

## Cover Letter

### A. Project History/Background

Queens Library was awarded a New York State Department of Labor grant to develop a TASC Transition Curriculum, as aligned to the Common Core State Standards – which provided a holistic, integrated approach for adult educational providers to help meet the needs of high school equivalency students transitioning into higher education or a career. The curriculum, which consists of 15 “workshops” (comprised of a collection of teacher workshops and student lesson plans) provides students an experience that is robust and relevant to the real world, reflecting the knowledge and skills that young people need to pass the new TASC exam and for success in college and careers.

### B. Goals and Objectives

The goals of this project were to:

1. **Develop a collection of TASC Transition Curriculum materials** (i.e., teacher workshops and accompanying student lesson plans), designed to:
  - a. Strongly align to and reflect the instructional shifts of the Common Core ELA and Math (CCSS), Next Generation Science (NGSS), and History/Social Studies standards for college and career readiness.
  - b. Prepare students for the shifts in the TASC exam.
  - c. Include embedded assessments to demonstrate evidence of readiness and mastery of both content and practice.
2. **Build the capacity of ABE/pre-HSE teachers** to:
  - a. Effectively implement instructional strategies which reflect the intended shifts and classroom implications of the CCSS, NGSS, and History/Social Studies standards for college and career readiness.
  - b. Implement the TASC Transition curriculum (i.e., student lesson plans) in their adult education programs/classrooms.

### C. Rationale for the Approach

As with all learning, the effectiveness of the TASC Transition Curriculum developed through this project, when implemented in adult education and pre-High School Equivalency programs and classroom settings, will depend on the efficacy of its implementation. The project is a direct response to a significant need in the field of adult education – and education as a whole – for concrete examples of what Common Core-aligned instruction actually looks like in the classroom. As such, the primary goal was to develop easy-to-use, ready-to-integrate professional development training for teachers and lesson plans for students in these programs. Admittedly, teacher effectiveness will be the key to ensuring that teachers and students engage in these learning experiences, which were designed to promote deeper conceptual understanding, problem-solving, and sustained ownership of learning. For this reason, the project team defined the goals clearly and specifically with intent to achieve both teacher and student outcomes, by developing the TASC Transition Curriculum as an interwoven combination of student lesson plans with workshops and guidance for the teachers who will implement them. Ideally, curriculum implementation will be an iterative process, fostering opportunities for growth in both teacher capacity and student competencies.

To ensure practicality of the materials and their potential to be integrated into the classroom settings serving the intended audience, we felt this project would not be complete without at least a small-scale pilot implementation of selected workshops and student lessons within the limitations of the project timeline.



*The TASC Transition curriculum is a collaborative project of the New York State Education Department and the Queens Borough Public Library, supported by funding from the New York State Department of Labor.*

Feedback from pilot site visits was tremendously helpful and directly informed the final revision and overall quality of the curriculum.

The design of the curriculum was modeled on general principles from research and practice. Each workshop includes specific standards to which the lesson content and learning experiences are aligned and goals & objectives that describe specific knowledge and skills to be attained through each lesson. Components of the lesson are divided into parts, each beginning with a warm-up to activate entry into the topic and/or prior knowledge, diving into the lesson content through engaging activities, and concluding with a wrap-up (and embedded assessment) to summarize and/or provide opportunities for reflection. The project team committed to ensuring that lessons would exemplify the intent of the CCSS and NGSS standards, essentially by modeling a shift from traditional lecture-style and content-oriented instruction toward deeper engagement, discussion, and experience with complex text and investigations in order to build conceptual understanding and skills building.

## D. Overview of Formative Evaluation

We conducted a qualitative (formative) evaluation of this project, designed to assess the quality of the work being developed and to inform the potential for its use. The work involved assessing the extent to which project goals were met, to varying degrees. For Goal 1, we conducted thorough reviews of each draft of the TASC curriculum, providing feedback and discussion, and additional support as needed. Our review of the TASC Transition Curriculum included written and verbal recommendations for the design of teacher workshops intended to meet Goal 2. Additionally, a site visit component was conducted to observe a sampling of curriculum implementation in two pilot settings, which provided additional preliminary evidence for Goal 2.

