4
-  Teacher Overview Page 1
-  Teacher Overview Page 2
-  Teacher Overview Page 3
-  Teacher Overview Page 4

## Meeting Program Enrollment Goals

Promising Practices 19

### Program Puzzler

You have noticed a decline in new students enrolling in the program. To understand the decline better, you review the AspireLink data (Student Registration Form 17: How did you find out about this program?) and realize most have come from Job and Family Services referrals and word of mouth. Per the grant, the current enrollment is approximately 30% short of the projected enrollment. What steps could you take to increase enrollment?

### Peer Perspective

#### Ways to Increase Enrollment

- Analyze the location of the student population in order to offer classes in proximity to where students work and/or live.
- Draw on partners to increase awareness and referrals (e.g., temporary employment agencies, library, career centers, local businesses, One-Stops).
  - o Make sure that your program is on literacy-related service lists (e.g., Dollar General).
- Advertise in multiple ways.
  - o Speak at the beginning Head Start meeting for family advocates.
  - o Develop a public service announcement for local radio and television stations.
  - o Distribute brochures listing program services.
  - o Encourage current students to tell others.
  - o Participate in a fund raiser or community event (e.g., Walmart family literacy days, recycling drive).
  - o Participate in Business after Business activities sponsored through the local Chamber of Commerce to network and promote your program.
- Offer additional types of programming or different delivery systems, such as Madison Heights on TV for family literacy or Math Lab using the computer for distance learning.
- Set the right tone for students to feel comfortable and successful. They can recruit for you.
  - o Provide incentives to students who recruit others.

#### **Timely Tips**







Speak at local civic group meetings (e.g., Lions, Rotary, Eagles, VFW, Elks). Groups often need monthly speakers.

#### Potential Factors Affecting Enrollment

- Local economy
- Competition with other agencies (e.g., churches offering English for Speakers of Other Languages [ESOL] services)
- Unrealistic program goals

## Added Insights

### AspireLink Accompaniments

-  Annual Report Table 1 Participants by Entering Educ. Functioning Level
-  Annual Report Table 6 Participant Status and Program Enrollment
-  Attendance by Class by Month
-  Attendance by Site by Class by Month
-  Attendance by Student by Site by Class by Month
-  Program Demographic Information

## Establishing Partnerships to Serve Students Better

Promising Practices 20

### Program Puzzler

In your community, there is an agency that assists low-income parents with young children. The agency provides childcare for their clients, along with providing guidance and assistance with work and education issues. You think that there is potential overlap of services and/or clientele. You would like to work with this and other programs in the community to better assist your students, but you are unsure how to begin a partnership. How should you proceed?

### Peer Perspective

#### Steps to Establishing Partnerships

1. Acquire and maintain a knowledge of agencies in your community that provide social services that could assist your students. Utilize Internet searches, brochures/flyers, newspaper articles, and advertisements and other items to learn more about the community agencies.
2. Make contact with identified agencies (e.g., via phone calls, e-mail, face-to-face meetings) to create awareness of your services, to better understand their services and how their services are marketed to the community, and to identify how services can complement.
3. Cultivate relationships with individuals with whom you want to partner. Partnerships are built as much on trust as mutual interest. Invite representatives from agencies to your program and to events and keep them informed of your progress.
4. Market to potential partners.
  - o Offer brochures of services, presentations, attendance at job fairs.
5. Establish and maintain partner relationships.

#### Timely Tips

Recruit community and program partners to be members of your advisory committee.

#### Suggested Partners

- Business and Industry
  - o Business associations
  - o Chamber of commerce
  - o Hospitals/healthcare
  - o Manufacturing companies
  - o Restaurants
- Civic/Religious Organizations
  - o Churches
  - o Lions club
  - o Rotary club
- Governmental Agencies
  - o Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation (BVR)
  - o Libraries
  - o Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS)
  - o One-Stops

- Probation boards
- Veteran affairs
- Youth services
- Educational Agencies
  - Aspire programs
  - Adult Workforce Education programs
  - Colleges and universities
  - Community colleges
  - Schools

### Sample Partnership Services






- Building space
- Childcare
- Funding
- Onsite classes
- Referrals
- Remediation (e.g., preparation for WorkKeys)
- Technology (e.g., Internet access)
- Transportation

### **Added Insights**

Aspire programs can better serve students by partnering to support student beyond the classroom. According to adult education research, providing “wrap around” services helps with student retention. Identifying potential barriers, addressing issues, and providing direct support (e.g., access to transportation, daycare, referrals) increase persistence.

- Develop collaborations with social-service agencies and build a large network of service providers to help students in your program persist. (*Program Administrator's Sourcebook*, National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy, 2005)

### **AspireLink Accompaniments**

-  Primary Reasons for Attendance - by Site
-  Program Demographic Information
-  Program Overview - Student Demographics
-  Referring Agencies (How did you find out about this program?)
-  Secondary Reasons for Attendance - by Site

## Connecting with Students' Families

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### Program Puzzler

Many of the students in your English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program have children or grandchildren. You would like to provide some activities for your students that include these younger family members—but you are not quite sure where to start.

### Peer Perspective

- Take ESOL students and their families to a garage sale. Students can practice their speaking, listening, and math. They can also experience an American custom.
- If your students and their children depend on public transportation, discuss schedules, routes, and stops. Then, have students and their children plan trips to various parts of the city.
- Teach your students songs that they can sing to their children.
- Invite students and their children to attend a holiday parade, for example a Halloween parade. Students can learn about the reason for the parade before they attend.

### Timely Tips

Talk to the elementary teachers who have your students' children in their classes. If they are interested in family literacy, plan activities together for your students and their children.

Survey your students to see what their interests and their children's interests are or what areas their children are struggling with in school. Build activities around those topics that will also address the ESOL standards.

### Added Insights

Research shows that adult students stay in programs longer when the program address the needs of their children as well as their own needs.

Research on the effectiveness of family literacy can be found in the publication *Family Literacy: Who Benefits* at <http://literacy.kent.edu/Oasis/Pubs/WhoBenefits2003.pdf>

Resources for family activities can be found in the Family Literacy Resource Collection at <http://literacy.kent.edu/familyliteracy/>

Aspire programs who have engaged ESOL students in family literacy activities include the following:

- Fostoria—Anitha Thomas (419-436-4100)
- Kettering—Katie Miller (937-499-1450)
- Middletown—Rose Marie Stiehl (513-420-4520)

Literature mentioned in the Added Insights of this document is drawn from reviews, reports and papers housed on the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL) website. Refer to <http://www.ncsall.net/> for more information. In addition, the reference below, also found at the NCSALL site, is more directly cited in this document.

Taylor, J., Smith, C., & Bingman, B. (December 2005). *Program Administrators' Sourcebook: A Resource on NCSALL's Research for Adult Education Program Administrators*. Cambridge, MA.  
<http://www.ncsall.net/fileadmin/resources/teach/PASourcebook.pdf>