ESOL Teachers' Professional Growth (Standard 7)

Introduction

Welcome to ESOL teachers' professional growth based on the Massachusetts Professional Standards for teachers of adult ESOL standard 7. It is our intention that by watching this video you will be able to take steps in your professional growth through reflection, goal setting, professional development planning and participation, and the application of learning into your ESOL teaching practice. That is, you will take steps toward meeting the Mass ESOL Professional Standard 7 on professional growth.

Professional Standard 7

Professional Standard 7 states that the ESOL teacher engages in a continuous improvement process that includes ongoing reflection, self-assessment, goal setting, and high-quality professional development in order to gain greater teaching expertise, refine instructional practices, increase learner engagement, and improve student outcomes. It is this final section, increasing learner engagement and improving student outcomes, that is the ultimate goal of professional growth. Better teaching leads to better learning, and better learning leads to better learner outcomes.

Continuous Improvement Cycle

This continuous improvement process has five steps, beginning with reflecting on your teaching practice and assessing your strengths and areas that may need to be strengthened; looking closely at student data; using the information you get from student data and your reflections to set professional development goals and develop a professional development plan; then actively pursuing high-quality professional development opportunities; and finally, integrating new learning into your teaching practice. The cycle begins again with assessing the impact of your professional development efforts on your instruction and on your students, and reflecting on your next steps of professional growth. Let's take a look at each of these steps individually.

Reflection

Let's start with reflection. Teachers who are reflective have a growth mindset and welcome opportunities to learn and to integrate new knowledge and information into their practice. They take time to think about their reflections during and after lessons and review their notes periodically, looking for patterns for what's working and what's not working in their classes. They critically assess their own professional strengths and areas for improvement by observing student engagement and progress, reviewing student work, and asking for student feedback.

Collaboration

They collaborate with colleagues, observing each other's classes and giving each other feedback, sharing resources and insights, and working together to contribute to their program's overall performance and improvement. They may also use resources such as the Mass ESOL Professional Standards to identify which standards they are meeting and which ones they may want to work on. For example, do they need to deepen their understanding of second language acquisition principles or align their instruction more with the Mass ALPs?

Student Data

A reflective practice also includes analysis of student data—for example, data on learning gains. Are your learners progressing? Are all of your students progressing? Are they progressing in all language skill areas—reading, writing, speaking, and listening? Why or why not? Do you have access to your students' BEST Plus or TABE Class E assessment scores? Also, data on attendance. While there are many possible explanations for poor attendance that may be outside the teacher's control—for example, the class schedule or child care and transportation issues, or perhaps the curriculum—there are some explanations that a teacher can do something about. Is the classroom environment inclusive and culturally relevant? Is the class content helping students reach their goals? Are the class activities engaging? And persistence. Are your students coming to class regularly, and do they come to class for the duration of the learning cycle? Why or why not?

Goal Setting

Through some reflection and a look at student program data, teachers can usually identify what they need to work on in their professional development. Then they set PD goals and design a PD plan, sometimes with the help of a coach, supervisor, program director, or colleague. PD goals should be SMARTIE. That is, they should be specific, strategic, and student-centered, designed to improve both instructional practice and learner outcomes.

SMARTIE Goals

Teachers' PD goals should be aligned to the program's goals. Goals should be measurable. How will you and others know whether you've met your goals? Are they action-oriented? What will you do differently as a result of meeting these goals? Are your PD goals rigorous, realistic, and results-focused? And your goals should also be inclusive and equitable, ensuring that all learners are considered.

Professional Development

Once you've set your professional development goals and designed a PD plan, it's time to follow through by participating in high-quality professional development. You have many options. You can see what organizations like SABES (https://www.sabes.org/) or LINCS (https://lincs.ed.gov/) are offering that align with your PD goals. These and other PD organizations have workshops and courses—online,

blended, and in person—on a vast array of ESOL topics.

Application

The application of learning into one's teaching practice is a key element of high-quality professional development. While participating in PD activities, identify the new instructional strategies that you want to try out, and then try them out. Track and document changes in your practice and student engagement and progress.

Conclusion

Professional growth is indeed a continuous improvement process. Research shows that teaching quality and leadership are key factors in student achievement. That is why your professional growth is so important to your learners. We wish you well on your professional growth journey and are here to support you every step of the way. Please contact SABES at https://www.sabes.org/ or info@sabes.org with any questions.