Adult Learning Principles and Theories

Early Orientation Presentation for Adult Education
Presentation Goals

This presentation will discuss:

- Adult Learning Theory: What is Andragogy?
- Characteristics of Adult Learners
- Promoting Adult Learning
- Preparing for Instruction
  - Strategies to Help Motivate Adult Learners
- Traits of an Effective Teacher
- Apply the principles of research based teaching, evaluation, and assessment
Who Is An Adult?

• An individual who performs roles associated by our culture with adults (worker, spouse, parent, soldier, responsible citizen)
• An individual who perceives himself or herself to be responsible for his/her own life.

Wlodkowski and Knowles
What Is Learning?

- Learning is a *change in behavior*.
- Change in knowledge or skill.
- Acquiring new information and knowledge is part of everyday adult life.
- Adults seek out learning opportunities.
- Learning is an *individual process*.
When Adults Need to Learn

Imagine that you want to learn a new skill or content area.

- Think about what usually triggers that desire to learn.
- Think about how you would go about it.
- Think about what would help you.
- Think about what might get in your way.
What is Adult Learning?
Andragogy: The art and science of helping adults learn.

- Adults learn differently, depending upon experience, aptitude, and attitude.
- These include . . . your individual characteristics, the perceived value of the learning task to you, and how much experience . . . you have had with the topic in the past.

O’Connor, Bronner, and Delaney
Adult Learning Theory

- The andragogy model is based on several assumptions:
  - Adults have the need to know why they are learning something.
  - Adults commit to learning when the goals and objectives are considered realistic and important.
  - Adults have a need to be self-directed.
  - Adults need to be taught how they learn. (They are influenced by the way they were taught which in many cases is the very reason they are in adult classes.)
Adult Learning Theory

- Adults bring more work-related experience into the learning situation.
- Adults enter into a learning experience with a problem-centered approach to learning.
- Adults are motivated to learn by both extrinsic and intrinsic motivators.
- Need concrete experiences to apply learning in real work.
- Need feedback.
Self-Directed Learning

- Helps adults be self-directed
- Encourages transformational learning
- Promotes emancipatory learning and social action

Merriam and Caffarella
Characteristics of Adult Learners

- Control over learning.
- High motivation to learn.
- Pragmatic in learning.
- Learning may be a secondary role.
- Resistant to change.
- Adult learners are more diverse.
- Draw on past experiences in learning.
- Learning is often self-initiated.
- Learning is aimed at an immediate goal.

Houle, 1984
Ball, 1996
Promoting Adult Learning

- Establish a climate conducive to learning.
- Design training to be approximately 1/3 presentation and 2/3 application and feedback.
Dialogue

- Helps learners make meaning.
  The creation of nonjudgmental dialogue evokes the meaning-making dialogue and internal thought.
- Takes time and effort to appropriately design provocative open questions inviting participants to significant, honest reflection.
- Encourages change that leads to unique, self-identified, reflective, meaning-making learning experiences.
Tips for Learning Success

- Provide enough information
- Allow students to work collectively
- Do not put them on the spot
- Emphasize immediate benefits. Learning is not its own reward.
- Use Think/Pair/Share
- Small group activities provide learners an opportunity to share, reflect and generalize their learning experiences.
Implications for Developing Effective Adult Education Programs

- Learning is not its own reward.
- Adult learning is integrative.
- Value adjustment
- Control
- Practice must be meaningful
- Self-pacing
Preparing For Presentations

- Plan a 2:1 ratio of preparation to presentation for new classes.
- Research and plan presentations.
- Rehearse presentations.
- Don’t confuse students by presenting too many facts.
- Check learning frequently.
Learning Pyramid

- Lecture: 5%
- Reading: 10%
- Audio-Visual: 20%
- Demonstration: 30%
- Discussion Group: 50%
- Practice by Doing: 75%
- Teach Others / Immediate Use: 90%
Adults have something real to lose in the classroom ego and self-esteem.
Preparing for Instruction

4-Step Method

Primary Steps:
- Preparation
  - Motivation
- Presentation
- Application
- Evaluation
Preparation - Instructor

- Know the topic and your capabilities.
- Determine the best way to present the information.
  - Demonstration, Illustration, Lecture
- Divide the lesson into manageable parts.
Preparation - Students

- Put the students at ease
- Help them be part of the class
- Explain unclear or complex information in detail
- Motivate
- Outline the day
Motivation

- Demonstrate enthusiasm
- Require good performance
- Promote achievement and success
- Provide relevancy
- Use positive reinforcement
- Correct with sensitivity and empathy
- Encourage, Encourage, Encourage
Motivating Strategies

• Put materials into “bite-size chunks” which people are able to understand.

