

Forum: Creating a Better Future

Introduction to the Forum

Alisa Belzer on behalf of the Editors of ALE

These are not normal times for the field. As of July 1, 2025, federal funding for adult education that was due to be released has been held back pending review. Administration of that funding may move from the U.S. Department of Education, a department whose very existence can no longer be taken for granted, to the U.S. Department of Labor. This change would further tighten the focus on education for work and continue to squeeze out the potential to study for the wide array of other reasons that adults may seek lifelong learning and educational opportunities. Immigrant learners rightfully fear deportation by masked ICE officials. Program activities that explicitly value diversity and inclusion are being called discriminatory by the administration. This issue's Forum authors refer to our current times as "an emergency," "terrifying," "chaotic," and "cruel." Harrison says simply, we're in "a moment."

How should teachers, program administrators, researchers, advocates, and others with a deep commitment to adults who want to improve their literacy, language and number skills respond? We asked our three authors to address this question. Their answers suggest the importance of staying true to commitments, core principles, and values related to equity and social justice by finding ways to continue to enact them regardless of what we call them. Their suggested strategies include implementing democratic problem solving, collective action, and developing pragmatic support strategies for learners. The importance of including and responding to diverse voices, experiences, knowledge, and visions for a better future for the field is threaded throughout all three pieces. Not only do we need to "keep on keeping on" to sustain what we do best, we also need to work toward a better future with courage and creativity by doing our work more effectively through community and collaboration.