6 TIPS FOR TEACHING
BASED ON PRINCIPLES OF ADULT LEARNING THEORY

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

- The average age of CSUF students is 23.39 years (Fall 2015).
- We have many adult reentry students.
- Principles of adult learning theory overlap with principles of effective instruction generally.

WHAT TO DO IN CLASS

1. Address adult learners’ desire to know why they should learn something.
   - Bring out the personal benefits of learning.
   - Have students write personal goals and action plans.
2. Make learning practical and relevant.
   - Make class time more task-centered than subject- or content-centered
   - Provide authentic learning experiences.
   - Provide immediate real-world applications.
3. Use active participation in class, as part of a varied set of teaching methods.
   - Make social interaction part of the learning process.
   - Tap into adults’ interest in solving problems, especially practical ones.
   - Provide structured opportunities for them to talk and reflect in class.
   - Make touch and movement part of the learning process to aid the many kinesthetic adult learners.
4. Use adult learners’ previous experiences and knowledge effectively.
   - Prompt them to relate their life experiences to what they are learning now.
   - Provide opportunities for them to integrate new knowledge with their existing knowledge.
   - Acknowledge their experiences to address adult learners’ desire to be respected.
5. Tap into adults’ desires to direct and have responsibility for their own learning.
   - Incorporate self-assessments.
   - Provide choices when creating assignments, selecting readings, etc.
6. Adapt your expectations and policies to adult learners’ busy lives.
   - Divide instructional presentations and assignments into segments.
   - Provide ample time to complete work prior to deadlines.
   - Don’t require the use of resources that are only available during narrow time windows.

HOW TO LEARN MORE

Learn more about Malcolm Knowles’ work on adult learning theory.

Dr. Laura Lohman, Director, CSUF Faculty Development Center, August 13, 2016