Adult Learners

- Eighty-eight percent of the adults who reported participating in higher education programs said they did so to learn new skills or knowledge.
- Twenty-six percent of adults in higher education degree or certificate programs said they received financial support from their employers for tuition, books, or materials.
- Adult students are likely to attend part-time and work full-time while enrolled.
- Adult students often have dependents other than a spouse.
- Adult students are more likely to use libraries, advising services, and to seek out faculty (and less likely to use health services, student clubs and organizations).
- Adult students have lower postsecondary persistence and completion rates than traditional students.


OVERVIEW

The Higher Education Policy Commission (Commission) and the Community and Technical College System (CTCS) created this handout as a supplement to presentations on adult learners by Commission and CTCS staff members given throughout the state at public four-year and community and technical colleges.

The purpose of this document is threefold (1) to provide an overview of West Virginia adult learners and adult learner initiatives in the state and at individual institutions, (2) to briefly outline the literature on adult learner learning styles and techniques, and (3) to offer a synopsis of best practices for serving adult learners.

WEST VIRGINIA ADULT LEARNERS & INITIATIVES

In this section we examine adult student enrollment trends in the state and discuss a statewide initiative aimed at getting more adults back into school for a credential. Additionally, we highlight some institutional practices geared toward adult students on West Virginia campuses.

DegreeNow

The Higher Education Policy Commission (Commission) and the Community and Technical College System (CTCS), with support from the Lumina Foundation, is pleased to announce DegreeNow, an adult learner initiative aimed at getting adult students (over 25) who have started college but not finished, back into school for a credential.

According to Commission data there are 126,997 potential degree completers who meet these criteria. Of these, most have earned less than 30 credits (45%), followed by 30-59 credits (25%), 60-89 credits (22%), and 90-119 credits (12%). A small proportion has completed more than 120 credits but has not earned a baccalaureate degree. While our primary and secondary target populations include the second (30-59 credits completed) and third groups (60-89 credits completed), helping all adult students complete their postsecondary credentials is essential.

West Virginia cannot meet its workforce and civic needs for a more educated populace or aspire to achieve the nationwide goal of a 60 percent attainment level by 2025 without targeting adult students. The number of adult students enrolled in West Virginia public higher education institutions has been on the rise. Since 2006 there has been a 22.4 percent increase, and from 2009 to 2010 adult numbers increased by 6.6 percent. (See Figure A for WV total adult enrollment figures.) In comparison, SREB states and the United States as a whole have seen declines in the percent of adult students from 1997 to 2007. Figure B compares West Virginia to SREB States and the U.S. (Please see Appendix A for adult enrollment by institutions.)
Most institutions across the state are increasing the number of adult students and graduates on their campuses. Many are contacting eligible inactive students who already have a certain number of credits but have not completed a degree and starting marketing campaigns aimed at adult students. Additionally, institutions are increasing on-line courses, off-campus courses, and classes offered on evenings and weekends.

ADULT LEARNING STYLES

The literature reveals adult learning styles and the variables affecting their learning may differ from those of traditional age students. In order to better serve adult learners it is vital to understand these differences. In the following section we examine adult learning styles.

Andragogy

Andragogy is the art and science of helping adults learn. Malcolm Knowles is the father of andragogy and he proposed five factors involved in adult learning.

The five assumptions underlying andragogy describe the adult learner as someone who:

- Has an independent self-concept and who can direct his or her own learning
- Has accumulated a reservoir of life experiences that is a rich resource for learning
- Has learning needs closely related to changing social roles
- Is problem-centered and interested in immediate application of knowledge
- Is motivated to learn by internal rather than external factors (Merriam, 2001, p.5)

Knowles used these principles to propose a program for the design, implementation and evaluation of adult learning. Since the development of his theory, Knowles has acknowledged that the principles he outlined did not apply solely to adult education. The development of the theory simply illustrates that the designer “should involve learners in as many aspects of their education as possible and in the creation of a climate in which they can most fruitfully learn” (Merriam, 2001, p.7). Knowles’ main focus with the development of andragogy was the notion of the material being learner centered and the learner being self-directed.
**Variables Affecting Adult Learning**

