

Adult Learner and the Classroom

Module 6

Helping Adults Learn

You, as an educator and a professional, are an adult learner and so are the adults entering your program. The material may change and the strategies to learn, remember, and apply the information may differ, but we all bring a unique constellation of learning experiences to the table. Articles information from the Teaching Excellence in Adult Literacy (TEAL) Project will help explain the characteristics of adult learners. These are aspects of the adult learner:

1. **The Need to Know:** Adults need to understand the benefits of learning something new.
2. **Orientation to Learning:** Adults are motivated to learn new material when they perceive the subject matter to be of value and relevant to their current lives.
3. **Readiness to Learn:** Adults are ready to learn new material when their life has a need for it not only developmentally but in application.
For example a young couple is ready to learn about parenting when they are expecting a baby.
4. **The Learner's Self-Concept:** As educators we can help learners move from dependency on the instructor to self-directedness (dependency on themselves) for their own learning.
5. **The Role of the Learner's Experience:** As educators, we can emphasize individualization in the learning process and understand that each learner has their own past experiences that have led up to this educational moment.
6. **Motivation:** Most adults are intrinsically motivated to learn new material especially when external forces are at stake (e.g., a job promotion).

Many students experience gaps in their learning. There are many reasons for the gaps.

The student:

- may have moved often,
- was or is ill,
- had maturation issues - was not ready to learn when material was presented,
- had an unstable home life and conflict,
- experienced the death of parent or caregiver,
- became pregnant or was needed at home to care for siblings, or
- had any variety of other undisclosed reasons.

Adult Learning Theory

This module will consider three learning theories. Additional information will found on TEAL Fact Sheet (FS) # 11 on Adult Learning Theories in the back of this section.

- Andragogy – Methods or techniques used to teach adults
- Self-directed Learning – the student becomes responsible for and learns to direct his/her own learning and learning situations.
- Transformational Learning – Students share responsibility for the learning environment that leads to a change in their perception of and participation in their own education.

Each theory provides constructs and/or models for us to consider in determining how our students learn. As our understanding of the principles, assumptions, and theories of adult education are broadened, we deepen the tool kit we use to reach our students.

Universal Design for Learning

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a flexible approach to curriculum design that offers all learners full and equal opportunities to learn through multiple means of content presentation, action and expression, and engagement. Based on research on the diverse ways people learn, UDL offers practical steps for giving everyone the chance to succeed. (See FS #2 at the end of this module)

Teacher's concept	Strategies for Instructors
When presenting new content, offer a choice of learning and organizational structures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual • Pairs • Group work • Hands-on learning • Distance learning • Peer-to-peer learning
Present new content using	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Real-life materials • PowerPoint presentations • Online resources • Manipulatives
Scaffold student learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviews from previous lessons • Summaries • Study guides • Handouts • Calibrate the task into steps and levels
Teach to a variety of learning styles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giving auditory instructions • Giving instructions visually • Build in movement into the lessons
Allow students to validate their knowledge in multiple ways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oral • Visual • Written • Any way that they are comfortable

UDL requires instructors to think through the process(es) and content a student must complete and determine curriculum, design materials, consider the learning space and its organization, and how best to communicate what is needed. There is an article on “Universal Design for Learning Guidelines” behind FS #2 at the back of this section.

Self-Regulated Learning

Self-regulated Learning (SRL) refers to one's ability to understand and control one's learning behaviors. In order for the learner to do this, he or she must set goals, select the strategies to achieve the goals and monitor progress toward the goals. FS #3 and #10 are articles which explain the learning process, assumptions, and cycles of actions in which active participants engage.

Strategies must be taught. The strategies must be *effective* and *efficient*. In the process of becoming self-regulated learners, students move from dependency on the instructor to monitoring and directing their own learning. Strategies to be taught include:

- Organizing Information (Identify)
- Developing Goals (Plan)
- Documenting Progress (Monitor)
- Enhancing Retention of New Learning (Check)

Each student may find that he/she must take additional time, in his/her own way and in their own space/time to digest new concepts. They become aware of how they learn and the steps they need to take to integrate the information. The process for the instructor is "I do, you watch, we do it together, you do it, I (instructor) facilitate, you (the student) does it on their own. See the chart on pg. 6-7. The teacher may help with outlines, flow charts, or checklists. (See the Subject Flow Chart at the end of this module.) For example, when a student first writes an essay, the instructor may need to sit down with them, outline it or use a graphic, walk them through the essay writing steps etc. On the next essay, the instructor would have the student do more of the process on his/her own. Each time, the instructor becomes more of a resource/facilitator and the student becomes more directive in the process.

Goal Setting

From the beginning of orientation, the adult is asked to think about his/her goals. These are the student's personal, educational and/ or career goals. NRS goals will reflect the goals set by the student and the teacher must consider these goals during intake and later during the lesson planning process.

