

Survey results evaluate adult education

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This spring adult students, teachers and administrators in seven adult education programs throughout the state will participate in an Adult Performance Level (APL) Validation Survey. The Survey results will validate or invalidate for Alaska the APL objectives which were developed from a national study as requirements of adult living in today's world. The study conducted by the University of Texas at Austin in the early 1970s under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, however, did not include Alaska in its sampling. Since implementation of the APL model of adult education has been endorsed nationally, an assessment of the objectives for Alaskan needs will assist in state and local planning and design of adult education programs.

The APL objectives representing adult competencies are arranged in five content areas: community resources, government and law, consumer education, health and occupational knowledge. Based on these content areas, the University of Texas developed the APL model of an adult education program called the 'APL External High School Diploma Project which offers an alternative to the traditional four year high school program and to the GED high school equivalency diploma program. The focus is on development of the skills traditionally learned in school: reading, writing and arithmetic as well as more recently defined skills of problem solving and interpersonal relationships in practical life situations. The model includes a set of life skills which a student must perform in practical situations before qualifying for a diploma. Examples include comparison shopping, budgeting, obtaining a library card, registering to vote, and interviewing for such things as a job or insurance. Several pilot sites for implementation of the External High School Diploma Project have been designated across the nation; one of these is in Alaska at the Fairbanks Regional Adult Learning Center.

Since adult education programs in Alaska serve many people whose lifestyles are unique due to geography and culture, the question has been raised about whether the APL objectives are relevant to adult daily living in Alaska. The question becomes more critical as adult education programs make decisions about incorporating Adult Performance Level studies and using curriculum and testing materials which have been developed around the APL objectives. Results of the Validation Survey may help to determine whether there are unique Alaskan concerns as well as whether there are regional and urban-rural differences within the state. Programs at the urban centers of Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau, and Kodiak which serve diverse populations as well as the predominantly Native towns of Bethel and Nome are involved. All of these centers except Anchorage coordinate village programs in their regions. In Anchorage, Iliisagvik, an exclusively Native urban program at Cook Inlet Native Association, will also participate.

The Validation Survey was designed by Shelia Colbert-Kerns of the Adult Education Staff Development Program at the Alaska Center for Staff Development. The Adult Education Staff Development Program is administering the Survey under a grant from the State Department of Education. In order that students at low reading levels can take part, each APL objective was rewritten at a third grade reading level. Students in Adult Basic Education, English as a Second Language and GED preparation programs will participate. At a statewide Adult Education conference held January 10-16, 1978, program administrators and regional coordinators filled out the Survey as the first part of its implementation. Instructional staff and students in each of the seven programs are currently taking part in the Survey. Results will be compiled and a final report prepared by June 30, 1978.