Learning opportunities for adults exist in a variety of settings ranging from a formal institution to a place of employment. It is important to acknowledge prior knowledge and experiences of learners, including their ability to recognize their own skills as lifelong learners (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). Considerations for adult development and learning include biological and psychological development and sociocultural and integrative perspectives on development (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). While the most common reason for adults to place themselves in a learning environment is a life-changing event, once in that environment there are many factors that affect the learning experience:

- Life experience (including life altering events that affect cognitive abilities)
- Work experience (including development of thinking patterns based on this experience)
- Positive/negative previous adult learning experiences
- Performance influences, including cognitive abilities
- Time between learning interactions

We have provided a brief overview of West Virginia adult learners and initiatives. Now let us turn to the literature on adult learners to better understand their learning styles.

**LEARNING TECHNIQUES RELATED TO ADULT LEARNING**

Given adult learner styles, four broad learning techniques are suggested:

- Action Learning
- Experiential Learning
- Project Based Learning
- Self-Directed Learning

The components of these learning techniques and their advantages and disadvantages are described in more detail below.

**Components of Action Learning:**

- The first step is creating action groups based on programmed learning, "the expert knowledge" and learning or real world experiences. These are small groups, generally consisting of 3 or 4 people.
- Emphasis is placed on diversifying these small groups so that each group is best equipped to contribute to the learning community.
- A learning coach is designated for each group. Together, the learning coaches also form a group.
- From there, a project group leader is chosen. Both the project group leader and the learning coaches act as organizers, facilitators and overall motivators for the action groups (O’Neil & Lamm, 2000).
- Action learning involves learning from experience through reflection and action with the support group.
- It is important that the groups remain constant and have duration, meaning the opportunity to establish themselves over a solid time period (Wade & Hammick, 1999).

**Advantages/Strengths:**

- Process used in forming groups.
- Balanced and diverse groups enhance the learning process and allow significant contributions to the learning community.
- Utilization of group dynamics.

**Disadvantages/Weaknesses:**

- Struggle constantly with the balance between accomplishing the task and learning from it.
- Difficult to ensure consistency across groups and across sessions of any program.
- Challenge of group dynamics.

*Action learning is defined as an approach to working with, and developing people, which uses work on a real project or problem as the way to learn. Participants work in small groups or teams to take action to solve their project or problem, and learn how to learn from that action. A learning coach works with the group in order to help them learn how to balance their work, with the learning from that work (O’Neil & Lamm, 2000, p.44).*
Project Based Learning

In Project Based Learning, students work in groups to solve challenging problems that are authentic and often interdisciplinary. Learners decide how to approach a problem and what activities to pursue.

- Learners gather information from a variety of sources and synthesize, analyze, and derive knowledge from it.
- The learning is inherently valuable because it is connected to something real and involves adult skills such as collaboration and reflection.
- At the end, the learners demonstrate their newly-acquired knowledge and are judged by how much they have learned and how well they communicate it.
- Throughout this process, the teacher’s role is to guide and advise, rather than to direct and manage student work.

**Advantages/Strengths:**
- Builds on experience which is especially appropriate for adult
- Is a holistic learning approach.
- Is most effective when the learning has intrinsic motivation which is a common characteristic in adult learning.

**Disadvantages/Weaknesses:**
- Might not always be the best method when dealing with many different cultures and backgrounds because problem solving methods vary from culture to culture.

Self-Directed Learning

"Informal and incidental learning is at the heart of adult education because of its learner-centered focus and the lessons that can be learned from life experience (Marsick & Watkins, 2001, p.25)."

Self-directed learning in an example of informal learning. It is defined as the process in which individuals take on the responsibility for their own learning process by diagnosing their personal learning needs, setting goals, identifying resources, implementing strategies and evaluating the outcomes. In 1999, more than 95% of adults participated in self-directed learning. Typical learners spend an average of 15 hours per week on a self-directed learning project (Rager, 2003).

