Strategies for Connecting with Adult Learners in Ways that Work

Outcomes

- Describe "Andragogy" and the adult learner
- Incorporate strategies for dealing with typical adult learner problems
- Share strategies for connecting with adult learners

AGENDA (ish)

- 1. Quick review of adult education principles and the notion of "andragogy"
- 2. Identification of key areas of interest
 - Emerging technology in the teaching and learning process
 - Creating and managing a safe environment
 - Helping build confidence for learning
 - Motivation
 - Sharing new approaches and strategies for Essential Skills facilitation
- 3. Putting it together
- 4. Sharing our knowledge

Knowles' Theory

- Knowles emphasizes that adults are selfdirected and expect to take responsibility for decisions. Adult learning programs must accommodate this fundamental aspect.
- Strategies such as case studies, role playing, simulations, and self-evaluation are most useful.

Andragogy

- Andragogy is the science and art of teaching adults.
- In practical terms, andragogy means that instruction for adult needs to focus more on the process and less on the content being taught.
- Instructors adopt a role of facilitator or resource rather than lecturer or grader.

"Sage on the Stage" and "Guide by the Side"

Pedagogy vs. Andragogy

- dependent on teacher
- limited experience
- ready when requested
- oriented to subjectmatter content
- external motivation

- o self-directed
- great volume & variety of experiences
- life-, task-, or problem-oriented
- ointernal motivation

Adults want to:

- Gain something: sharpen their skills
- Be something: more effective in their jobs and in life
- Do something: get rid of roadblocks
- •Save something: time, effort, money

Basic Principles of Andragogy

- Adults need to be involved in the planning and evaluation of their instruction.
- Experience [including mistakes] provides the basis for learning activities.
- Adults are most interested in learning subjects that have immediate relevance to their job or home life.

Basic Principles

- Adults need to know why they need to learn something.
- Adults need to learn experientially.
- Adults approach learning as problem-solving.

Basic Principles

- Learner is viewed as self-directed
- The learner's experience is viewed as a resource for learning
- Motivation is internal.
- Need to attach instruction to relevant schema

Typical Adult Learner Problems

- Adjusting to work context
- Learning academic procedures
- Rusty study skills
- Inability to concentrate

Typical Adult Learner Problems

- Poor self-image
- Social & family problems
- Excessive practical orientation
- Unlearning of previously learned habits
- Unrealistic goals/expectations

Creating Personal Meaning

- Adults learn best when the learning process and results are perceived as having personal meaning for them.
- Use exercises that utilize their personal experience
- Have them share their ideas and experiences in dyads or groups
- Have them use new information in experiential activities

Creating Personal Meaning, cont'd.

- •Allow time for them to reflect how new ideas fit in with what they already know
- Ask them how they see this new information being used
- Link the material to their needs and interests through the workshop

Questions Our Brain Asks

- Have I heard or seen this information before?
- What does it remind me of?
- Where does this information fit?
- What can I do with it?
- Can I assume that this is the same idea I had yesterday, or last month, or last year?

Creating a Safe Environment

Adults learn best in a supportive climate free from threats, a climate that fosters self-esteem, freedom of expression, respect for individuality, acceptance of differences, and an acknowledgement that mistakes are necessary and result in learning.

Creating a Safe Environment

- A way to feel safe is to be connected to other people and feel included in a group
- We need to feel secure before we will reach out, take risks, explore the new.
- Growth forward takes place in little steps from where we feel safe.

Motivation

- Can be forced to attend but cannot be forced to learn
- Extremely resourceful under supportive conditions: knowing needs & motivations
- Respond to understanding personal growth & gain
- Stimulating curiosity, demonstrating usefulness, & ensuring low risk are also motivating

Differentiated instruction

- All learners can learn
- Different learners learn differently
- NOT individualized instruction
- Support is provided at different levels
- Support is provided through different means

Social Side of Learning

- We now face a world of exploding knowledge, rapid change, & uncertainty.
- As a result, we can be anxious & defensive
- Maslow says we have two sets of forces or needs: one striving for growth; one that clings to safety
- A person who must choose between them will choose safety over growth.

Social Learning Strategies

- Placing participants in teams and giving them tasks in which they depend upon each other to complete the work is a wonderful way to capitalize on their social needs.
- Once they have become involved, they also have a need to talk with others about what they are experiencing, which leads to further connections.

Active Learning

Is designed to:

- increase participation
- o enliven learning
- deepen retention
- encourage application

Active Learning Strategies

Evaluating Learning Needs

- Cognitive lack of knowledge –
 don't know
- Psychomotor/Skill lack of skill –can't do
- Affective lack of desire or fear about using the new knowledge or skills – won't do

Key Ideas

- olt's not what I tell you that counts; its what you take away with you.
- o I want you to feel that you have really learned something rather than having been exposed to everything.
- If I do a good job focusing on the most important topics, you will be able to learn the rest of what you need on your own!

Planning Framework

- Needs assessment: start where the learner is
- Creating a safe learning environment
 - Letting participants know what to expect
 - Negotiating the agenda
 - Listen, listen and then rephrase
- Help them make connections to what they already know
- Tell them what you are going to tell them, tell them, tell them what you have told them
- Evaluate: formative and summative