A First Course Experience for the Online Adult Learner: The Excelsior Model
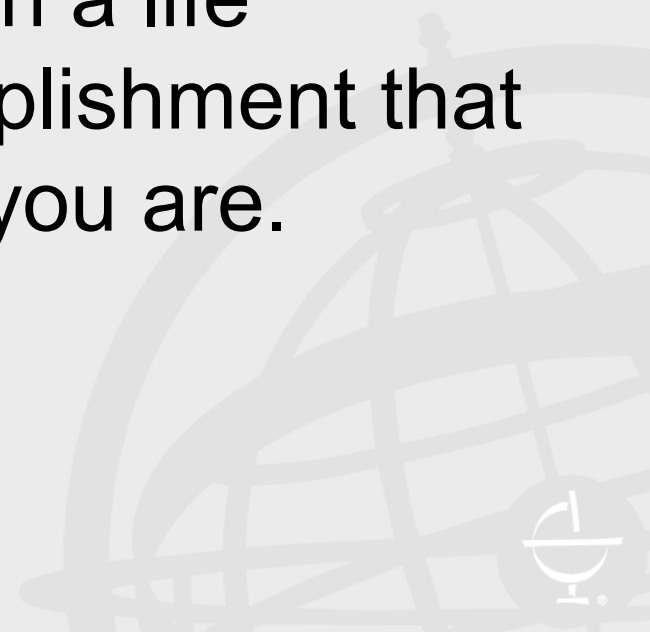
Timothy Maciel, Ed. D.

Associate Provost

Excelsior College
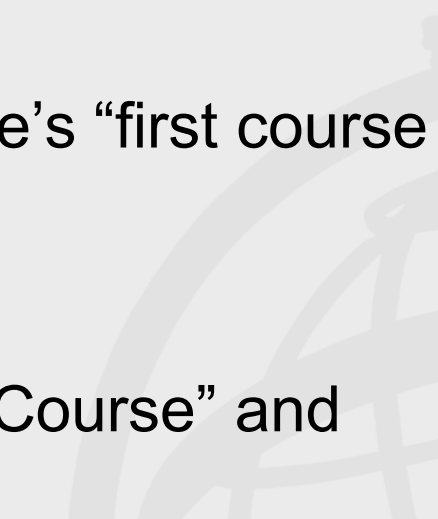
Who Are We?

Three-minute exercise

What is something about you that defines you as the person you are? Mention a life experience or personal accomplishment that reveals something about who you are.

The Agenda

1. Present information and gather thoughts on adult learners American Higher Education

2. Present a model of a fully distance education college whose mission is to serve working adults.

3. Present the thinking behind this college's "first course experience"

4. Present the model, "The EC Success Course" and gather ideas for improving it."

The Adult Learner in American Higher Education: A quiz

1. What percentage of students can be characterized as "non-traditional" in U.S. higher education?

    a. 25%   c. 60%

    b. 40%   d. 80%

2. What percentage of the nation's 28 million students in U.S. higher education are 25 years or older?

    a. 23%   c. 59%

    b. 43%   d. 80%

The Adult Learner in American Higher Education: A quiz

3. What percentage increase in enrollments of people under 25 does the NCES project from 2005-2016?

   a. 10%   c. 23%

   b. 15%   d. 31%

4. What percentage increase in enrollments of people 25 and older does the NCES project from 2005-2016?

   a. 10%   c. 21%

   b. 17%   d. 30%

Characteristics of the "non-traditional" student

- Have delayed enrollment into postsecondary education
- Attend part-time
- Are financially independent of parents
- Work full-time while enrolled
- Have dependents other than a spouse
- Are a single parent
- Lack a standard high school diploma

National Center for Education Statistics, 2008
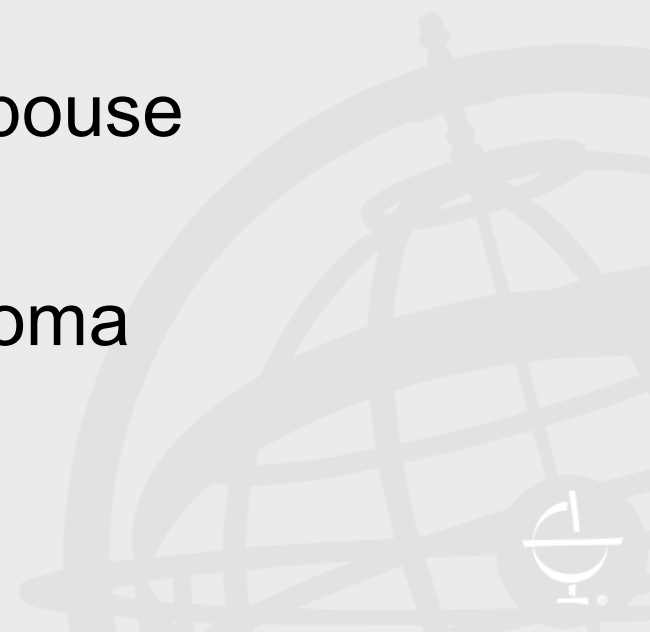
Over 25 years of age and, according to Malcolm Knowles, are largely self-motivated and self-directed.

How can an institution best serve adult learners?

1. **Outreach**. By overcoming barriers of time, place and tradition to create lifelong access to educational opportunities.

2. **Life and Career Planning**. By addressing adult learners' life and career goals before or at the onset of enrollment.

3. **Financing**. By using an array of payment options.

4. **Assessment of Learning Outcomes**. The institution defines and assesses the knowledge, skills and competencies acquired by adult learners both from the curriculum and life/work experiences in order to assign credit and confer degrees with rigor.

"Serving Adult Learners in Higher Education: Principles of Effectiveness. 2000. Council for Adult and Experiential Learning. www.cael.org

How can an institution best serve adult learners?

5. **Teaching-Learning Process**. The institution's faculty uses multiple methods of instruction (including experiential and problem-based methods)

6. **Technology**. The institution uses information technology to provide relevant and timely information to enhance the learning experience.

7. **Strategic Partnerships**. The institution engages in strategic relationships, partnerships and collaborations with employers and others to develop and improve educational opportunities for adult learners.