There are three aspects of self-directed learning: the goals, the process, and the learner. In an adult learning context, the goals are generally self-determined, as is the process. Self-directed learning can be enhanced with facilitation, particularly through providing resources. Motivation is key to a successful self-directed learning experience.

Adult Learners are motivated by the opportunity to:
- Gain new skills, knowledge, and attitudes
- Improve family life and health, enjoy the arts
- Participate in a hobby, or simply increase their intellectual capital

Experiential Learning

Experiential learning is a learning technique that is learner-centered and operates on the premise that individuals learn best by experience. It is “learning by doing”. Experiential learning thus has the learner directly involved with the material being studied instead of just thinking and talking about that material. Experiential learning is:

- Is a cyclic process involving setting goals, thinking, planning, experimenting, and making decisions, and finally action, followed by observing, reflecting and reviewing.
- Uses participants’ own experience and their own reflection about that experience, rather than lecture as the primary approach to learning. Experiential learning theory allows for the generation of understanding and allows for the transfer of skills and knowledge.
- Involves doing something and discovering what it is like, how it made the learner feel, what it meant to the learner, i.e. experiential learning is their experience and no one else’s.
- Is, therefore, particularly effective in adult education as it addresses the cognitive, emotional and the physical aspect of the learner.

**Advantages/Strengths:**
- Does not take into account differences in cultural experiences or conditions
- Is less clear where elements of learning such as goals, purpose, and intentions fit into experiential learning theory
- May not help us understand and explain change and new experiences

**Disadvantages/Weaknesses:**
- Builds on experience which is especially appropriate for adult
- Is a holistic learning approach.
- Is most effective when the learning has intrinsic motivation which is a common characteristic in adult learning.
BEsT PrACTiCes
Having examined adult learning styles and techniques, we can now turn to best practices. In this section the principles of effectiveness for serving adult learners outlined by the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) are discussed. Additionally, prior learning assessment, a best practice found throughout the adult learner literature, is highlighted and discussed under CAEL’s assessment and learning outcomes section here.

Principles of Effectiveness for Serving Adult Learners
The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL), a national non-profit which creates and manages effective learning strategies for working adults, summarizes effective strategies for serving adult learners into eight broad categories:

- Outreach
- Life & Career Planning
- Financing
- Assessment of Learning Outcomes
- Teaching-Learning Process
- Student Support Services
- Technology
- Strategic Partnerships

The following pages provide definitions of these eight principles, exemplary practices, and specific examples.

What is Prior Learning Assessment (PLA)?
PLA is the opportunity to earn credit for college-level learning through work, military, training, volunteering, or personal experiences.

PLA methods include the following:

- Individualized student portfolios or Portfolio Assessments.
- Evaluation of corporate and military training by the American Council on Education (ACE).
- Program evaluations done by individual colleges of non-collegiate instructional programs that award credit for those who achieve recognized proficiencies, or the Evaluation of Local Training.
- Customized exams offered by some colleges to verify learning achievement; these may be current course final exams or may be other tests developed at the department level for assessing general disciplinary knowledge and skill, or Challenge Exams.
- Standardized exams such as:
  - Advanced Placement Examination Program, or AP Exams
  - College Level Examination Program, or CLEP Exams
  - Excelsior College Exams (formerly, Regents College Exams or ACT/PEP Exams)
  - The DANTES Subject Standardized Tests, or DSST Exams, conducted by the Chauncey Group International.

**Prior Learning Assessment (PLA)**

A March 2010 study by CAEL found that PLA students had much higher degree-earning rates than non-PLA students. In fact, 43 percent of PLA students earned a bachelor’s degree, compared to only 15 percent of non-PLA students. At the associate’s level, 13 percent of PLA students earned a degree, compared to 6 percent of non-PLA students.

