

Engaging Adult Learners

Make Learning Stick!

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Next Step Action Plan

Name: _____ Date: _____

Topic: Engaging Adult Learners – Making Learning Stick!

What action steps will you take to implement what you learned today?

What current practices do you want to modify or extend?

What new practices or strategies do you want to try?



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KEY MESSAGES

1. “Your content is not as important as your audience’s interaction with the content.” – Robert Garmston
2. “Experience is not the best teacher. It sounds like heresy, but when you think about it, it’s reflection on experience that makes it educational.” – George Forman Ph.D.
3. Know Thyself – Your strengths can create your teaching biases.
4. Intentionally choose and implement strategies that engage ALL adult learners.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will...

1. learn and identify teaching strategies for each of Constant Hine’s 4 M’s of adult education principles: **Magnetic, Meaningful, Memorable, Mobilizing**.
2. learn and practice multiple **teaching tools and strategies** to engage learners, meet the diverse needs of learners.
3. **practice self-reflection and self-assessment strategies** that can be incorporated and implemented in designing and delivering trainings.

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PRINCIPLES OF ADULT LEARNING

Important adult learning principles for professional development or adult learning experiences include:

1. Adults have to want to learn.
2. Adults learn only when they think they need to learn.
3. Adults insist that content be meaningful and relevant.
4. Adults bring their backgrounds to the learning setting.
5. Most adults' primary source of learning is not reading.
6. Adults learn better when they are relaxed, feel safe, and are having fun.
7. Adults learn by processing experiences (talking, writing, doing, and reflecting — not just through experiences).

*"The content is not as important
as the audience's interaction with the content."*

Robert Garmston

The following guidelines meet the criteria of the Four Ms for Engaging Adult Learners:

1. Provide concise information to eliminate 'overload.'
2. Enhance learning by organizing content into small units.
3. Build on familiar experiences or past knowledge to expand and deepen new learning.
4. Use multi-sensory strategies and experiences to expand and deepen learning.
5. Focus on relevant problems, concerns, or desired outcomes.
6. Provide information, skills, or strategies to use practically.
7. Diversify instructional strategies and approaches for each topic to meet audience needs.
8. Provide opportunities throughout your presentation for the audience to interact with and internalize the content.
9. Focus on the audience's response to, and interaction with, content that they value; don't focus only on presenting the content.
10. Establish rapport with the audience; learning happens within the container of relationships. Set a respectful tone by preparing the learning environment and intentionally choosing how to present your content for successful learning.

Excerpts from *Engaging Adult Learners Through Multiple Intelligences Toolkit* by Constant Hine, Exchange Press ©2013

4M Strategies for Engaging Adult Learners



Magnetic — Engage learners through their strength and primary ‘operating system’ for learning, naturally piquing interest. I refer to this method of presenting content as ‘walking in the front door’ of a learner.



Meaningful — Life experiences, culture, strengths, interests, and passions are the foundation for creating personal meaning. A person’s frame of reference is like an ‘operating system’ through which learners process information and experiences, identify and decide what’s important, and how to interact with people. For some, what is meaningful and grabs their attention will be facts and interesting problems to solve; for others, it will be through relationships and specific case studies; still others will be hooked by language, keywords, or quotes.



present.

Memorable — Presenting information and content is key to what makes something memorable. When information is presented in multi-modal strategies, you are more likely to reach more people. A variety of teaching strategies includes keywords, music, pictures, formulas, outlines, and storytelling, increasing the number of people engaged and multiple ways for people to remember what you



Mobilizing — Mobilizing is asking people to change. It’s important to consider what will encourage people to take action, to take a risk, to move out of their comfort zone and try something new and different, or to simply practice repeatedly what they already know how to do, but haven’t done consistently. Typically what inspires people to change is when they connect to something they are passionate about, when they can envision new meaningful possibilities, have a sense of purpose, or when they feel safe enough to take a risk.