"Serving Adult Learners in Higher Education: Principles of Effectiveness. 2000. Council for Adult and Experiential Learning. www.cael.org
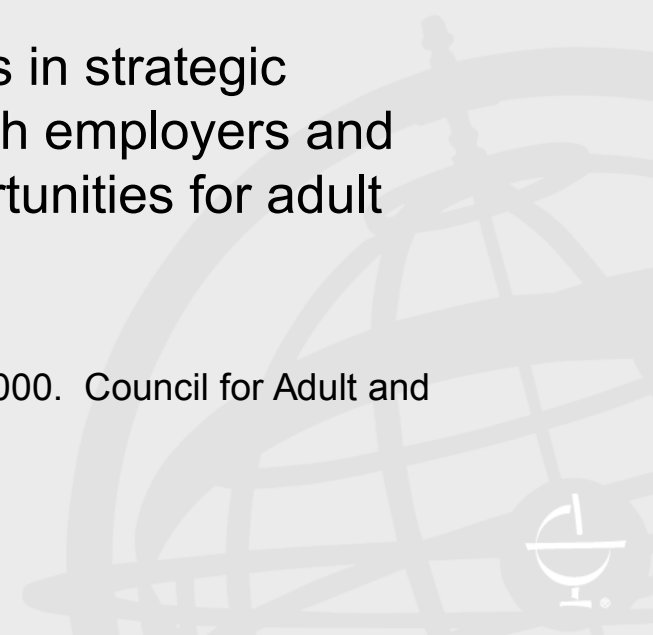
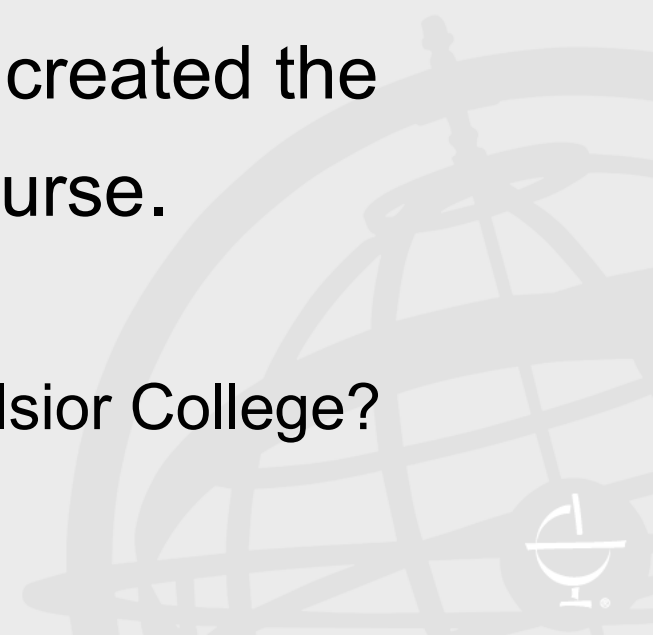8. **Student Support Systems**. The institution assists adult learners using comprehensive academic and student support systems in order to enhance students capacities to become self-directed, lifelong learners.

To this end, Excelsior College created the EC Student Success course.

But first, the context. What is Excelsior College?

About Excelsior College

- A fully distance education college in Albany,NY
- Private, non-profit
- 35,000 + students, over 121,000 graduate
- Four Schools:
  - Liberal Arts
  - Business and Technology
  - Health Sciences
  - Nursing

Our graduates

Excelsior College Class of 2008

- Total Graduates   5,254

- Male   2,859   (54%)
- Female   2,395   (46%)

Our graduates

By Program in 2008

- Business 522
- Technology 497
- Liberal Arts 2,552
- Nursing 1,691
- Health Sciences < 20

Our students

- <u>Graduates By Degree</u>*

- Master's   72
- Bachelor's   2,714
- Associate   2,481

Who are our graduates?

- 32% minority groups

- 38% U. S. military

- Average age of the Class of 2007: 37.8

Excelsior Graduation 2008

A military translator the day before returning to Iraq

Proud graduates & moms

Which one is the professor?

A proud wife

A proud husband and family

Anywhere, anytime

Anywhere, anytime
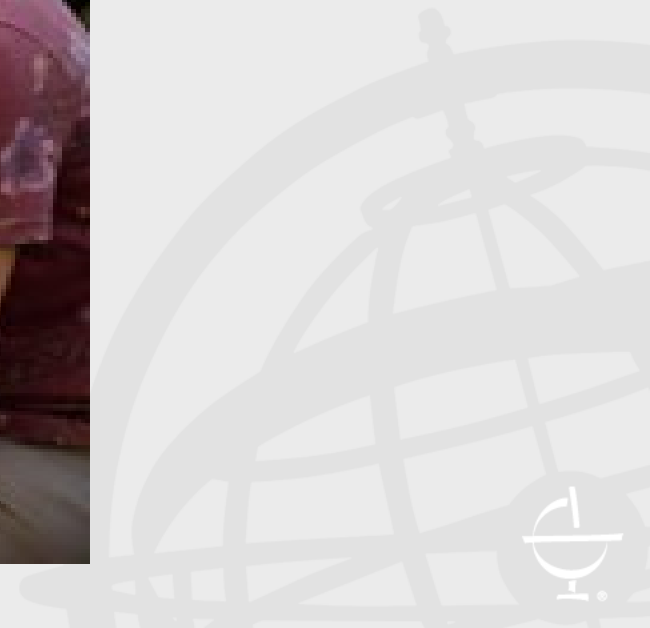
Anywhere, anytime, anyhow
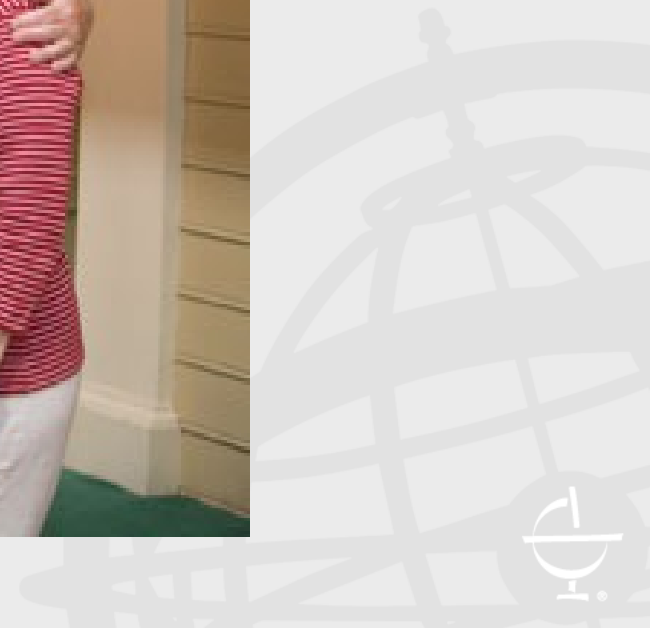
A soldier, single mom, and EC graduate

More proud graduates

And another….

