

EFF Online Course

EQUIPPED FOR THE FUTURE: A STANDARDS-BASED APPROACH TO EDUCATIONAL IMPROVEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Overview

This EFF online course is designed for the range of practitioners – teachers, program administrators, professional development providers, state adult literacy and basic education staff – who want and need to understand how Equipped for the Future supports improvement in the quality and results of adult basic/literacy/ESOL education through standards and an aligned assessment and accountability framework. Participants will be able to explore EFF educational improvement processes and tools in detail as well as receive structured feedback and support from an EFF facilitator.

Participants will use a variety of online EFF resources to increase and apply their own growing understanding of EFF standards-based educational improvement in the context of their own practice.

Objectives

By the end of the course, you will have accomplished the following:

- increased your familiarity with the goals and accomplishments of EFF;
- increased your understanding of standards-based educational improvement;
- explored, and applied what you learn from, a detailed example of EFF standards-based educational improvement which uses the EFF Content Standard *Read with Understanding*, and elements of a prototype assessment and accountability system that is aligned with this standard;
- Considered the critical role of professional development in promoting standards-based educational improvement; and
- explored, and applied what you learned from, illustrations of quality EFF standards-based instructional practice (planning, teaching and instructional assessment).

Course Schedule

You will explore EFF's approach to standards-based educational improvement, and have multiple opportunities to apply what you are learning in your own context, over the next five weeks. The following shows which course modules and activities will be covered each week:

- Week 1 (dates TBA): Course Overview, Participant Introductions, and General Introductions to EFF and to the theory/concept of Standards-Based Educational Improvement (Modules 1 and 2)
- Week 2 (dates TBA): The EFF Approach to Standards-Based Educational Improvement (Module 3)
- Week 3 (dates TBA): Standards-Based Educational Improvement and the EFF *Read with Understanding* Prototype (Module 4)
- Week 4 (dates TBA): Professional Development, Improved Teaching, and EFF Standards-Based Educational Improvement in the Classroom (Modules 5 and 6)
- Week 5 (dates TBA): Summary, Reflection, Application, Evaluation (Module 7)

During these 5 weeks you will be regularly analyzing your prior knowledge and experience related to the subject matter at hand; reading a variety of materials online, both within the modules themselves and by following links to other online resources; engaging in a variety of activities and then contributing to an online discussion board in order to share your experiences and learn from the experiences of others; participating in online chats as another way to share your experiences and learn from others; reflecting on and applying what you have learned; and thinking ahead about how you might choose to implement EFF standards-based educational improvement in your educational context.

Structure of the Course

Each course module includes **text** to be read; it may also direct you to **additional reading** via links to other online resources. The text can be a bit dense at times, and especially in Modules 2, 3, and 4, will

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contain some fairly technical material (this is pretty complex stuff you are engaging with – good for you!). We have tried our best to be as clear as possible, to provide lots of definitions for terms that may be unfamiliar, and to guide you toward additional information if you need it. So pat yourself on the back and hang in there!

Each module also includes a series of **activities** to engage in either before, while, or after reading the material in that module. Sometimes these activities involve studying a graphic or additional text as you read what is offered within the module; sometimes you are asked to respond to questions based on the reading; sometimes you are asked to create something based on what you read and how it relates to your prior experience. Usually these activities do not require you to report what you accomplish to the facilitator or other course participants – they are designed to help you increase your understanding of and comfort with the material being presented.

Finally, each module includes 2 to 5 **assignments**. These assignments are designed to help you use what you are learning within the module to build on your prior knowledge and experience, and to apply and monitor your increasing understanding in some meaningful way. Usually these assignments do require you to document and “report” your work through such mechanisms as postings to the discussion board and participation in online chats. We provide more detailed information about these week-by-week assignments below.



Week 1 Assignments (due date TBA)

During Week 1, participants will preview the course content; introduce themselves and their prior knowledge of/experience with EFF; read background material on EFF, on standards, and on the theory/concept of standards-based educational improvement; and study a model for standards-based educational improvement that will inform the rest of the course.