Establishing "SMARTER GOALS" allows the student to be clear of his/her expectations are for himself as well as program expectations. Goals should be action oriented, realistic and measureable. The students should know when the goal has been achieved.

S	M	A	R	T	E	R
Specific	Measurable		Realistic, Reasonable & Relevant	Time - Based	Exciting	Recorded

S - Goals must be **Specific** the more specific the better. State the goal in as exact of terms as possible. It should say exactly what is going to be done!

M - Targets should be **Measurable**. That which you (the student) measures will be treasured, so think about what will be the measurement that defines achievement of the goal.

A - Goals should have **Accountability**. Who or what are you accountable to for the goal? Is it action oriented?

R - Goals must be **Realistic**. Unrealistic goals will lead to discouragement. They must be reasonable and relevant to the student.

T - Targets should be **Time-Based**. Decide upon a timetable for completion and stick to it.

E - Goals should be **Exciting**. Exciting goals will be met far sooner than boring, bland goals.

R - Goals should be **Recorded**, in a place where they are visible to the student every day.

Article Source: <http://EzineArticles.com/92418>

Let's break down this writing goal for 2012, and see how SMARTER Goals work in action.

GOAL: "I will earn my Writing Competency Level 2 Certificate by June 1, 2012."

Is it **Specific**? - Yes, it is very specific. It includes what you will do, what will document completion and a time table for achieving it.

Is it **Measurable**? - Yes, it is measurable. The steps to accomplishing this goal would be writing five essays, editing them, and rewriting a final copy of each.

Does it have **Accountability**? – Yes, it is being shared with others, so I am accountable to whomever I share this with, like my family or study group.

Is it **Realistic**? - This is absolutely a realistic goal for me. The class I am taking is a six week class, so I have to write, edit, and rewrite one essay each week. I can do this, but it will take effort.

Is this **Exciting**? - Definitely an exciting goal for me to achieve. As a new employee, I will be able to improve my writing skills and demonstrate to my employer that I have valuable skills.

Is it **Recorded**? - I wrote it down here, I'll be putting it on a note card with my other goals, it will be in my work folder at class, and I'll review it every day to remind myself of its importance.

There is a **second part to goal setting** and that is the internal choices we make. Goal setting is the road map. It helps focus us on what we have determined to be important and allows us to screen out the static that gets in the way that distracts us from our goal.

Goal setting makes airy thoughts concrete. Our mind deals with thousands of thoughts daily. Some linger longer than others. The ideas we focus on the longest become a priority on which to take action. If we don't consciously choose what we want to do, then we drift along, and every event in our lives is just a reaction to stimuli. We aren't in control of our destiny; destiny is in control of us.

CHANGE CHART

Many years ago a local teacher took a leadership class designed to help individuals take control of their lives and achieve personal and professional goals in a short period of time. This is where I was first introduced to the "Change Chart." This is how it works.

1. We start in the middle with the word "Change." Nothing is stable in our lives. It is either growing and changing or decaying and changing. So the operative word in life is change.
2. Once change is brought into our life, we react. The feeling we have is fear. What kind of fear might we have about change?
3. We can imagine all kinds of things, but eventually we come to a place of choice. We have to decide what we are going to do. Are we going to take a risk or try to stay safe?
4. If we choose to take a risk, the motivating energy is excitement. This leads us into the upper half of the change chart. This is the positive cycle for change. This is what happens.
5. The excitement creates new opportunities. You know how it feels when someone is trying to do something new and how it incites a sense of wanting to help. Many new opportunities begin to spring up. This starts our creative juices churning, and we have inspiration, thoughts, insights, and hunches. So now we have to make some decisions on what to take action on, and that leads us back to change.
6. But many people will hit the wall of fear and then choose to play it safe. This will begin the other cycle of change, which tends to be experienced as negative. We may simply feel stuck.

Then, before we have had time to think, we are experiencing resistance. We may find our actions tend to be avoidance, ignoring, or lack of patience.