And another…

And another…

Serving A Special Niche in Higher Education

In the past decade, 32,000,000 adults started college but did not finish.

Source: <u>Futures Forum 2008: Exploring the Future of Higher Education</u>. National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO)
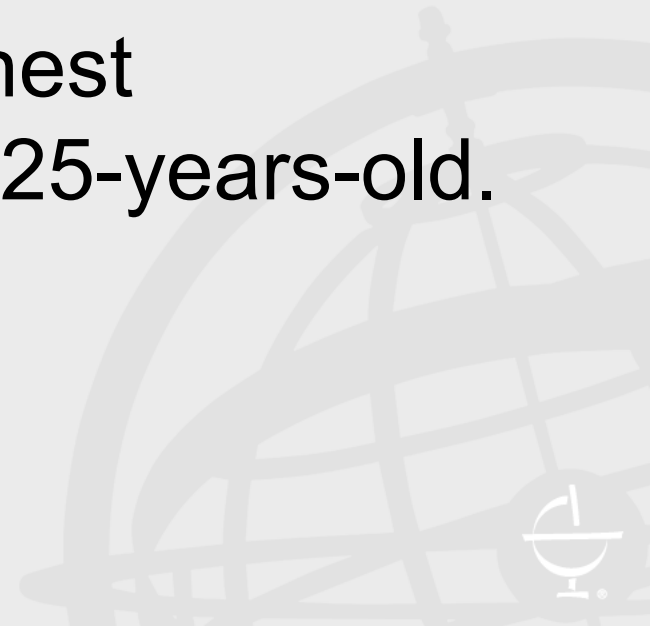
Multiple pathways to the degree

Far more than an "online college," students earn their degrees via:

- Aggregation of credit

- Excelsior College Exams

- Online courses

U.S. News & World Report, 2007

- Number 1 for having the highest number of transfer students enrolled

- Number 1 for having the highest percentage of students over 25-years-old.

A reality check…

Only 70% of our 9th graders will finish high school.

Only 52% of our inner-city school children will finish high school.

Yet…

90% of the new jobs being created need <u>more than</u> a high school diploma

Source: National Center for Higher Education Management Systems

Reality check…

Fewer than 27% of Americans aged 25-44 have earned college degrees

Source: National Center for Higher Education Management Systems

Yet, of the 4,000 accredited institutions of higher education in the United States…

- Vast majority focused on the 18-22-year olds,

  but what about…

- The "non-traditional" student, the 35-year old unemployed auto worker, the 40-year old housewife reentering the job market?

The Excelsior College Student Success Seminar

The EC Success Seminar

- Launched in September, 2008 with a pilot of 12 students.

- Incentive for pilot: Free books and reduced tuition.

EC Success Seminar

- Intensive 8-week, three-credit, fully online

- A first-course for all students returning to college with no or minimal number of credit hours earned

- Pilot completed in October, 2008

- Will soon be mandatory for all newly enrolled students with fewer than 9 credit hours of college experience

Goals of the Course

- Examine reasons for earning a college degree and what the realities are for the adult learner

- Learn strategies to become a successful adult learner at Excelsior and beyond

- Learn how to make the best use of support services available at Excelsior, including the library, tutoring, advisors, financial aid office, etc.

Goals of the course

- Build a support system w/ peers and instructor

- Learn how to manage work, college and family and stay motivated to complete the degree

- Learn how to handle stress and pressure
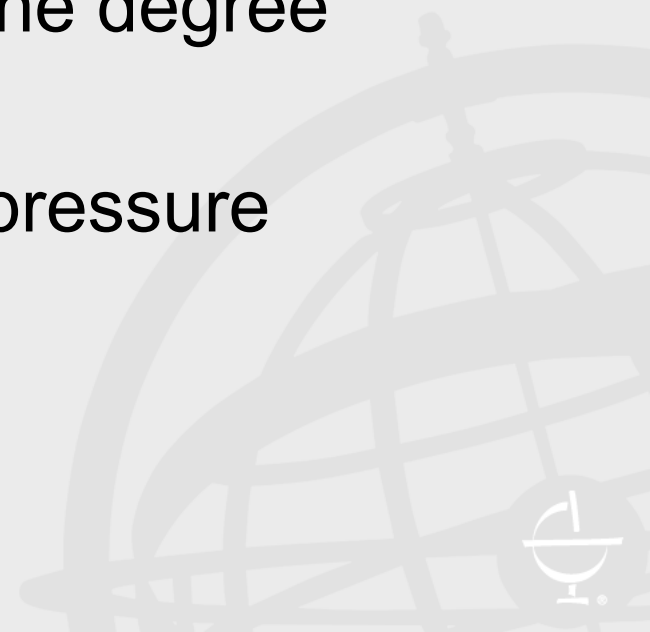
Goals of the Course

- Learn to think critically and apply practical problem-solving in handling a college career

