



MESSAGE FROM MK

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*An update from Mary Katherine Moen, State Director of Adult Education
mkmoen@doe.nv.gov, 775.687.9167*

Innovation — We encourage creative ideas and support the integration of research and best practices.

—Nevada Adult Basic Education Directors, 2004

Years ago I worked in a community college in another state. The president of the college began a process of organizational development, a multi-faceted approach to problem-solving and improvement so the college could more quickly and efficiently meet the needs of its students and of the community. About six months into the process, the president called a college-wide staff meeting. After we all were assembled, he said, "You are not making enough mistakes!"

He explained to the astonished group that innovation requires trying new things, doing old things differently. Trying new things, he said, would result in some positive outcomes and some not so positive. But if we weren't making mistakes, we weren't being innovative.

While I am not advocating that we all start "goofing up," I do believe wholeheartedly that, as Henry Ford said, "Failure is the opportunity to begin again more intelligently." And so we value creativity and new endeavors in Nevada's ABE/ESL community. Many work well. For example:

- Nevada has the only outcome-based Certificate of Performance in the country. The Certificate recognizes proven competence and performance in the classroom or tutoring environment. It is based on demonstrated proficiency in achieving outcomes in support of the Nevada State Plan and/or program grant objectives. To date, 130 teachers and tutors have received Certificates of Performance.
- The program administrator at Great Basin College co-developed and co-teaches a rural "Bridges" class, leading the way to increased postsecondary education outcomes for the state.

An administrator at Truckee Meadows Community College, working with other states on developing content standards, modified the group's product for Nevada.

- A collaborative research project is being conducted by University of Nevada, Reno's Center for Program Evaluation and Partnership Development and the Northern Nevada Literacy Council. The program's ESL Pronunciation (phonics) curriculum is the focus of the study, the purpose of which is to establish that the curriculum is research-based.
- Since 1997, special leadership funds have been available for innovation for teachers, tutors, and administrators. Examples of funded projects include a tuition credit award program, literature circles, teaching literacy through the performing arts (to incarcerated students!), a job readiness curriculum for ESL students, a science curriculum for GED students, and a reading research project. Many of these products have been incorporated into the ABE/ESL system.

Even projects that did not work as well as hoped are valuable. They were learning experiences that often provided a springboard, sparking other ideas that did work.

Innovation holds a place of esteem in our system. We continue to honor it.