• Use the whole-part-whole concept, showing the overall picture followed by the details and then a refresher with the overall picture.

• Add a little “spice to their life” by giving them some degree of options and flexibility in their assignments.
Motivating Strategies

• Create a climate of “exploration” rather than one of “prove it.”

• Provide plenty of documentation for the learner, usually in the form of hands-on experience and paper documentation.

• Let the students work in groups, since they would rather ask other students for assistance rather than ask the course instructor.
Motivating Strategies

- Make the material relevant, as close to the actual requirements of that person’s job.
- Explain why certain assignments are made and their relevance to the overall course or training sessions.
Motivating Strategies

- Keep the course requirements in perspective to the amount of time for the course (credit hours, for example).
- Make certain the student is equipped with enough knowledge and skill to complete the assignment, rather than setting the person up for failure.
- Bend the rules, if necessary and appropriate, so that the adult learner can “push the envelope” and try new things.
Application

• To develop student skills:
  • Ensure students have the opportunity to perform.
  • Check for understanding and skill application.
  • Give immediate feedback and evaluation.
  • Safety must be continuously stressed and modeled by the instructor.
Evaluation

- Takes place on two levels:
  - Informal
    - Maintain eye contact with the students.
    - Ask brief questions to “spot-check” learning.
  - Formal
    - Use written assessments.
    - Evaluate performance demonstrations.
Assessment

- A process of gathering data for a purpose
Why Do We Assess Adult Students?

- Information and guidance for individual students
  - Skill level placement
  - What are my learning strengths and gaps?
  - Am I making progress?
  - Instructional planning
  - (Before) What do these students need to learn?
  - (After) Was my teaching effective?
Why Do We Assess Adult Students?

- Required reporting
  - To the state and federal government
  - Are we meeting state and local performance targets?
    - Are students making competency gains?
    - Are students achieving their goals?
When to Assess

- **Pre-Assessment** – is used to determine what an individual knows and can do. After assessment, the teacher provides the student with his/her scores, and information about strengths and weaknesses, as indicated by the assessment.

- **Post-Assessment** – occurs as needed following instruction in the skill area to be assessed. This assessment provides evidence of learning achievement and may include a grade or score.
Nine Conditions to Successful Learning

- Gaining attention
- Informing participants of objectives
- Retrieval
- Presenting new material
- Providing learning guidance
- Eliciting performance
- Providing feedback
- Assessing performance
- Retention and transfer
Traits of an Effective Teacher

- Think of an instructor who motivated you.
- What were their qualities?

- Read the next slides to validate or expand the qualities you considered as you remembered your instructor.
Four Traits of Effective Teachers

- Expertise
- Empathy
- Enthusiasm
- Clarity
Expertise

- Competence
- Substance
- Content
- Experience
Empathy

- Meets student needs and expectations
Enthusiasm

- Show excitement
- Be vocal
- Animation
- Show you care about the subject and the students
- Emotion
- Energy
Clarity

- Power of language
- Power of organization
- Thinking on your feet
- Critical to developing connections with adult learners
Effective Teacher Qualities

- Set the “tone” of the class
- Demonstrate professionalism
- Create a learning environment
- Assess class timing
- Avoid obstacles to effective learning
- Ability to self evaluate
Mistakes An Instructor Must Avoid

- Do not pretend to know all the answers.
- Information must be based on fact.
- Do not promise to find an answer then fail to do so.
- If there is no exact answer, inform the students.
Adult Learning Principles and Theories
Closing Assignment

• Consider how will you apply this learning in your instructional setting?
• Write a description of how you will apply this learning in your instructional setting. Be prepared to share this work during Module 1.1.
Follow-up Assignment: Websites

  • Literacy Information and Communication System

• [http://calpro-online.org/pubs.asp](http://calpro-online.org/pubs.asp)
  • California Adult Literacy Professional Development Project (CALPRO) Resources Guide