



Adult Learning Principles

Introduction

Adult participants in community programs or training courses may have difficulties with some of the literacy requirements of their program. Integrating literacies means recognizing and addressing the needs of people with literacy and learning difficulties. Applying adult learning principles in programs helps to support all participants.

Integrating literacies also recognizes that adults' previous experiences, including experiences of violence, can have serious negative impacts on learning. To learn more about ways to address these impacts, refer to the website: www.learningandviolence.net.

The following principles are general ideas to support adult learning. They reflect mainstream North American adult education practices. Adults of other cultural backgrounds may have different expectations for learning programs.

Principles

Adults learn best when	Facilitators support adult learning when they
They have a clear objective for learning and are well motivated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss learners' interests and personal goals. • Discuss the aims and purpose of the learning program • Provide clear outcomes for learning.
They know that the facilitator understands and supports their goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get to know their learners. • Learn something about their learners' lives and aspirations. • Identify individual learner's learning needs.
They are treated as adults and equals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a friendly, informal atmosphere from the start. • Emphasize learning as a partnership.

Written by Michael Wallace, 2009.

Widening Access for Adult Literacies Project.
www.wideningaccessforliteracies.ca



<p>They can see that the subject matter and the learning methods used address their needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose examples, illustrations and exercises that are relevant to the learner' life situations. • Select learning methods that are appropriate to learner's learning needs. • Provide for possible language, literacy and numeracy difficulties amongst learners.
<p>Their culture, learning styles, experiences and knowledge are acknowledged and included in the learning process</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use learner-centred activities. • Encourage active participation in the learning process while recognizing different participation styles (e.g., listening and watching, as well as speaking). • Create ample opportunity for small group discussion, questions and comments.
<p>They find that new information and concepts are presented in a logical order, step by step</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carefully plan information giving sessions. • Give the big picture (context for learning). • Break information into easily learned chunks. • Summarize key points.
<p>They are encouraged to ask questions and discuss freely</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultivate the skill of using good open and probing questions. • Respond carefully to answers. • Don't flood learners with information they can get elsewhere.
<p>They are actively involved and doing things with a purpose</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide opportunities for direct practice in the application of knowledge and skills. • Use demonstrations, role plays, simulation exercises, games, projects and small group activities.
<p>They get a feeling of direction and achievement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regularly summarize and reflect on the work that has been done. • Remind learners of what lies ahead. • Give incentives, encouragement and praise as they go.