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WHAT I KNOW... 4M Strategies for Engaging Adult Learners

Instructions:

1. *Individually read the 4M Guidelines below.*
2. *Write what you already know about each M and what you want to know more about or what questions you have about each.*
3. *Get a group of 4 people.*
4. *In your group discuss your understanding of and question about the 4Ms and how or why this is relevant to your current situation.*



Magnetic — Engage learners through their strength and primary ‘operating system’ for learning, naturally piquing interest

I Currently Know

I Don’t Know, Want to Know, Have Question



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I Don't Know, Want to Know, Have Question

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SYMPTOMS OF LEARNER DISENGAGEMENT

Some common indicators that learners are not engaged with the content and learning experience:

- Learners are hesitant or reluctant to interact with you or peers.
- Learners do not seem to care or see value in the content (leaning back, arms crossed, shaking heads, putting hands on heads, or covering faces are a few non-verbal examples).
- Learners do not understand or ask questions about the material you thought you had adequately covered; if you do formal evaluations, a high percentage have low scores.
- Participants do not share or demonstrate an understanding of the content or its relevance when opportunities are provided.
- Participants repeatedly ask or make “Yeah... but” questions or statements, indicating a defensive or fearful demeanor.
- Participants make comments like, “This is good in theory, but...” and then give reasons why there are barriers to implementing what you are presenting (“I don’t have enough time to do this,” or “With these kids and families, it’s not possible”).
- Learners have a ‘deer in the headlights’ expression, usually caused by content overload, fear, the pace is too fast, or lack of understanding of what you are presenting.
- Learners are not attentive or are acting in inappropriate ways during the session (texting, leaving the room frequently, arriving late and leaving early, doing tasks unrelated to the topic, talking in a disruptive manner, speaking in a negative manner, interrupting or distracting others by side talking).

Note: Presenters and teachers have their own comfort level and tolerance with side talking. Side talking can be an acceptable behavior during sessions because Interpersonal or ‘people smart’ learners often use this as a learning strategy to integrate, share excitement, or concerns while engaging with the content and learning experience. Disrespectful or inappropriate behavior occurs when people who are side talking are unwilling to share when asked what they are discussing. Side talking can be useful if it is not disruptively loud and on topic; however, side talking becomes a problem if the conversation is off topic. Ask people at the beginning of a session to manage their volume so it does not distract others and to ask the person they are talking with if she or he finds this helpful before doing so. Place tables together so those who like to side talk can sit together.

Although there are more symptoms, listing these examples ensures that we don’t get into the habit of blaming the learners for their behavior without looking at ourselves to see if our teaching strategies are effective. Consider the link between our choice of scope of content, instructional strategies, and how we create the ‘learning container’ with the response and behaviors of learners. This toolkit encourages you to be more intentional and successful in choosing and implementing strategies that will engage ALL adult learners.

STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS TYPES OF DISENGAGEMENT

Lack of Relevance – “So What?”

If learners are asking “So what?” types of questions or making comments indicating that they do not see how the topic is relevant to them, then they probably need more Intrapersonal, or Existential activities to help them reflect and discover what the relevance or application might be. Increase the Interpersonal activities, as people often find it easier at times to learn from peers to see how others value the content or its application.

Lack of Understanding the Bigger Picture – “Why?”

If learners persistently are asking “Why?” questions and want more context, proof, or demonstration, then more theory, research, and Logical/Mathematical strategies are needed. If the “Why?” questions are more personal in nature, the audience may need more Intrapersonal activities to draw their own inferences, conclusions, and relevance.

Need for More Application or Ability to Transfer Information – “What if?”

If learners quickly launch into “What if ?” questions or pose possible scenarios that could happen, then they may seek more learning experiences relating to practical implementation and how to transfer information to real life situations. Incorporate more anecdotal stories or examples (*Interpersonal and Verbal/Linguistic*) that illustrate possible implementation. Or provide opportunities to explore the grander Existential considerations or relevance of the information. Provide more Logical/Mathematical strategies by presenting information in a more linear, sequential approach with an emphasis on cause and effect.

Need for More Information – “What?”

If participants are asking for clarity of information, they may be hesitant to move on to new topics until they feel they understand WHAT you are presenting. These learners may want to go deeper into detail or may need more facts, data, or resources. For these learners, more information and knowledge increases their sense of safety. To increase their ability to take new or challenging next steps, they may want more information to feel prepared. It may indicate the necessity to present information or resources through more intelligences and ‘doorways,’ especially if you have used only one or two of the intelligences to present the information. When possible, ask each learner how they like to learn – using descriptions of the 8 intelligences to consider how to present the information in a more easily accessed ‘doorway’ for the learner. You may need to incorporate a visual approach using graphic organizers, a verbal strategy listing keywords, or do a kinesthetic “Walk Around Survey” activity.