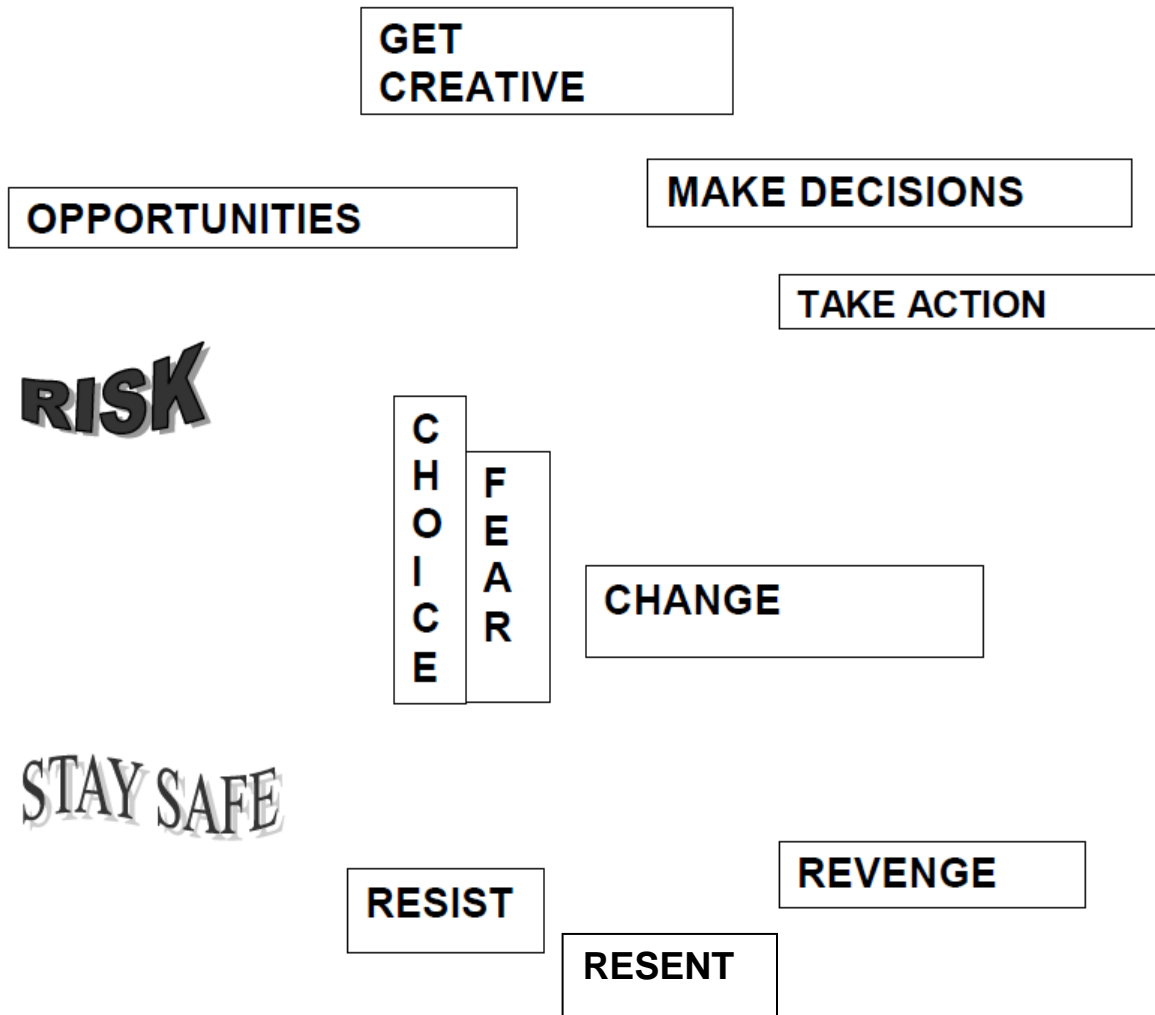
7. But before long, we will resent the intrusion of change. This may be simply irritation and frustration at first – after all, who asked for it, anyway? How dare life be unfair! What did we do to deserve it?
8. Someone or something must be blamed, and that will lead us into revenge. Revenge is striking out to equalize the perceived wrong. How do we see this played out in our lives? It can be passive or active, but it is a type of action/non-action, and with that, we are back to change.

ROAD MAP

We have all experienced this, and so have the students we teach. No matter what age we are, this cycle is still operating in our lives. Many times, our students have been on the lower cycle of change, and we are asking them to come back and take the ride again. This time, we have to help them understand how the cycle works and how to draw the road map that will take them to a new experience.

“He who sets the goals is in charge of getting the goals.”

The Change Chart Process



Draw the arrows in to represent each cycle. Starting with choice the cycle goes either up or down and circles around until you arrive at change.

Once the goals are set, it is time to look at the instructional side.

Steps to Modeling and Guided Practice

Research shows that optimal learning is achieved when teachers use the *Gradual Release of Responsibility Model* of instruction.

