

Oregon Adult Basic Skills

WIOA Title II AEFLA: Standards-based PLCs

Teaching Skills that Matter: Local PLC Activities

There are many ways to familiarize yourself with Teaching the Skills that Matter (TSTM). Below are some activities designed for use in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) at local institutions. These activities and their structure are flexible, and you can select from the activities below based on the interest of your PLC members.

You may want to survey PLC members to find out which activity/activities would be most interesting and/or most impactful, or you may want to break up into smaller groups based on interest and reconvene as a large group to discuss.

Remember that the goal of a PLC is not only to discuss ideas but also to try new evidence-based practices, so make sure that you build in concrete steps for action, experimentation, and reflection. More information about TSTM and PLCs is available on the [ABS Professional Development page](#).

Intro to Teaching Skills that Matter (TSTM)

1. Visit the [Teaching Skills that Matter in Adult Education webpage](#) on LINCS. Take a few minutes to explore the page and its subpages listed on the left-hand side.
 - a. What are your initial impressions of TSTM? What are your questions? Record these questions in a parking lot and return to them as you work through the PLC tasks to see if they have been answered or require further investigation.
 - b. The webpage states that “The Teaching the Skills That Matter in Adult Education project (TSTM) trains teachers to integrate the **skills** that matter to adult students using **approaches** that work across critical **topics**.” Note: If you have a large group, you could have small subgroups work concurrently on steps i, ii, and iii and share out with the whole group before beginning step iv.
 - i. Review the 9 skills that matter. Attempt to define/describe each of them, and then compare your definitions/descriptions with [the definitions provided by TSTM](#). Why do you think these 9 skills were selected? Do you integrate any of these skills in your classroom already? How? On a large piece of chart paper, brainstorm how you do or could teach each skill in the classroom.
 - ii. Repeat (i) with the 5 topic areas. [Topic Focus Area Definitions](#).
 - iii. Repeat (i) with the 3 approaches that work. [Approaches That Work Definitions](#).
 - iv. Do you see any ways that the skills, topic areas, and approaches might overlap or naturally work together?
 - v. Ask each member to consider the TSTM framework (skills, topic areas, and approaches) and rate themselves overall on a scale of 1-10 with 1 being “I teach none of these things,” 5 being

“I teach some of these things,” and 10 being “I teach most/all of these things,” and explain their answers. Have members pair up to discuss a skill/topic area/approach they are doing well that another person wants to do better, and exchange tips/tricks. If there is time/interest, ask them to change partners multiple times. Ask the whole group to share what people are already doing well regarding the skills, topic areas, and approaches. As people share out, record all these great ideas and who’s doing them, and share that resource in a place that everyone can access. If people are willing, gather and exchange the relevant materials (lesson plans, activities, etc.) and make them available to everyone, too. You may also want to include your brainstorming from steps i, ii, iii.

- c. To wrap up, have participants share something they learned today that they want to try in the classroom. Ask them to try it out and report back on how it went in the next session.

2. Teaching Skills that Matter: [Civics Education](#)

- a. Ask participants to read the [Civics Education Brief](#) (5 pp) or watch the [Civics Education in Action video](#) (10 min) before coming to the session. Based on these source materials, (i) what do participants think it means to have civics education skills, and (ii) why do participants think civics education was chosen as one of the 5 most important topic areas for adult learners?
- b. Civics education seems like a natural fit for citizenship or social studies classes. Can civics education “fit” in other domains like language arts, math, and science?
- c. Look at the 9 skills. How do participants think these skills can be implemented in civics education? How do participants already do this in their classroom?
- d. Look at the 3 approaches. How might these approaches be utilized with civics education? Do any participants already use any of these approaches for civics education in their classroom?
- e. Choose 1 or more of the provided lesson plans on the Civics Education page linked above for participants to analyze.
 - i. Have participants spend a few minutes skimming the lesson plan. In general, what do participants notice about the lesson plan?
 - ii. Which standards and anchors are addressed? Where/how do you see them reflected in the lesson activities?
 - iii. Which of the 9 skills are addressed? Where? How?
 - iv. What scaffolds are provided based on the students’ language and/or literacy levels?
 - v. If you chose one of the lesson plans that makes use of the approaches that work, how is the approach used to structure students’ learning?
- f. After analyzing the lesson plan(s), how do participants view learning standards (OACCRS/OAELPS) as being related to TSTM?
- g. Look at the [CASAS Competencies](#) document. Which categories do participants think correspond to civics education? Ask your data professional to run a CASAS Competencies report for the students

in your class. Are there civics education-related competencies that students need to work on? Could you incorporate them into your instruction?

- h. To wrap up, have participants share something they learned today that they want to try in the classroom. Ask them to try it out and report back on how it went in the next session.
3. If your group feels that the Civics Education task was useful, replicate it for other TSTM topic areas.

Map the Gaps: TSTM Topic Area

The 5 TSTM topic areas are the areas the adult learners use the most in everyday life and, therefore, find the most motivational.

Session 1: How often and in what ways do these 5 topic areas show up in your current curriculum?

- a. Choose a class or a textbook and make a large chart with each of the 5 topic areas listed.
- b. Look through your curriculum and write down where each of the topic areas comes up and in what way. Subject of a chapter, project, homework, exercise, example? Are the topics dealt with substantially or more as examples in exercises?

Session 2: After doing this mapping exercise, see where the gaps are.

- c. Are any topic areas completely left out? Are any over or under-represented?
- d. Can they be leveraged to provide more motivation to your adult learners?

Session 3: Take a current activity and redesign it using one of the 5 Topic Areas.

- e. Look at the lesson plan examples in [Teaching Skills that Matter in Adult Education webpage](#) to see some different ways the skills have been used.
- f. Try out some lesson adaptations in class and report back.

Map the Gaps: TSTM Teaching Approaches

Repeat Map the Gaps: TSTM Topic Areas activity focusing on Teaching Approaches.

Calling out Skills

The 9 Skills that Matter are closely related to employability skills but include skills important to success in many aspects of life. Recognizing when and how students practice these skills inside and outside of coursework helps students be able to both articulate and access/use these skills.

Possible PLC activities:

- A. Introduce the 9 Skills That Matter by using the lesson plan Introduction to [The Skills That Matter Lesson Plan](#) in the TSTM Overview at LINCS.
- B. Identify where and how students practice these skills in your classes. Are there any missing? How can those currently missing be added or strengthened and in what kinds of inside the classroom or outside the classroom activities?

- C. Work together to develop introduction, “pause in class” and wrap up practices and materials that may be useful across courses to help students to do reflections, self-assessments and then articulate how they use or have used these skills in class or in life, and how they can then expand on their use outside the classroom – in what situations at work, home or in the community, and which skills?
- D. Develop and share materials, practices and/or activities to help students recognize the skills that they are strong and weak in and make a plan to improve them.
- E. If you have a lesson plan template that you use in your program, redesign your template to intentionally incorporate/call out or teach the Skills That Matter. See Oregon Adult Learning Standards template here: [Oregon Adult Learning Standards/TSTM Lesson Planning Toolkit](#)