Complaints About the Environment

Attention to physical environmental details is important to keep learners engaged. When people complain about temperature, lighting in the room, uncomfortable chairs, or long stretches of sitting they are probably Bodily/Kinesthetic intelligent. They need more activities

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and support to provide comfort and care for their bodies, so they are not distracted. Giving the opportunity to move or stand will help Kinesthetic learners to better focus. Incorporate more Standing Pair Shares or do more.

Flip Chart or PowerPoint Aerobic activities throughout the session. When setting up your learning environment, be proactive about creating a caring physical space, know how to adjust the lighting and temperature, allow ample space for seating, or add beautiful accents to the room. If necessary, correct temperature or lighting during the session. Know ahead of time if the seating is uncomfortable; if so, then be proactive and plan to use more Kinesthetic strategies. Don't underestimate the importance of the physical environment on participants' learning.

Excerpts from *Engaging Adult Learners Through Multiple Intelligences Toolkit* by Constant Hine, Exchange Press ©2013

PINWHEEL INTERVIEW ACTIVITY

Acknowledge and build upon people's prior experience and strengths. Create a space for participants to interview, learn from, and problem solve with each other.

Set Up

Inner Circle – Have a group of 4 people stand with their backs to each other, facing outward, creating the inner circle. The people standing in the inner circle do not move.

Outer Circle – Have another person stand in front of and facing each person in the inner circle. There should be the same number of people in both inner and outer circles. The people in the outer circle will move clockwise (when instructed) to stand in front of the next person in the inner circle after each sharing is complete.

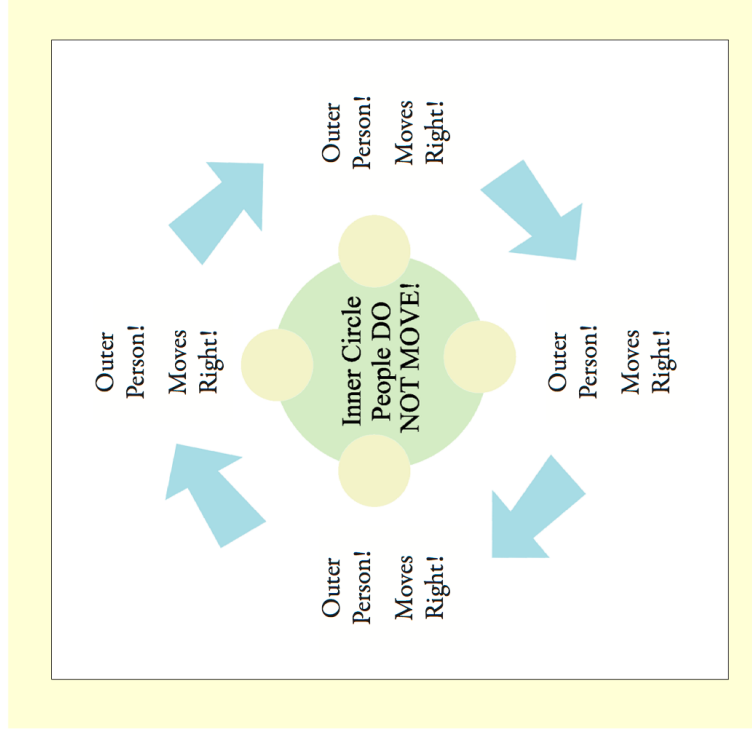
Plan and Timing

This can be done at the end of a workshop to help people problem solve how to implement strategies, to get ideas regarding topics not covered in workshop, or to think through a topic more thoroughly. This is a good activity for after lunch. Circles of 4 people, both asking questions – plan 20 minutes, allowing 2–3 minutes per question/answer. (Modify: To save time, have people in just one circle identify a question, or have only 3 people in each circle. Since it takes time to move bodies, plan on 10–15 minutes for this activity.)