Teaching Phase	Teacher Behavior	Learner Behavior
Demonstration I do -- you watch (modeling)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiates • Models • Explains • Thinks aloud • Shows "how to do it" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listens • Observes • May participate on a limited basis
Guided Practice I do -- you help (modeling)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates • Leads • Suggests • Explains • Responds • Acknowledges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listens • Interacts • Questions • Collaborates • Responds • Tries out • Approximates • Participates
TEACHER HANDS OVER RESPONSIBILITY		
Teaching Phase	Learner Behavior	Teacher Behavior
Independent Practice You do -- I help (guided practice)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applies learning • Takes charge • Practices • Problem solves • Approximates • Self-corrects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scaffolds • Validates • Teaches as needed • Evaluates • Observes • Encourages • Clarifies • Confirms • Coaches
Application You do it alone Student is independent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiates • Self-monitors • Self-directs • Applies learning • Problem solves • Confirms • Self-evaluates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affirms • Assists as needed • Responds • Acknowledges • Evaluates • Sets goals

*Source: Routman, R. (2003). *Reading essentials*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

This model will help every student you work with. Some students will need to be shown only once and will then be able to jump to the application stage because they are recalling or brushing-up on information they were taught in the past. Other students will be learning information for the first time and will need to take each step in the model. The lower the educational functioning level of the student plus the longer the time since they were in school, the more focused the direct instruction must be for the student to make progress. **What is your opinion?**

Self-Monitoring Guide

“Self-monitoring is an important metacognitive tool for boosting reading comprehension by cultivating a reader's natural inner dialogue.”

By C.A. Spafford | G.S. Grosser

[Pearson Allyn Bacon Prentice Hall](#)

Adults bring experience to the classroom. It is important for them to use their prior knowledge and skills to plan, organize and integrate new information. This is metacognitive processing. To learn more about the elements of metacognition read the FS #4 in the back of this module.

Questions for the student to ask to self-monitor:

1. “What do the instructions tell me to do?”
 - Do I understand the instruction?
 - Does it make sense to me? Yes or No

2. “What information do I need to know in order to do this assignment?”
 - Do I know this information?
 - Is there new information here?
 - Should I slow down or reread? Yes or No

3. “How do I know if I am doing this correctly?”
 - Am I looking back at examples?
 - Am I asking questions? Yes or No

4. “Did I double check my work?”
 - How am I doing?
 - Am I learning this? Yes or No

Planning a Classroom

There are multiple classroom structures for different physical settings. If the program is housed on a main campus or provider site, there may be managed classes, open labs, or tutoring by peers or volunteers. If you are at a satellite site, you may have small group instruction or “a one room schoolhouse” with all levels, ages and subjects being taught and studied. The local program director will introduce you to the program.

Usually we start from what we know. If you are a certified teacher and have taught, you will approach your students from your training and experience. If your background is from another field or content area, you might look back at your own educational experiences to the model of a successful teacher you had when attending school and try to imitate that style of teaching. This is a good starting place but teaching Adult Basic Education requires you to teach adults from 16 to 60 and older. Additionally, people tend to teach the way they (themselves) learn best. This is not always the way the students you will be responsible for learn best. There are many things to plan and many things to consider.

- **Instructional Methods**

Communities of Practice - Collective Learning & Individual Learning (see Module 1 - pg. 4)

Student Centered Instruction (FS #6)
Differentiated Instruction (FS #5)

- **Use of Technology**

Audio-Visual, Smart boards, hand-held devices
Computerized assessments (TABE, BEST Plus, OPT, GED)
Computer-based Instruction software (Plato, Aztec, Skills Tutor, Keytrain/WIN, etc.)
Internet - email, distance learning, research

- **Effective Lesson Planning (FS #8)**

There are many ways to create lesson plans. Many sites will also incorporate Bloom's Taxonomy of higher order thinking skills into lessons. Your program may have a bank of lesson plans or you may want to start one to share with others.

- **Subject Matter Techniques**

Writing - (FS#7) and on the web resources at <https://teal.ed.gov/>

Reading - the components are alphabets, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary. You will find resources at <http://www.startoolkit.org/resources/links.aspx>

Math - Adult Numeracy Network resources are located at <http://www.adulnumeracynetwork.org/publications.html>



- **Bloom's Taxonomy and Questioning:** Bloom's Taxonomy is a classification system developed in 1956 by education psychologist Benjamin Bloom to categorize intellectual skills and behavior important to learning. Bloom identified six cognitive levels: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation, **with sophistication growing from basic knowledge-recall skills to the highest level, evaluation.** Within each level of the taxonomy, there are various tasks that move students through the thought process toward higher order thinking skills

Higher order thinking skills are discussed in many areas of ABE and when transitioning students to college and work. Bloom's Taxonomy is covered in the article "**Utilizing Bloom's Taxonomy.**" This hierarchy of thinking skill provides ways to assess, question, and incorporate these skills into your classroom.

USING BLOOM'S TAXONOMY IN INSTRUCTION

A "Task Oriented Questions Construction Wheel" based on Bloom's Taxonomy is an additional tool you may consider using with your students. The inner wheel has the cognitive levels. The next two circles describe tasks or skills ascribed to the level. The outer most section divides the wheel into levels of processes of manipulating or applying the levels to the four areas of Information Gathering, Making Use of the Knowledge, Taking Apart, and Judging the Outcomes. Below is a thumbnail of the diagram but an enlarged chart is in this section as one of the handouts.