- Learn effective study skills and develop basic writing and reading skills

- Develop effective test-taking strategies

- Develop a degree-completion plan and a financial plan for completing the degree
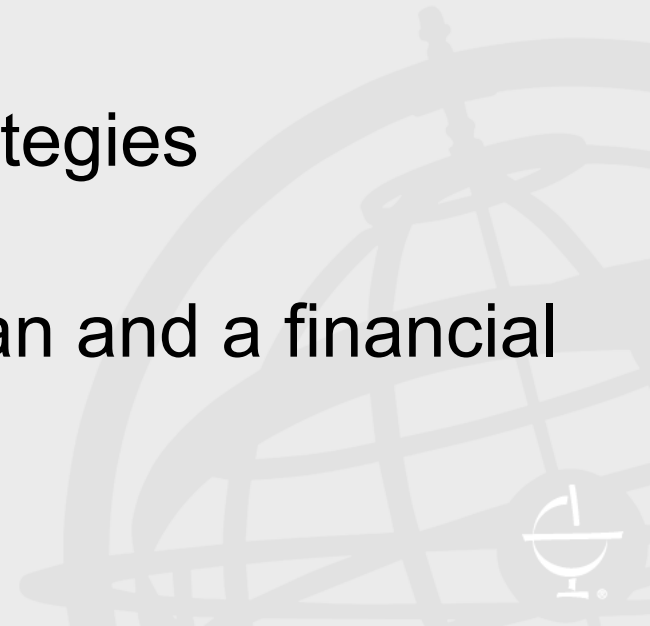
The Adult Learner's Companion
by Dr. Deborah Davis (Houghton-Mifflin)

On Course: Strategies for Success.
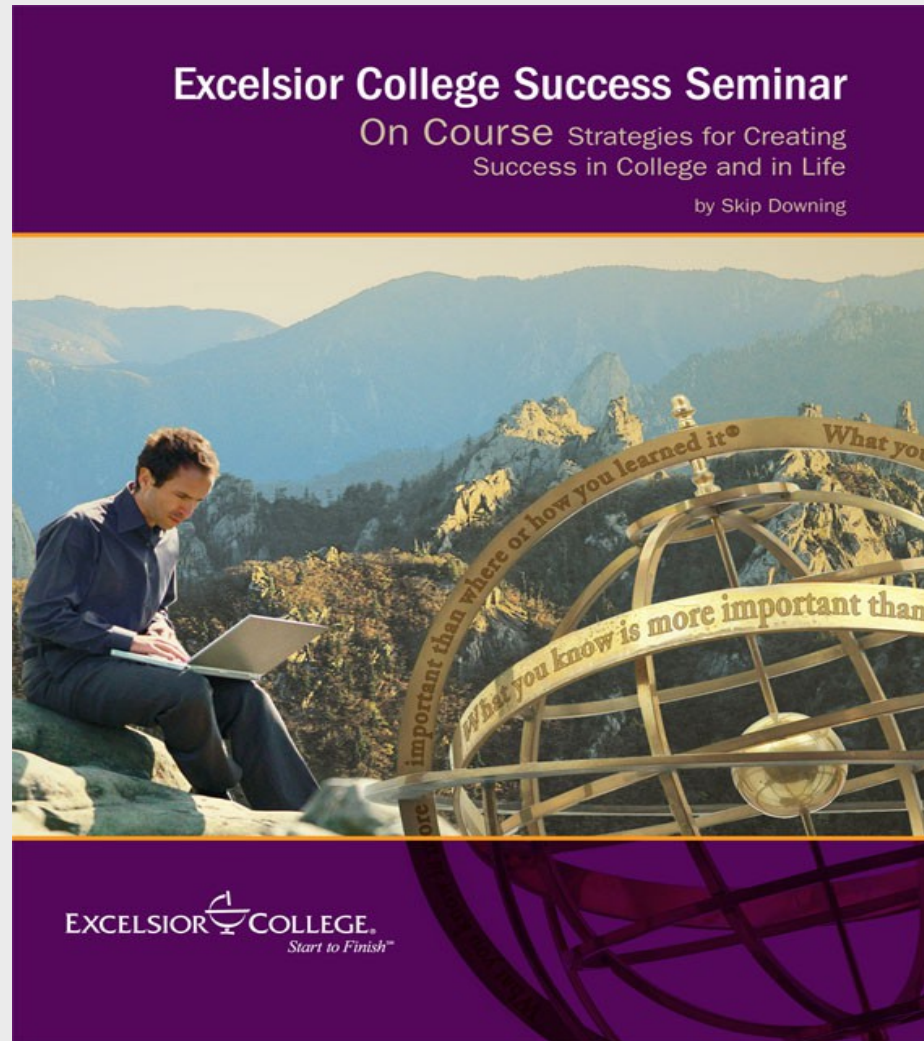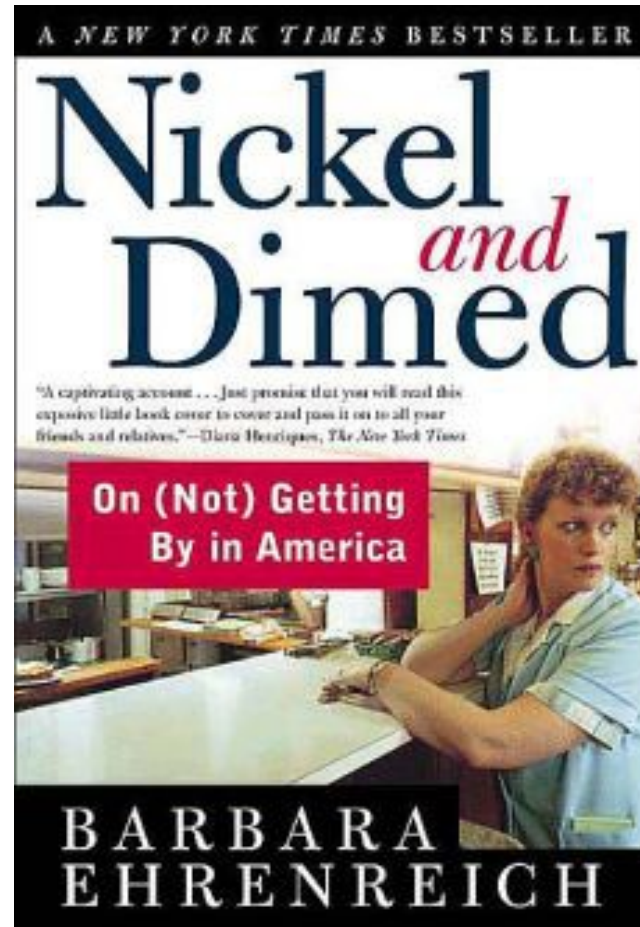# By Skip Downing (Houghton-Mifflin)

A common reader

Elements of the EC Success Seminar

1. Title of Module

   Module Four: Career Explorations, Professional Advancement and Emotional Intelligence

2. An inspirational quote

- *The major difference I've found between the highly successful and the least successful is that the highly successful stick to it. They have staying power. Everybody fails. Everybody has their knocks, but the highly successful keep coming back.*

    Sherry Lansing, chairman, Paramount Pictures.

