

Indicators of Good Teaching in Adult Education

Teacher Observation Project 2003

The indicators below were developed by the advisory group for the Teacher Observation Project. These experienced Virginia adult educators met and considered the question, "What is good teaching in adult education and what does it look like?" After some reworking by the group, the indicators were used in the project pilot test, and then further revised, resulting in the list below.

CURRICULUM

Purposes and Objectives

- are derived from a curriculum framework
- are clearly articulated by the instructor and understood by learners
- are specific and relevant to learners' needs

Instructional Content

- is relevant to learners' needs/interests
- is directly related to learners' goals
- is based on learners' real-life problems and individual/group issues
- covers the scope of skills and knowledge required for program and learner goals
- is sequenced appropriately for learners

Instructional Materials

- include authentic items related to learners' goals and life tasks

INSTRUCTION

Learning Experiences

are appropriate for content, goals, and learners:

- explicit lesson objectives and purpose(s)
- clear directions and explanations
- all senses/modalities involved; variety of instructional methods, techniques, tools, and available technology; and both large- and small-group activities
- strategies matched to learning objectives/situation – e.g. use of groups, direct teaching vs. learner exploration/discovery, tutoring
- appropriate sequence of skills – less difficult material introduced before more difficult content; complex tasks broken into segments for instruction

- appropriate learning sequence in lessons — introduction of skill, background knowledge assessed/taught, repetition as necessary, modeling, guided practice with feedback, independent practice
- both literal (content-based) and higher-level questions to engage learners in thinking and active learning
- critical thinking and problem-solving skills taught
- teacher modeling of thinking and learning processes (think-alouds)
- problem-based approach

Assessment

in the classroom is ongoing and includes:

- use of assessment data as basis for instruction – data is available for easy reference and used to design learning activities and to individualize instruction
- regular monitoring of learning and understanding, e.g. identifying learners' errors and misconceptions
- instructional adjustments based on monitoring: re-teaching, adjusting pace, etc.
- individual feedback and appropriate praise
- learner reflection and evaluation

Transfer

of learning is explicitly taught:

- emphasis on real-life goals and practical application of skills and knowledge
- skills introduced in a context meaningful to learners
- authentic materials related to learners' real-life goals

MANAGEMENT

Systems and Resources

facilitate learning:

- classroom routines understood by learners
- strategies to minimize impact of sporadic attendance and tardiness
- system for integrating new enrollees
- appropriate grouping of learners
- time management: pacing and momentum
- appropriate use of volunteers

Engaged Learners

The teacher

- knows learners
- gets and keeps attention focused on learning
- provides lessons that address all skill levels
- interacts equitably with all learners
- builds rapport with and among learners
- maintains appropriate sequence and pacing of instruction

Learners are engaged in meaningful tasks.

Adult Learning Environment

The teacher

- is both “instructor” and “facilitator of learning”
- maintains an “open” environment where learners are free to ask questions and access classroom resources
- encourages multi-directional communication: learners voices heard
- encourages learners’ participation in classroom decisions
- teaches collaboration strategies for working with other learners, co-workers, and community members
- demonstrates sensitivity to personal issues in adults’ lives that create barriers to learning