

Preface

The world of adult education, as practiced in public schools (GED/ABE), vocational training, community colleges, corporations, churches, recreation departments, health care institutions, and a wide range of community-based agencies, depends in good measure, on new teachers, many of them part-time. Administrators and program planners often hire as instructors people who are knowledgeable, have technical expertise, are interested in sharing their knowledge, and are highly competent professionals. In other words, people like you. Chances are you feel reasonably confident when thinking about *what* you are going to teach. However, especially if you have not had specific training in the field of education or a range of experiences as a classroom instructor, you may feel significantly less confident about how you will teach.

This point came home to us several years ago (prior to the publication of the first edition) when a respected adult education director in southern Maine, the region where both of us live and work, expressed something of her frustration about this widespread issue. “At the start of each semester I hire new teachers for my program,” Barbara said. “They are good, competent professionals. But many of them have never taught adults before. They want me to go over their course plan, help them anticipate problems, and coach them about teaching, but I’m awfully busy trying to run my program and can’t always make the time to do this. I wish I could get some help.” This book is explicitly written to address this need.

Admittedly a written survival guide isn’t the same as one-on-one coaching. But in the hands of new teachers of adults and, as we have learned from many who have read the first edition, experienced teachers of adults, this book is a helpful navigational tool. From the beginning it has been our intention that *The New Teacher of Adults* indeed be a tool. It is meant for practical use. While at times you will read brief sections where we share important theories about adult learning and teaching, our purpose is to provide a wider context so the teaching practice aspects of this book will be understood in more depth and in the end make greater sense.

An aspect of this book we feel is especially important are the numerous examples we offer from our own teaching practices and those of colleagues with whom we have consulted. Within these pages you will find samples of syllabi, advance-organizers, mind-maps, journal entry ideas, evaluation forms, and other instruments which we have

found to be useful over the years and which may help you to teach more effectively. While many books have been published on the subject of teaching (written primarily for college-level faculty and often with a strong bent toward theory), we don't know of other current sources in which these types of practical teaching tools are offered to the reader. We hope this is an especially beneficial characteristic of *The New Teacher of Adults*.

Receiving comments from readers of *The New Teacher of Adults* has been important to us and based on that feedback we have incorporated numerous changes in the second edition. For example, in 2004 we had an entire chapter dedicated to the “Equipped for the Future” standards, an initiative sponsored by the National Institute for Literacy that was all the rage in some states when it was first promulgated in 2000. However a number of educators from widely disparate regions of the United States informed us that “Equipped for the Future” is not used by adult education programs in their state. Therefore we have chosen to delete that chapter. (Note: Readers of the second edition can still read about “Equipped for the Future” by looking up the Sondra Stein—2000 reference in our Sources for Further Learning section.). We have added a new chapter about teaching online, the continuous improvement of teaching, and co-teaching models. Additionally we have strengthened and updated some exemplars.

Being bluntly truthful, we confess that we do not believe one person can teach another person to teach. Teaching, like any complicated and challenging activity, must ultimately be learned by practicing it again and again. And then, no matter how many years of experience we have, teaching is never fully “learned” because every semester and every new class of students brings unique situations and challenges. Teachers are constantly faced with learning new practices, experimenting, and sometimes failing. We often overcome these failures and challenges by sharing our experiences with fellow teachers, obtaining feedback, and thus gaining fresh perspective. It would be sheer foolishness—or hubris—for us to suggest that, through these pages or even coaching you in person, we could teach you to become a good teacher. However, we do feel confident that through these pages we can serve as a beacon and a source of support and perhaps even inspiration. We want our book to be a thoughtful and caring companion, a “guide on the side,” as you venture forth into this wonderful journey of teaching adults. And more than anything else, we hope you will deeply and passionately cherish the journey.