Not only did PLA students have higher graduation rates they also earned their degrees more quickly than non-PLA degree earners. PLA students earning bachelor’s degrees saved on average of 2.5 to 10.1 months, while PLA associate’s degree earners saved an average between 1.5 and 4.5 months of time, compared to non-PLA degree earners.

Additionally, PLA students who did not earn degrees were not only more likely to persist than non-PLA students but also more likely to re-enroll and earn credits in subsequent years.

**Principles of Effectiveness for Serving Adult Learners**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principles</th>
<th>Definitions</th>
<th>Exemplary Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outreach</strong></td>
<td>The institution conducts its outreach to adult learners by overcoming barriers of time, place, and tradition in order to create lifelong access to educational opportunities.</td>
<td>• Uses a variety of special methods and venues to recruit adult learners, e.g., on-campus and off-campus information sessions, ad campaigns, on-line information, etc. • Addresses the personal needs and concerns of adults who are unaccustomed to viewing themselves in the role of a student. • Helps adults to identify and overcome barriers that keep them from returning to learning. • Assists adult learners in making an informed decision about how well the college matches their interests and goals. • Employs faculty who do not limit themselves to the traditional role of lecturer in the classroom, and may perform in blended roles which include administrative duties, advising, teaching, and facilitating.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Life &amp; Career Planning</strong></td>
<td>The institution addresses adult learners’ life and career goals before or at the onset of enrollment in order to assess and align its capacities to help learners reach their goals.</td>
<td>• Engages the adult learner in a thorough process of education and career planning to determine their level of educational development upon entry, their educational and career goals, and a plan for reaching these goals as efficiently as possible. • Uses education and career planning as a method of establishing long-term relationships with adult learners and encouraging them to take greater responsibility for their own learning. • Engages adults as active partners in the planning, delivery, and evaluation of their learning. • Helps adult learners use assessment as the foundation for making educational decisions. • Promotes opportunities to gain credit through Prior Learning Assessment. • Creates pathways for adult learners to gain credit for learning from a variety of sources so that college-level learning acquired prior to enrollment can be accepted towards institutional credentials and degrees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Financing</strong></td>
<td>The institution promotes choice using an array of payment options for adult learners in order to expand equity and financial flexibility.</td>
<td>• Informs adult learners about convenient payment options available to them. • Assists adult learners through deferred payment options when tuition reimbursement programs do not make funds available until course completion. • Makes financial aid and scholarships available to part-time students. • Assesses charges to learners incrementally during the course of a program and establishes equitable refund policies. • Helps learners develop strategies for locating external funding to assist with education costs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Additionally, PLA students who did not earn degrees were not only more likely to persist than non-PLA students but also more likely to re-enroll and earn credits in subsequent years.
### Assessment of Learning Outcomes

The institution defines and assesses the knowledge, skills and competencies acquired by adult learners both from the curriculum and from life/work experience in order to assign credit and confer degrees with rigor.

- Designs educational experiences with learning outcomes in mind.
- Finds ways to integrate the perspectives of a range of stakeholders, such as businesses and the community, in defining learning outcomes.
- Embraces a variety of assessment techniques for measuring learning outcomes and assigning credit for prior learning.
- Documents what learners know and what they can do as a result of their educational experience.
- Uses learning outcomes to establish a foundation for those who wish to pursue subsequent degrees.
- Promotes the opportunity to gain credit through organizations’ instructional programs to adult learners.
- Initiates a dialogue with community-based organizations to learn what knowledge, skills, and abilities are needed by organizations and the community, and then develops learning outcomes based on these needs.
- Regularly re-evaluates external instructional programs to ensure their relevance and rigor in relations to the institution’s offerings.
- Creates pathways for adult learners to gain credit for learning from a variety of sources so that college-level learning acquired prior to enrollment can be accepted towards institutional credentials and degrees.
- Promotes opportunities to gain credit through Prior Learning Assessment (PLA).