- *A dream doesn't become reality through magic; it takes sweat, determination, and hard work.*

    Gen. Colin Powell.

Elements of the EC Success Seminar

3.   Objectives: By the end of this module, you will be able to:

- Describe the relationship between college and your career (or career aspirations)

- Describe "professional behavior" and how it applies to college and work life.

- Use the Bureau of Labor Statistics website to compare salaries and job outlook between two different professions.

- Begin applying a "Ten Step Writing Process" to your own professional writing needs

Elements of the EC Success Seminar

4. Reading and viewing Assignments from the textbooks, the virtual library, videos made for the course, Youtube, webinars

5. Guided Journal Assignments

Write about an experience when you felt one of the following emotions: frustration or anger, fear or anxiety, sadness or depression. Describe fully what happened and your emotional reaction… (from On Course, p. 215).

Elements of the EC Success Seminar

6. Practical Applications

   Consider the kind of writing you will do in your career (e.g., reports, legal documents, diagnostic reports and medical charts). Use the "Ten-Step Writing Process" to write an actual or a fictional report for your supervisor and place in the Drop Box (two-page limit)

   (modified from <u>The Adult Learner's Companion</u>, p. 161)

7. The Common Reader

Nickel and Dimed: Write a brief, (100-word) reaction paper to **Chapter 2,** "Scrubbing in Maine," then respond to Question 4 in the Reader's Guide (or you may choose a different question).

Elements of the EC Success Seminar

9. Discussion Board:

1. **Career and Salary Exploration**. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), the mean salary for Registered Nurses was $21.69, or about 42,000 p/year, in the year 2006. Do a search of your own on the BLS website (see the Library Skills section for tips on how to search this website) and find one interesting statistic about your field of interest. Also, do a salary comparison (see Library Skills exercise, below, for steps on how to find salaries in the BLS….

10.Library skills

> **Using Ebrary.** Use the ECVL's electronic book database, Ebrary, to access the readings in the book, *Dealing with Difficult People*.
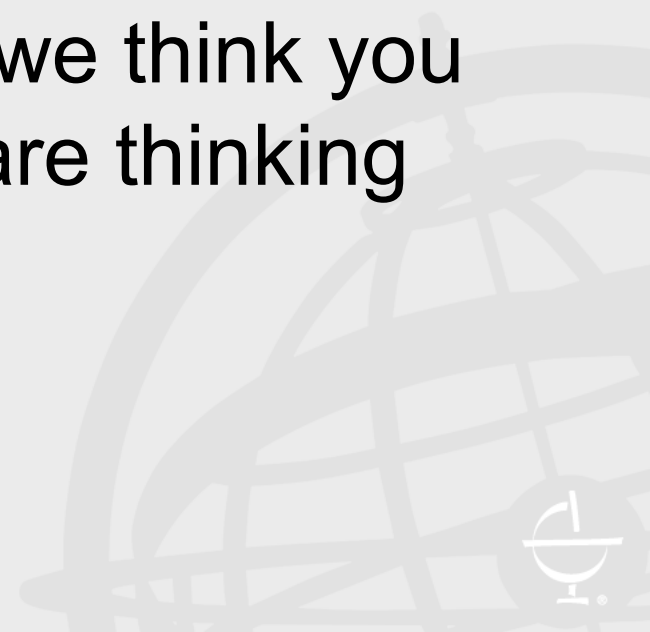
11. Assessment:

Quiz on EC Student Handbook. Read the *Excelsior College Student Handbook* and then take a quiz on essential elements of this document that will guide your college career at Excelsior.

12. For your listening and viewing pleasure.

- Here are three short Youtube videos (including one podcast) that we think you will enjoy, particularly if you are thinking about a career.

13. Grading for Module 4:

- **Guided Journal:** 2@10 point each (20 points total)
- **Assignments:** 3@10 points each (30 points total)
- **Discussion board:** (40 points total)
- **Assessment:** 1 Quiz 10 points
- **Total: 100 points**

Elements of the EC Success Seminar

15. Assignments and tools to help students develop a complete study plan along with a financial plan using a cost calculator (to be added to next iteration of the course).

16. Extensive feedback from the instructor via email, chat rooms, written responses, and, soon, oral feedback on written assignments.

What our pilot students have said

I think that new students to Excelsior should take this course especially if adult learners because they will learn how to use self management and self motivation. They will also learn how to be successful at managing work, school and a family along with handling stress in their life.
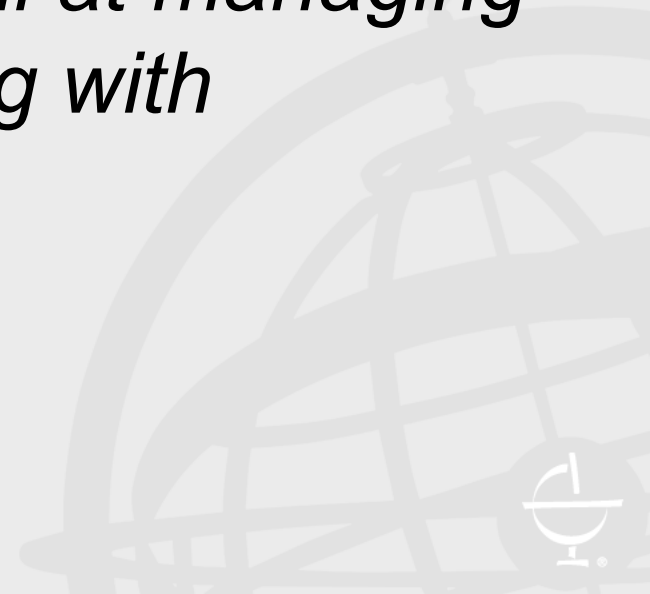
… making this course a mandatory course may be a good idea. Honestly, I have taken [Information Literacy] but didn't get half as much out of it as I did with this course. Maybe the two could be blended together as a requirement, instead of just having [Information Literacy] stand alone [Then] make it required. I would suggest that this course be taken first before any other courses.
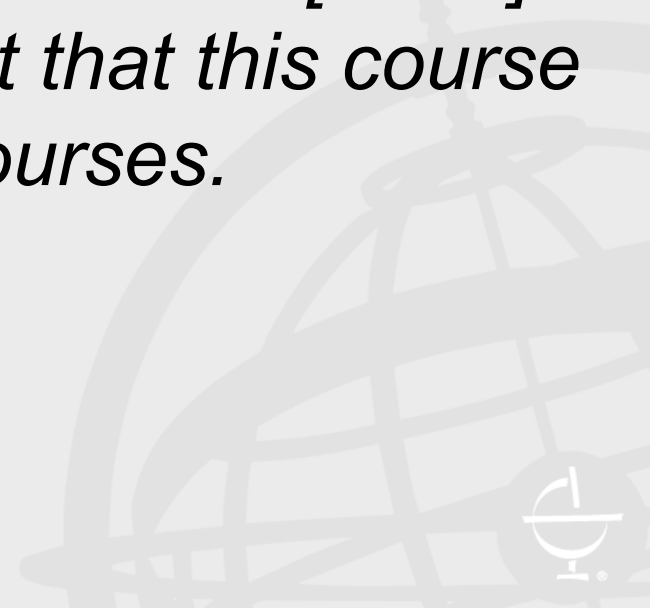
- *Hi Dr L.*

