



BEST PRACTICES FOR TEACHING

ADULT BASIC EDUCATION (ABE)
& ADULT SECONDARY EDUCATION (ASE)



Let's get to work.

OACES

Office of Adult & Career Education Services
Rochester City School District

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WHAT IS ADULT EDUCATION?

Adult Education is instruction, often at no cost, for adult students who want to improve their employability, education, or English language skills. Adult Education programs offer basic reading, writing, math, and problem-solving classes, English language lessons, employment preparation and training, Test Assessing Secondary Completion (TASC) preparation, and other basic educational services for adult students. Adult Education includes Adult Basic Education (ABE), Adult Secondary Education (ASE) as well as English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL / ESL).

Adult Education programs are for adults 16 years of age and older who are not in school, who have academic skills below the 12th grade level, and/or who need help learning English. The goal of Adult Education is to help adults reach their full potential as workers, family members, and citizens.

Adult Education is funded in part by the federal and state governments, with local and community support. Many programs receive grant funding from private and corporate sources. The New York State Education Department's (NYSED) Office of Adult Career and Continuing Education Services (ACCES) unit oversees Adult Education programs in New York. ACCES works with public schools, community-based organizations, colleges, correctional facilities, and other agencies to provide Adult Education services.

In Rochester, the Office of Adult and Career Education Services (OACES) is a workforce preparation organization that helps adult students learn the skills they need for success in the workplace and outside the classroom.

With unique focus on the education and employment needs of New York State's adult citizens, several vital interests and goals can be best served through:

- Ensuring that the needs of adults and out-of-school youth are met through efficient and effective access to relevant services, programs, and opportunities offered by the NYSED.
- Encouraging full participation of adults with disabilities.

- Enhancing post-secondary transitions by developing the capacity of individuals to engage in post-secondary education leading to high-quality employment opportunities.
- Promoting workforce investment through unified collaboration with the New York State Department of Labor and State and local Workforce Investment Boards to assure that individuals have access to a “one-stop” source for a full range of services leading to high-quality employment opportunities.
- Supporting individuals experiencing poverty and relying on public services to develop their capacity to earn income and develop assets toward greater economic independence.
- Utilizing a more comprehensive and effective representation for adults in coordinating services and program initiatives with New York State agencies such as the Departments of Labor and Health, the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA), the Office of Children and Family Services, and the State University of New York (SUNY).

There are multiple literacies addressed by Adult Education.

- Survival Literacy



- Oral/Speaking and Written Literacy
- Cultural/Social and Civic Literacy
- Workplace and Employment Literacy
- Health Literacy
- Financial Literacy
- Technological and Digital/Electronic Literacy
- Geographic Literacy
- Media Literacy
- Environmental Literacy
- Scientific Literacy

The importance of each of these literacies in an individual’s life varies based on specific circumstances. They all, however, have the potential to greatly affect the life of every adult and his/her family. Literacy begins within the family and is reinforced,

whether positively or negatively, in subsequent generations. Adult Education seeks to reinforce, promote, and support literacy to help adults reach their full potential as workers, family members, and citizens and in turn continue the cycle of literacy into the future.

Adult Education provides for the Community in numerous ways:

- Adult Education programs benefit businesses, workers, and job seekers. Businesses encourage Adult Education in order to provide and sustain a highly skilled and specialized workforce a workforce with the skills to perform a variety of tasks or workers with “cross-functional” skills. Workers may receive promotions, gain more power in the job market, or become more valuable employees by enrolling in Adult Education programs.
- Adult Education training facilities often house state-of-the-art equipment such as computers and computer-based training equipment.
- Adult Education programs benefit families. Increased literacy and skills translate to a higher earnings potential for the household. Parents’ literacy levels directly correlate to their children’s educational success (according to the National Center for Families Learning).

BEST PRACTICES FOR TEACHING ADULT BASIC EDUCATION (ABE) & ADULT SECONDARY EDUCATION (ASE)

Teaching Adult Basic Education (ABE) & Adult Secondary Education (ASE) students can be challenging, but also rewarding. Many students are at various skill levels. The same student may be proficient in one skill area (e.g. writing) but need significant instruction in another (e.g. math). A multi-level class can prove to be challenging for teachers as they strive to meet individual students' needs while still creating a sense of community.

Providing Guidance

Let students know that you are there to provide guidance to them whenever they want and need it. Tell them that you welcome their questions and you want them to feel safe asking them even if they feel insecure asking it. Be sure to respond sincerely and non-judgmentally to their questions and always respect and show appreciation for their efforts to master a skill.