Two overarching questions guided the formative evaluation:

- What is the quality of the TASC curriculum materials (both student lessons and teacher workshops), in terms of their alignment to national CCR standards and reflection of the intended shifts?
- What is the potential of this work to serve as a valuable resource and meet the educational needs related to implementing CCSS/NGSS/Social Studies standards-aligned instruction in ABE/pre-HSE settings?

### 1. Scope of Evaluation

The formative evaluation included two key components, described below.

#### a. Curriculum Review

We developed “Guidance” documents and reference links to inform the criteria for alignment of educational materials to the national CCSS, NGSS, and History/Social Studies standards. These documents were based on national standards support materials (e.g., the EQUIP rubric) to inform both our review and the work of curriculum developers, but not to provide detailed ratings. The extent of our detailed feedback included, but was not limited to, commentary on the categories provided by Queens Library: (1) goals/objectives and overall alignment to CCSS/TASC, (2) content of teacher workshops and student learning activities, (3) overall pedagogy & instructional methodology, (4) lesson materials (handouts/references), and (5) embedded assessments.

#### b. Pilot Implementation

Queens Library partnered with two higher institutions (one at a Pre-College Academic Program serving pre-HSE adult education students and another at a General Education & Academic Support Program serving students who already achieved their HSE diploma) to pilot three different student lessons from the TASC curriculum on June 8-9, 2015. The intent of these pilot implementations was to observe the draft curriculum being implemented in classroom settings equivalent to or as close as possible to the intended audience (i.e., ABE or pre-HSE students), for the purpose of informing revisions, further development, or implications for their use.

The site visit component of this project evaluation included:

- Pre- and post-conferences with professors and/or program directors.



*The TASC Transition curriculum is a collaborative project of the New York State Education Department and the Queens Borough Public Library, supported by funding from the New York State Department of Labor.*

- Three classroom observations at two pilot sites.
  - Student questionnaire.
  - Data collection and analysis.
- c. Recommendations and Conclusions
- The work of the Queens Library’s TASC Transition Curriculum Project provides a direct response to the glaring need in the field of adult education and pre-high school equivalency for concrete, specific, well-crafted, well-aligned exemplars that answer the prevalent question educators are asking, “What do these standards look like in the classroom?” We are pleased to share our final recommendations for implementation of the TASC curriculum and its broader implications in the adult education field.

## E. Recommendations for Curriculum Implementation

The Queens Library project team of staff and consultants developed the TASC curriculum as a collection of fifteen workshops organized into five modules. Each module contains three “workshops,” but the term “workshop” is defined loosely, depending on the intended audience. The Table of Content describes in detail the various component of the curriculum: (1) Project History/Background, which describes the curriculum’s overall philosophy and intent, (2) Scope & Sequence/Module Descriptions, which itemizes each module’s overall learning goals and topics in sequence (from conceptual understanding of Common Core strategies to skills building towards TASC test readiness), as well the intended audience and structure for each module’s corresponding workshops, and (3) Workshop/Lesson Plan Format, which describes the standard organization of each workshop and what each category was intended to address.

The intent of the entire series of workshops, as a collection, was two-fold: (1) to inform and engage Adult Education teachers in professional consideration and preparation for implementing the instructional shifts emphasized by the CCSS and NGSS standards in their classrooms, and (2) to provide instructors with sample student materials they could easily implement right away.