### Teaching-Learning Process

The institution’s faculty uses multiple methods of instruction (including experiential and problem-based methods) for adult learners in order to connect curricular concepts to useful knowledge and skills.

- Employs a teaching-learning process that includes a high degree of interaction among learners and between learners and faculty.
- Considers adult learners to be co-creators of knowledge (learning experiences and projects are often designed in cooperation with learners and directly relate to the adult learner’s work and professional world).
- Offers multiple methods of instructional delivery to enhance convenient access to education and to provide choices about preferred learning modes.
- Uses assessment as an integral part of the learning process and in ways that enhance competency and self-confidence.
- Encourages faculty to build upon the knowledge, interests and life-situations that adults bring to their education to develop learning experiences.
- Supports faculty members’ work with adult learners, staff, adjunct faculty, and local community resources in developing collaborative learning experiences.

### Student Support Systems

The institution assists adult learners using comprehensive academic and student support systems in order to enhance students’ capacities to become self-directed, lifelong learners.

- Support systems are activated by an adult learner’s initial inquiry.
- Academic support systems provide or work collaboratively with other organizations to provide assistance to adults who wish to become college-ready.
- Flexible time frames for enrollment, registration and program participation are part of the academic and administrative structure.
Technology

The institution uses information technology to provide relevant and timely information and to enhance the learning experience.

- Uses technology to build community among adult learners living in remote geographical areas.
- Uses information technology to provide flexible and timely education and administrative services (e.g., web registration systems, call centers).
- Uses technology to empower adult learners to better manage their learning process and to expand the choices available for learning modes (e.g., partial and full Internet-based courses, technology-rich on-campus instruction).
- Employs technology in the learning experience in ways that mirror the technology-rich environment in which many adults work.

Strategic Partnerships

The institution engages in strategic relationships, partnerships, and collaborations with employers and other organizations in order to develop and improve educational opportunities for adult learners.

- Seeks relationships with organizations as a way to reach adult learners through organizationally-mediated programs.
- Helps establish learning goals that include the organization’s future job opportunities and skill needs.
- Works with employers and/or unions to develop mentoring and advising programs.
- Helps organizations develop ways to encourage employees/members to pursue their education (train supervisors to communicate to employees the importance and relevance of learning; develop internal promotional programs to alert employees/members of learning opportunities).
- Provides support for adult learners at times and places that are congruent with work schedules such as establishing education extension centers at or near work locations.
- Encourages employers to make telephones, computers, Internet access and video conferencing available for employees to engage in education related activities during hours when technology is not used for business-related activities.
- Develops options for using learning technology at work sites and on desktop computers.
- Works with organizations to establish ways to measure the impact of education programs on organizations’ goals.
Bibliography


Additional Resources and Literature

Best Practices

• The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL)—a national non-profit which creates and manages effective learning strategies for working adults. www.cael.org. Many resources are included on this website.
  - http://www.cael.org/alfi/isas.htm provides institutional self-assessment surveys to examine how your resources, structures and practices impact the success of your adult learners.
  - http://www.cael.org/alfi/coalition.html discusses how to become a part of the Coalition of Adult Learning Focused Institutions.
  - http://www.cael.org/pdf/State_Indicators_Annoted_Bibliography.pdf includes an annotated bibliography of the report, Adult Learning in Focus: National and State Data Report for those interested in further adult learner and related workforce and postsecondary education literature and data.

  - This research brief outlines a study that looked at how younger and older students respond differently to taking remedial courses.
  - Older students who enrolled in remediation (and specifically math remediation), were less negatively affected than were younger students, although enrollment in remediation decreased the odds of graduating for both older and younger students.


  - This report by CAEL includes state and nationwide data on adult learning.