Responsibility for Their Own Learning

Encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning. By assisting students in becoming assertive participants in their own education, you are helping them ensure that they get what they need out of your class as well as providing them with transferable skills that will serve them well in other educational settings throughout their lives. Addressing the importance of student responsibility early on in the learning cycle contributes to clearer expectations in teaching and learning. Encouraging students to assume responsibility for their own learning includes requiring learners to:

- Evaluate their work or the work of their peers.
- Record the completion of their daily learning activities and assessment results.

- Maintain a portfolio or notebook of their work to document their progress.
- Complete homework assignments.

Delivering Instruction

Allow for a range of learning approaches.

- Some students may want to work alone; others prefer pairs or small groups.
- Some students may need you to model a skill repeatedly and then guide them as they practice the skill over and over until they can perform it independently; others may not have need of you practicing a skill but will demonstrate for you when they are ready.
- Some students benefit from having information presented through various modalities (auditory, visual, tactile/kinesthetic); others may prefer to learn through one, dominant modality. The more modalities through which you offer instruction, the more likely you are to reach all students.
- Sometimes students process their learning silently. Silence does not necessarily indicate boredom, confusion, or passivity. Try to find out what the silence means. It is helpful to explore with students how they learn best so you can help them work from their strengths. Some strategies on how to deliver instruction are listed below.

Individualized and Whole Group Instruction

Providing a combination of individualized and whole group instruction introduces variety into your instruction and also allows for adequate practice of the lesson objectives(s). Individualized instruction is a key component of any adult education program. This is true because students come to class at a wide range of levels, with different “gaps”. Due to open enrollment, new students will likely join your class on a weekly basis. Therefore even if the students had a similar level of mastery in a subject after a lesson, new students will have to be presented with the same lesson at a future time.

The benefits of individualized instruction are:

- Adults work at their own pace on materials designed specifically for them.

- Instructional materials are based on the individual student's assessed level.

Note: When the initial assessment is made during intake, an item analysis should be made which focuses on the kinds of errors the student made. Going over this with the student while you set up his/her course of study will add legitimacy and motivation to assigned tasks.

The benefits of group instruction are:

- Adults learn well working with one another, watching and helping each other perform specific learning tasks.
- Group work encourages critical thinking and builds communication skills.
- Students learn teamwork and how to relate to age, cultural, and ethnic diversity.
- Students discover that they can use their individual skills, talents, and abilities to help others.
- Students create social networks that promote regular class attendance.
- Use of such things as anticipatory sets, timelines, and graphic organizers helps students assimilate, process, and better retain information taught during group instruction.
- The use of hands-on projects and activities geared around the lesson enables students to more easily grasp concepts that might otherwise prove elusive.

Peer Instruction

Peer instruction is an interactive teaching method that adopts information assimilation into the classroom instead of the traditional information transfer model. Research demonstrates the effectiveness of peer instruction over more traditional teaching methods, such as pure lecture. Peer Instruction as a learning system involves preparing to learn outside of the class by doing pre-class readings and answering questions about those readings. In class, the teacher engages students by posing prepared conceptual questions or ideas that are based on student difficulties. The questioning procedures are as follows:

1. Teacher poses question based on students' responses to their pre-class reading.
2. Students then reflect on the question.
3. Students commit to an individual answer.
4. Teacher reviews student responses.
5. Students discuss their thinking and answers with their peers.
6. Students then commit again to an individual answer.
7. Finally, the teacher again reviews responses and decides whether more explanation is needed before moving on to the next concept.

Direct Instruction

Direct instruction is a general term for the explicit teaching of a skill set using lectures or demonstrations of the material. It involves some explanation of the skill or subject matter to be taught and may or may not include an opportunity for student participation or individual practice. Direct instruction should be only one of the methodologies used in your classroom.

Project-Based Instruction

Project-based instruction (PBI) is the use of in-depth and rigorous classroom projects to facilitate learning and assess student competence. PBI is a teaching method that provides students with complex tasks based on challenging questions or problems that involve the students' problem solving, decision making, investigative skills, and reflection that includes teacher facilitation, but not direction. PBI is focused on questions that drive students to encounter the central concepts and principals of a subject in a hands-on manner. Students form valuable research skills as they engage in design, problem solving, decision making, and investigative activities.

Additional Resources

Adult Education Content Standards Warehouse
www.adultedcontentstandards.org

New York State Education Department
www.nysed.gov

Sources

California Adult Literacy Professional Development Project
www.calpro-online.org

Oklahoma State University
www.okstate.edu



DISCOVER THE EXCELLENCE



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