  I know the class is winding down but I have to give you an update on one of the units we have done. I don't recall which unit but it involved setting goals and objectives for work. One of mine was to have all of my staff attend 100% of the training [opportunities]. Why am I sharing this? I have utilized the unit on how different people learn with different methods and by different learning approaches and guess what? It really works! Thank you!

I think one of the most important activities is discovering someone's learning style. …To me, it was important to discover the way that I learned best before I began even trying to learn anything. [This] information should be conveyed to the instructor [so she could] make suggestions to the students for use throughout the course. I think that it will also help the student-teacher learning relationship too.
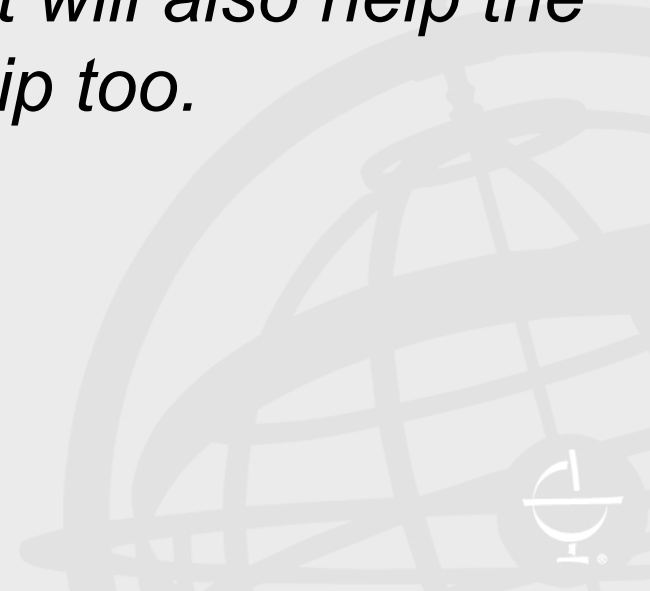
From the First-Year Experience Discussion List

"Looking to see if anyone out there is currently offering or researching the appropriateness and effectiveness of an online version of a student success course, i.e. College 101"

Patrick P. Posted 11.14.09

So what about online courses?

Resources:

1. Annual SLOAN-C International Conferences on Online Learning. Next conference October 28-30, 2009 (www.sloan-c.org/conference/index.asp)

2. Insidehighered.com
    1. "Distance Ed Continues Rapid Growth at Community Colleges," April 7, 2008
    2. "A Look at Online Orientations" April 8, 2009

3. Eduventures: "Online Higher Education: Retention Benchmarks & Practices" (Parts 1 and 2, April 2007)

Online Pedagogy: Key elements to success

- Clear expectations
- Opportunities to learn by doing
- Use of a range of activities (reading, writing, discussion, experimentation)
- Value in peer learning
- Balance between instructor-led, group and independent learning
- Recognition that individual learners prefer to learn in different ways
- Value of regular and constructive feedback
- Close connection between what is most valued in a course and what is formally assessed
- Opportunity to "make sense" of what has been learned through personal or professional application
- Some form of official recognition of achievement

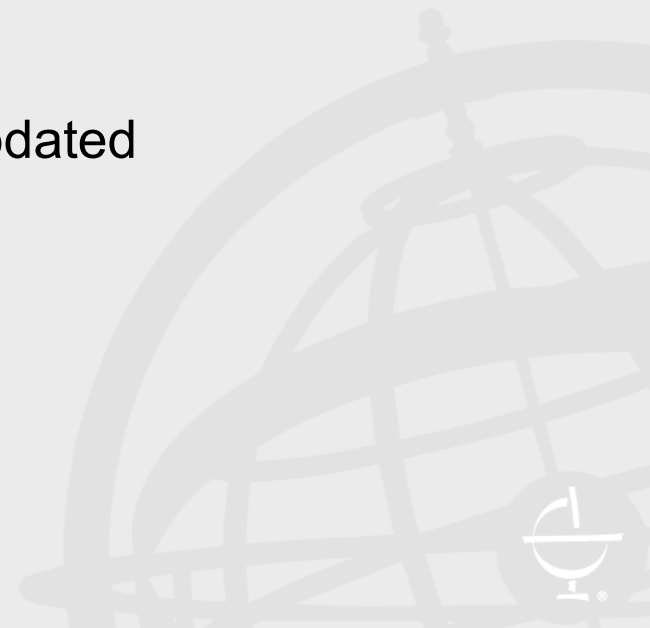Eduventures, "Online Higher Education: Retention Benchmarks & Practices, April, 2007

Principles of Good Learning and Practice:
Chickering and Ehrmann, 1996

1. Encourages interaction between students and faculty

2. Encourages cooperation among students.

3. Encourages prompt feedback

4. Conveys high expectations

5. Uses active learning techniques

6. Good practice emphasizes time on task

Some advantages of online instruction

- Within the online course email, discussion boards, chat rooms, and whiteboards provide more opportunities for students and faculty to interact and to interact in a thoughtful and deliberate manner.