Procedure

Have each person identify a specific issue or a question they have that they want help with. Each couple faces each other taking turns asking their questions and getting answers from their partner. Allow 2–4 minutes for each person to speak (4–8 minutes per couple). Use a chime to indicate when it is time to switch partners. At this time, the people in the outer circle will move clockwise to stand in front of the next person in the inner circle to form a new couple. Each new couple asks the new partner the same question, getting another solution from a different person. Continue to rotate to a new partner until each couple has shared.

PINWHEEL INTERVIEW ACTIVITY



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Walk Around Survey Worksheet

Directions: Walk around the room and briefly survey 9 different people about one thing they know or have learned about the content in one of the following three categories. Each person interviewed can give one answer in any of the following areas – some information or data they recall about the content, something they learned that was personally meaningful and relevant, or something they will apply or an action they will take. **ONLY** one item may be collected from each person.

Content Recall			
	Name	Name	Name
Personal Meaning &			
	Name	Name	Name
Action & Application			
	Name	Name	Name

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4M Strategies & Timing

- 1.) Goals, Needs, Wants Assessment (5-15 mins) (Opening)
- 2.) What I Know/Want to Know About ...TOPIC (2 – 10 mins) (Opening) (Close/Review)
- 3.) Walk About Survey (8-15 mins)
- 4.) Matching Activity: Ex: Linking Activity and 4M activity (5-10 mins)
- 5.) Key Words- (mins)
- 6.) 4 Corners (10-15 mins) (with corner discussion/activity) (15-30 mins)
- 7.) Equations (5 mins)
- 8.) Metaphoric Thinking: individual (3 mins) (Soul Cards) (Nature objects)
- 9.) Anecdotal Stories (3-10 mins)
- 10.) Quotes (1-5 mins)
- 11.) Graphic Organizers (1-10 mins)
- 12.) Moveable Ideas -Post It's (5-15 mins)
- 13.) Reflection – Ex. BFO “Blinding Flash of the Obvious” (3-10 mins)
- 14.) Pair Share/ standing pair share (2–10 mins)
- 15.) Small or Large Group Discussion (5-30 mins)
- 16.) Pinwheel Activity (10-20 mins)
- 17.) Recall a Time Activity (5 – 15 mins)
- 18.) Step Over the Line (10-15 mins)
- 19.) Case Study/Problem Solving (10-40 mins)
- 20.) Video (4- 30 mins) (length of video + if there is an associated activity or discussion)
- 21.) Action Plan (5-10 mins)

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Matching Activity/Strategy to 4M Engagement Approach

Instructions: Identify which of the following activities would support which of the 4Ms.. Write the corresponding activity letter in the 4M column. One activity may be relevant for more than one of the 4Ms

Activity/Strategy

- a) Goals, Needs, Wants Assessment
- b) What I Know/Want to Know About 4M's
- c) Walk About Survey
- d) Linking Activity and 4M activity
- e) Key Words-
- f) 4 Corners
- g) Equations
- h) Metaphoric Thinking Reflection (Nature objects)
- i) Anecdotal Stories
- j) Quotes
- k) Graphic Organizers
- l) Moveable Ideas (Post It's)
- m) Reflection – Ex. BFO – “Blinding Flash of the Obvious”
- n) Share & Discussion – Pairs, Small and Large group
- p) Pinwheel Interview
- q) Recall a Time Activity
- r) Step Over The Line
- s) Action Plan

4 Ms

Magnetic

Meaningful

Memorable

Mobilizing

EVALUATION

Topic: Engaging Adult Learners- Make Learning Stick! **Date:** _____

Program: _____

Instructions: Please complete the following questions and leave your evaluation with the instructor.

Session Evaluation: *Please rate the following questions on a scale of 1 to 7 by circling a number. (1 is Low/Poor/Not Effective and 7 is High/Extremely Effective)*

1. What was your overall experience of this session?

Low 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 High

2. Were the materials helpful and appropriate to your learning needs?

Low 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 High

3. Was the content of the session relevant and helpful to you?

Low 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 High

4. Was the presentation and delivery of the presenter successful in this session?

Low 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 High

Keepers....What worked? What was supportive and helpful to you?

Rethink...What didn't work? What could the instructor do to be more effective and add value to your professional development?

Self Reflection

1. What was the most meaningful learning for you today? How will this impact your teaching?



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- ☐ I am interested in hosting or sponsoring a training.
- ☐ Other:

Give completed form to the presenter