  - Recognize how different adult undergraduate students are from adult graduate students
    • Adult undergrad students motivated more by the opportunity for career change, increasing their income, and personal enrichment than adult grad students.
    • Adult services undergrad adult students were interested in included (over 60% indicated ”much more interested” in these services): college credits for work/life experience, online learning programs, financial aid specific to adults, and accelerated programs.
  - Push the personal enrichment button
    • The number one motivation for furthering students’ education is personal enrichment (indicated potential adult undergrads and grad students).
    • Marketing messages should address the issue of bettering oneself and wanting to expand knowledge (messaging must be emotional not just logical).
  - Evaluate your institution’s flexibility
    • Flexibility of class scheduling was rated as the most important attribute of a program.
    • Adult students’ concerns include juggling time among work, family, and school.
    • The need for daytime adult student programs is not high
  - Revisit your policy on credit for life experience
    • ”Life experience credit” is a significant factor in the college-selection process.
    • Do you have a ”life experience credit” policy in place? If so, are students utilizing it? If not, why not?
    • A policy with a clear set of procedures that allows students to work collaboratively with their advisor or a faculty member to construct a document that appropriately outlines the experience they bring to the academic table (then evaluate by a committee).
Critically analyze adult student financial aid
- Concerns and misunderstandings about financial aid are two of the biggest hurdles that adult students face.
- Cost is a big deciding factor for adult students.
- Develop financial resources that promote their understanding of the issues facing adult students.

Recognize the power of your website
- Are the following easy to find/access: course schedules for adult programs, cost of attendance, and faculty who will be teaching in the adult student program?


The brief provides literature-based characteristics of adult learners: they learn what they consider important; are often time conscious learners; know what goals are important to them and tend to do best in educational experiences that provide what they value, and prefer autonomy. Recommendations for creating a climate for adult learning include: establish adult-to-adult rapport; create a participatory environment; facilitate adult independence; and provide for individual differences. Offers collaborative approaches to evaluating adult learning: group decision making in identifying and selecting evaluation strategies; learning contracts that help clarify their objectives, document their learning and evaluation plans, and commit themselves to the contracted work; and grading contracts that provide learners with options in the relative weight of evaluation activities and in the amount of work they will perform.


This brief provides research literature on the forming and structuring of cohort and learning in cohorts. I concludes with recommendations for practice: Spend time at the beginning of the cohort developing group relationships; balance group and individual development; provide an environment that both supports and challenges; and acknowledge and address tensions that may arise between learners and instructors.

- This report synthesizes the research literature on the challenges facing adult learner and best practices for serving adult students.

- Recommendations for Practice:
  • Adult learners require easier transfer of credit from institution to institution.
  • Adult learners require more flexible course, certificate, and degree programs (including online learning, accelerated course formats).
  • Adult learners studying less than half-time require more flexible financial aid policies.

Reviews of Literature and Recent Developments in Adult Learning Areas

Discusses Dirkx’s four lenses of transformational learning: emancipatory education, perspective transformation, developmental transformation, and the spiritual-integrative approach. Focuses in on Mezirow’s perspective transformation, Taylor’s expansions to it (the importance of relationships, feelings, and context), and new areas of inquiry: group transformations, fostering transformational learning, and ethical considerations of facilitating transformational learning.

Argues that personally significant and meaningful learning is fundamentally grounded in and derived from the adult’s emotional, imaginative connection with the self and the broader social world. Argues that beyond reflective and rational examination of emotions, it is necessary to engage in imaginative and extrarational meaning making. Emotionally charged images evoked by adult learning provide an opportunity for more profound understanding of self and world.


Defines learning in context as paying attention to the interaction and intersection among people, tools, and context within a learning situation. For adult educators, it is incorporating the learners’ developmental needs, ideas, and cultural context into the learning experience. Discusses situated cognition, which emphasizes that learning is inherently social in nature, and that it has led to learning practices such as cognitive apprenticeships and communities of practice. Author argues that the ideas of learning in context have not been fully explored or developed in adult education and advocates that adult educators understand that learning can take place in many settings and design programs that incorporate tools context, and social interactions and that allow learners to share in the design, process, and evaluation of learning activities.


