



# Guiding Principles

By Mary Katherine Moen, State Director of Adult Education,  
[mkmoe@doe.nv.gov](mailto:mkmoe@doe.nv.gov), 775/687-9167

Professionalism—We support knowledgeable and dedicated educators by encouraging integrity, professional growth, and self-improvement. —*Nevada Adult Basic Education Directors, 2004*

I am participating in a workshop and the current presentation is not applicable to the issues I find in my work-life. I am squirming and gawking, anxious to be somewhere else. The presenter's voice is annoying and he periodically has to clear his throat. It also is the last presentation of a very long day which began at 3:30 a.m. in order to catch a plane to arrive at this meeting place in time for the presentation. There is a low buzz in the large room as several people are rudely whispering or speaking in low tones.

I pick up a pen and paper with the thought of using this time creatively. I decide I will begin writing an essay on another principle that guides the work of the Adult Basic Education system. I search my mind, trying to remember what it is. I have already addressed innovation, service, excellence ... and oh, yes, synergy. And then I remember: our fifth principle is professionalism. And I immediately review my thinking and behavior for the last hour. Have I been comporting myself with professionalism?

Adult basic education's statement about professionalism references integrity, professional growth, and self-improvement. Integrity would dictate that I be honest: Should I have simply left the room when I felt disconnected from the training and done something more obviously productive? Or should I have forced myself to pay more attention — might I have heard something that gave meaning or direction to my work life? Would my professional growth have been enhanced if I had truly listened to the content of the presentation?

I did venture into self-improvement by examining my thoughts and behavior—but that was after the fact. I had a perfect opportunity for self-improvement, but was not aware of it at the time. How can I seize such opportunities in the future?

Currently the professional development system for Nevada's AELFA-funded programs provides:

- Staff planning and training sessions, including orientation, goal-setting, and direct training for volunteers conducted by individual programs;
- Retreats and meetings planned by programs for their Boards;
- Regularly scheduled meetings for program directors which include a focus on administrative/management training;
- Live and Internet-based pre-service trainings;
- A statewide system of professional development offerings with each AEFLA-funded program hosting at least two trainings each year;
- Access to online and self-directed trainings geared to individual needs;
- Support for out-of-state conference attendance;
- Practical information and resources regarding adult education disseminated through various media; and
- Initiation and operation of special projects and activities to encourage creativity and research by teachers and administrators.

To me, being professional means being my best self, approaching situations with dignity and respect, and interacting with others with honesty and humility. I wish I had done better during this particular presentation. Perhaps my paying better attention would

have supported the speaker and made the experience much more pleasant for at least the two of us.

It is important to me that I remember and exhibit professionalism. I also want our system to be professional. How do I ensure that the adult basic education community is professional?

The first thing our state system can do is provide a system of high quality professional growth opportunities sufficient to enable all levels of personnel to perform their duties successfully. To do that, we must count on your professionalism. We must know that you will make your needs known, that you will "show up and be present" and that you will tell us what works, what doesn't, and what you'd like to see.

Working together, we can ensure professional growth and self-improvement for all of us! Working together we can live in integrity.