- Online learning allows information worldwide to be linked into the course in a multitude of formats (Power Point with voiceover, webinars, wikis, etc.)

- Course materials can be quickly and easily updated

- Anywhere, anytime

- Access, affordability, and quality

- Online delivery encourages independent/peer learning and self-assessment and can facilitate constructivist pedagogy (or andragogy) in various ways.

It's only going to grow…

- *Saint Paul – To expand access, increase technology skills, provide exciting and inspiring course content, and maximize efficiency and use of taxpayer resources, Governor Tim Pawlenty and Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) Board of Trustees Chair David Olson today announced a goal to have 25 percent of all MnSCU credits earned through online courses by 2015.*

  Press release, Office of the Governor, November 20, 2008

- **State of Michigan now requires all high school students to take at least one online course as a condition of graduation.**

  Eduventures online report, April 7, 2008
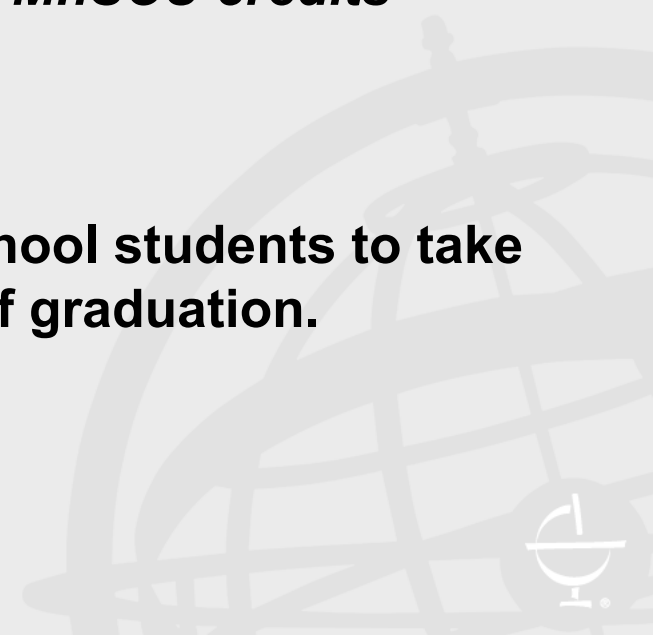
Traits of Adult Learners…

- Adults are self-motivated, especially with information that has immediate application to their lives and work. They expect, for example, practical tools to help them solve problems in the workplace.
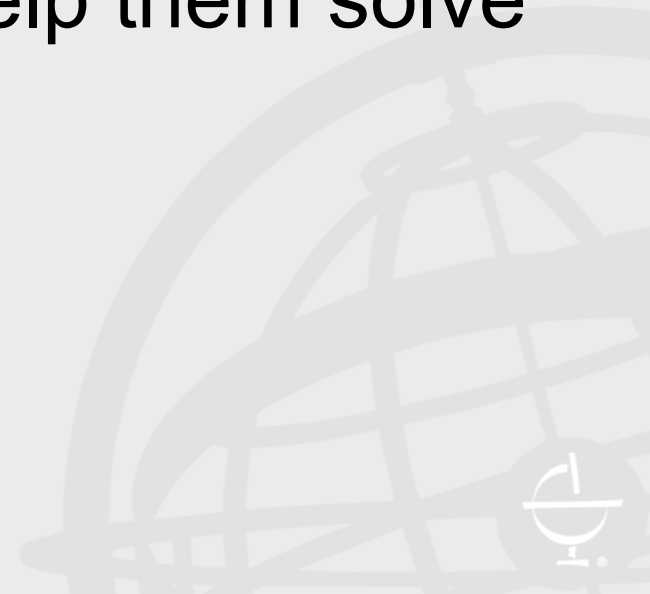
Traits of Adult Learners…

- Adults learn best by building on what they already know so that they can incorporate new ideas into their existing, vast reservoir of learning. They want to be respected for their experience in life. Therefore, effective methods draw on participants' own knowledge and encourage reflection on their knowledge base.
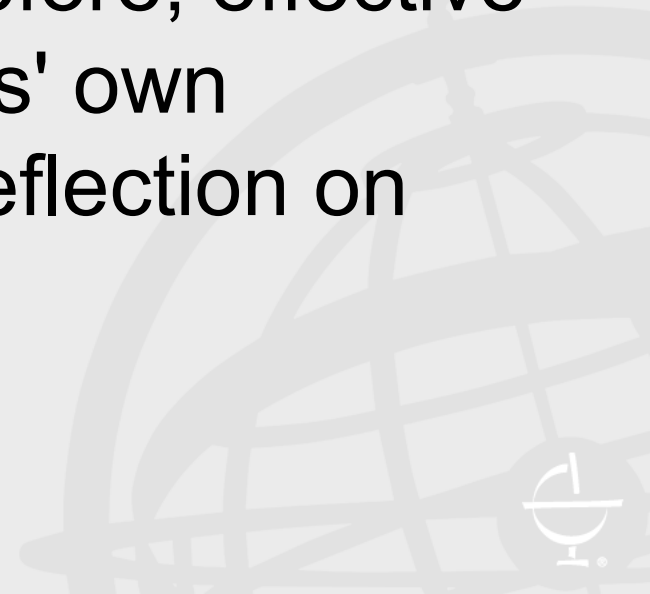
Traits of adult learners

- Adults learn in different ways. Each person has a particular learning style. An educational session will work best if participants have the opportunity to engage in multiple learning modalities: to listen, look at visuals, ask questions, simulate situations, read, write, and discuss critical issues.
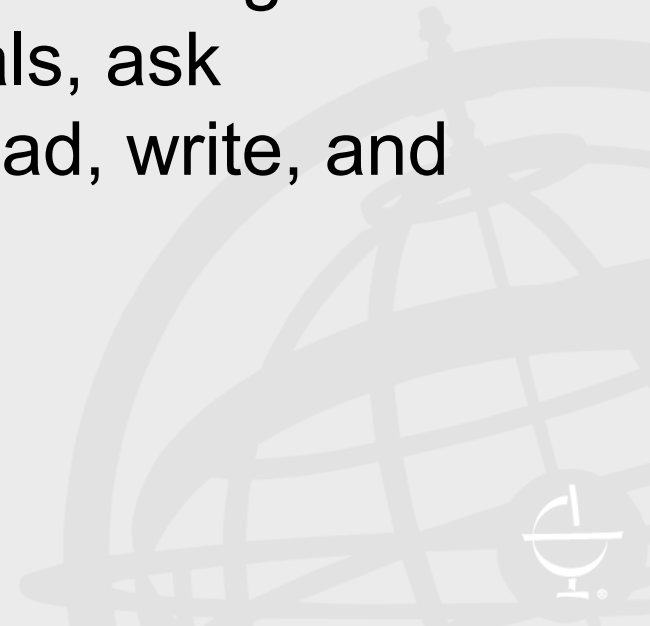
Traits of adult education

- Adults learn best when they are actively engaged, when they "learn by doing."