Reviews a broad array of recent scientific findings regarding the brain and learning and briefly discusses how these affect adult education. Reinforces what is contained in many of the other chapters in this special volume of New Directions, specifically, the importance of linking new knowledge to prior learning, accommodating learner differences, the importance of emotional states and meaning making.


Builds on Merriam and Caffarella’s three-part typology of adult learning by offering a four-lens model (learner, process, educator, and context) designed to be taken together to construct a holistic version of learning in adulthood. The authors provide a brief literature review in each lens along with key concepts and dimensions. The learner lens includes: participation and motivation patterns, characteristics of adult learners, learning styles, role of experience, mind-body connections, andragogy, self-direction, and rich learning environments that involve complex and novel situations. The process lens includes: learning processes, interactive, reflections, dialogue, transformational learning, and experiential learning. The educator lens includes: teacher beliefs and assumptions, philosophical orientations, teaching style, and behavioral, liberal, progressive, humanistic, and radical approaches to adult learning. The context lens includes learning communities, interactive and structural, power, situated cognition, feminist pedagogy, critical pedagogy, and multiculturalism.


Delineates the differences between critical and postmodern perspectives with respect to learning, power, and knowledge and argues that what they have in common is a viewpoint that knowledge is related to the process and politics of learning, rather than being a neutral end, and that learning can and must be examined for and by many different individuals and groups.


Traces the emergence of andragogy and self-directed learning in the late 1960s and 1970s and reviews the thrust of the literature on these two topics during the 1990s. Both are deemed to have focused extensively on the individual learner to the exclusion of sociohistorical context but nevertheless remain important areas of inquiry.

Argues that all of the approaches in the special issue of New Directions converge on: a holistic view of the learner; importance of context; the learning process is not just acquisition and storage of knowledge but is sense making, transforming what and how we learn, absorbing, imagining, intuiting, and learning informally with others.


Key orientations of a narrative approach to development are: (a) Narrative knowing is based on a constructivist, interpretive epistemology. (b) Narrative is a central structure in human meaning making; thus, the life course and individual identity are experienced as story. (c) Temporality and narrative are integrally related; time is constitutive of meaning. (d) Narrative is historical; thus, development can be understood retrospectively, as an interpretation of the life story. And (e) individual and cultural narratives are interrelated. Main points: Critical aspect of the educator’s role in acknowledging and respecting the individuality of learners’ stories. Autobiographical learning activities are integral to adult learning. Narrative orientation leads to understanding that educators are implicated in a mutual, relational teaching/learning process. Development as story demand of educator narrative receptivity toward the life stories and the lives of learners as opposed to analysis and assessment.

Research on Adult Learning


Utilized focus groups with non-traditional students to investigate their learning experiences. Challenges found were older students feeling uncomfortable, older and younger students having different orientations toward the professor, older students being viewed as authorities, different learning styles, and hostility between age groups. Strategies proposed to address these problems were: encouraging personal contact between students to emphasize similarities, discussing differences, and treating groups similarly.


Interviews with five individuals in their 60s indicated that a person’s mission provides meaning to learning activities and affects motivation and choices. Argues that educators seeking to be learner directed can do so by helping students illuminate their life mission.


Relying on the assumption that both interdisciplinary and adult education have focused on practical, integrative, and collaborative learning, the article utilizes a case study of a general education course to explore how adult learning is enhanced by an interdisciplinary curriculum.


Found in use of culturally relevant curriculum in first-year English course that it validated student language, fostered positive self and group identity, and helped with self-affirmation and affirmation of goals.
## Appendix A

### Enrollment Age 25 or Older by Institution

#### Age 25 or Older Undergraduate

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#### Adult Learner

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<td>22.4%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Our Adult Learning programs provide adult learners with opportunities to increase basic skills in reading, writing, and math, prepare for HSE testing, taking the TASC test or enroll in NEDP, learn English, increase civic engagement and develop the skills to transition to further education and jobs. Our Adult Learning programs provide adult learners with opportunities to increase basic skills in reading, writing, and math, prepare for HSE testing.