Five assignments for Week 1 include:

Module 1

Assignment 1 - Post your first message to the Discussion Board under the topic “Introductions and Prior Knowledge of EFF”. In your message, please introduce yourself and discuss

- what you already know about EFF,
- what experience if any you have had in implementing EFF, and
- what you hope to learn and to be able to do as a result of taking this online

Assignment 2 - Follow one link that interests you to find and read additional information about the goals, history, and accomplishments of EFF

Assignment 3 - Then post a message to the discussion board under the topic “EFF Background”. In your message, discuss

- How what you learned in this module “matches up” with what you knew about EFF before you began
- two things you learned in your additional reading about EFF that you didn’t know before, and
- two things that surprised or confused you.

Feel free to ask questions, or to reply to a thread created by someone else!

Module 2

Assignment 4 - Take some time to think about your own educational system, program or instructional setting. What are the connections between goals, teaching, learning and performance in your context? Try to describe these connections by thinking about how strong

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they are, how clear they are to everyone involved, and how well they work to result in higher levels of learning for students.

Try to draw or otherwise describe a model of what the connections look like in your experience. Try to be as specific as possible, using concrete examples from your own experience in a system, program or classroom if possible.

Save this model – you will return to it at the end of the course

Assignment 5 - Then post a message to the discussion board under the topic “SBEI” about what it was like to try to do this.



Week 2 Assignments (due date TBA)

For Week 2, participants explore EFF’s approach to standards-based educational improvement by reading module text and related online material; by examining a model for well-constructed, standards-based assessment; and by using some key concepts related to standards and aligned assessment and accountability to construct a model based in their own experiences.

Two assignments for Week 2 include:

Module 3

Assignment 1 - Create your own assessment triangle!

Assignment 2 - Then post a message to the discussion board under the topic “Standards and Assessment” in which you describe your triangle and what new insights and/or questions this activity raised for you



Week 3 Assignments (due date TBA)

For Week 3, The EFF *Read with Understanding (RWU)* Prototype is the focus that allows participants to see an illustration of how EFF processes and tools contribute to standards-based educational improvement. Participants will read materials and reflect on questions related to the *RWU* Content Standard; Performance Continuum and its 4 dimensions of performance; Performance Levels; and Assessment Task Level Specifications.

Two assignments for Week 3 include:

Module 4

Assignment 1 - Prepare for an online chat by posting a message to the discussion board (no later than 2 days before scheduled date of the chat) under the topic “Where we are”, in which you share

- At least one big “ah-ha!” learning, and
- At least one question you are struggling with

Assignment 2 - Participate in an online chat to explore what we have learned so far about EFF’s approach to SBEI, and to preview/share ideas for the next course assignment (connected to Module 6).

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Week 4 Assignments (due date TBA)

For Week 4, standards-based teaching, learning, assessment, and supportive professional development are the focus. Participants will consider the critical role that quality opportunities for professional development plays in successfully implementing standards-based educational improvement, and they may follow provided links to more information about EFF resources for training and technical assistance. Participants will also read an extended illustration of standards-based teaching, learning and assessment in an adult education classroom, accompanied by some tips that teachers in particular can follow in developing standards-based instructional assessment. Participants will be asked to reflect on how they might use the step-by-step process for planning and implementation outlined here in their own educational context

Two assignments for Week 4 include:

Module 5 – no assignments

Module 6

Assignment 1 - Using the EFF Performance Level Descriptions and Assessment Task Level Specifications for *Read with Understanding*, and following the five-step process outlined in this Module, create a standards-based learning and assessment plan that is focused on one typical or likely real-life learning goal in your instructional context.

Assignment 2 - Summarize your plan in writing and post it to the discussion board under the topic “Learning and Assessment Plans”

Week 5 Assignments (due date TBA)

In Week 5, participants will have the opportunity to review and reflect on the course content and on how they have been able to apply what they have learned to their own lives and educational contexts. They will be urged to celebrate their accomplishments and offer critical feedback to the facilitator on the effectiveness of the course in meeting their needs.

Three assignments for Week 5 include:

Module 7

Assignment 1 - Return to the model you created in Module 2 of the connections between goals, teaching, learning and performance in your instructional system or context. When you were constructing that model you were thinking about “what is happening right now”. Given your experience in taking this course, what do you think would be an “ideal” model? Would it be the same as the one you constructed? If not, how would it be different?

Assignment 2 - Post evaluative comments concerning this course to the discussion board under the topic “Course Evaluation”

Assignment 3 - Participate in a final online chat to

- Celebrate completion of the course,
- evaluate your experience with the course,
- share and discuss your learning and assessment plans and/or your ideal “connections model”, and
- raise any other issues or concerns you think are important