### 1. Pedagogical Approach

A consistent pedagogical approach weaved through all modules. A few highlights include:

Instructors	Students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comparing traditional instruction with the shifts implied and emphasized by the new standards.</li> <li>• Comparing prior and more recent TASC exam questions and alignment to the new standards.</li> <li>• Reflecting on professional teaching practice, student learning outcomes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engaging deeply with texts, evidence from text, and processing thoughts into clear and purposeful writing.</li> <li>• Persistent problem-solving, reasoning, and communicating ideas with peers.</li> <li>• Recognizing strategies involved in activating their own learning.</li> </ul>

In the “workshops” intended specifically for students, designed as student lesson plans (outlined above), instructional guidance is provided with the goal of modeling the kinds of teaching strategies and classroom experiences implied by the standards as having direct influence on student learning. However, the focus of the TASC curriculum is to balance that guidance with flexibility; thus, we encourage teachers to adapt the student lesson plans as needed to meet the needs of teachers’ own specific classrooms and students. Likewise, for professional developers or facilitators who will lead the workshops intended for the adult education instructors, the materials are designed to provide flexibility in format, participation, and a range of sections (labeled “parts” in the curriculum) that may be used individually or in combination. This flexibility is reflected in the format (as mentioned above and further described in the Table of Content).

### 2. Recommendations



*The TASC Transition curriculum is a collaborative project of the New York State Education Department and the Queens Borough Public Library, supported by funding from the New York State Department of Labor.*

Individual materials are effectively implemented when they are easy to use, adaptable to students' needs, and flexible enough to integrate easily into the context of existing classroom settings and program expectations. With this in mind, we offer the following suggestions, to optimize the ease of use and intended learning goals of the TASC curriculum materials with students and teachers.

- a. **Flexibility and Adaptability.** Consider each lesson plan or teacher workshop separately. These materials are intended to be used in a variety of ways – as a collection, individually, or even as individual parts of individual lessons/workshops.
- b. **Preparation for Student Lessons.** In “workshops” intended for students, designed as student lesson plans, consider them a glimpse of the classroom experience. Student materials are provided and easily photocopied for student use. Teacher guidance is designed to model the CCSS and NGSS instructional shifts and approaches that will bring the standards to life and help teachers reach intended learning objectives with their students. Use Teacher Focus sections to prepare and/or reflect on anticipated student needs; use Student Focus sections to prompt students to construct meaning from their learning beyond simply finding the correct answers.
- c. **Time frames.** The curriculum was purposely developed without suggested time frames for lessons or lesson parts, to accommodate the variety of schedules in program and classroom settings. Our goal was to allow teachers and workshop facilitators to use their judgment in conducting the work over multiple lessons, periods, or days as needed.
- d. **Standards Alignment.** These workshops, particularly the student lesson plans and problem tasks, were developed on the assumption that no single standard can be addressed in one lesson, but rather, conceptual learning and understanding is developed through multiple experiences over time. Standards listed in each workshop provide a sampling of the ways that the content showcased in the examples align to the corresponding standards, and a glimpse of the ways learning of those standards can unfold by carefully crafting teaching and learning approaches similar to those modeled.
- e. **Embedded Assessments.** A range of assessments are embedded throughout the curriculum, to emphasize the need for frequent formative checks for understanding. We encourage using these assessments to inform further instructional modifications based on student results or teacher responses.
- f. **Students' Unique Needs and Learning Modalities.** The TASC curriculum was designed to accommodate the unique strengths and challenges of the adult learning student population. Additionally, where appropriate and to the extent possible, each lesson integrates a variety of instructional supports, tips, and scaffolding to meet the specific needs of English learners (ESOL), struggling learners, visual learners, and others.
- g. **A Process, not an Event.** We recognize that meaningful use of curriculum is a cyclical, ongoing, informative process. We encourage instructors to try the curriculum with a variety of students, multiple times, with adaptations for the range of learning needs. Allow students' experiences to inform not only your assessment of their progress, but also, to inform your own instruction and related modifications to your instructional approaches. We also highly recommend sharing your work and experiences with colleagues as your most valuable resources for professional collaboration, reflection, and continuous improvement.



*The TASC Transition curriculum is a collaborative project of the New York State Education Department and the Queens Borough Public Library, supported by funding from the New York State Department of Labor.*