- They are more responsive to active, participatory methods than to passive measures.

- Lectures have their place, but case studies and other small-group activities that allow each individual to be involved are more likely to result in the retention and application of new learning.
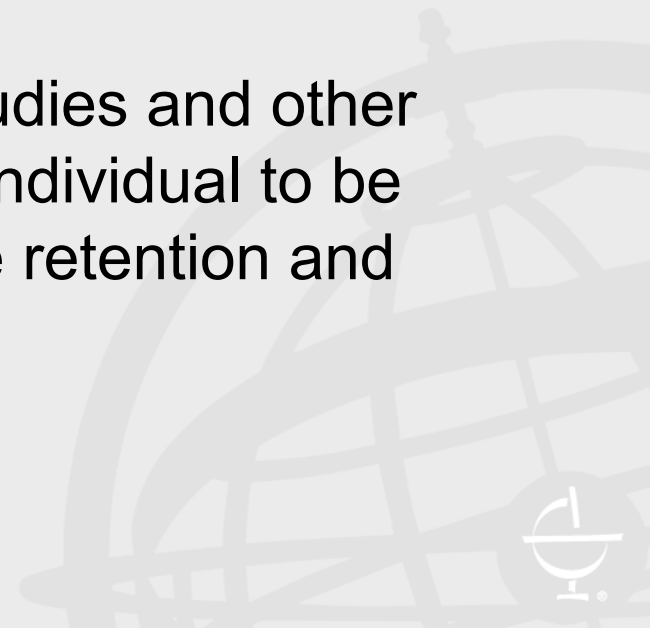
Traits of Adult Learners

- Ideally, each session involves interaction between participants and includes occasions for applying new skills and for discussing causes of problems and barriers to solving them.

- To increase the impact of education, active participation is essential!

Malcolm Knowles Principles of Andragogy

- **The need to know** — adult learners need to know why they need to learn something before undertaking to learn it.

When a person perceives him/herself to be an adult…

…the individual develops a deep psychological need to be perceived by others as being self-directing. Thus, when he finds himself in a situation in which he is not allowed to be self-directing, he experiences a tension between that situation and his self-concept.

(Knowles, 1978:56)
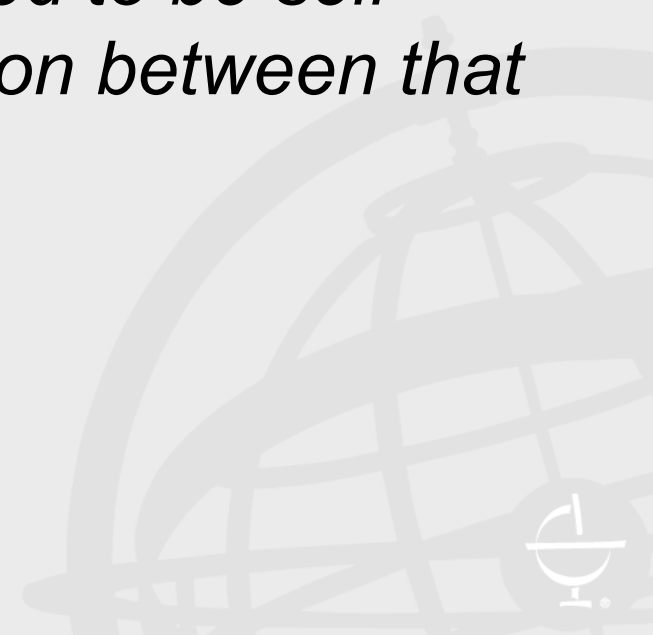
Malcolm Knowles Principles of Andragogy

- **Learner self-concept** —adults need to be responsible for their own decisions and to be treated as capable of self-direction

Malcolm Knowles Principles of Andragogy

- **Role of learners' experience** —adult learners have a variety of experiences of life which represent the richest resource for learning. These experiences are however imbued with bias and presupposition.

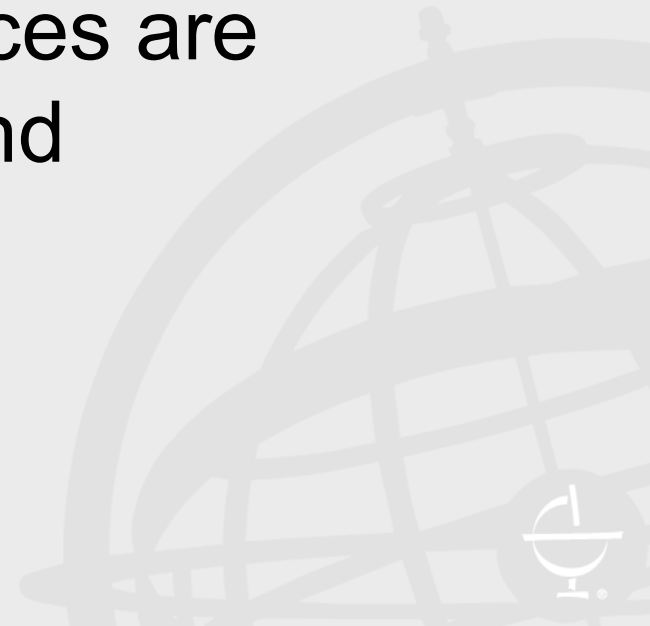# Philosophies of Adult Education: Purposes

Liberal	Behaviorist	Progressive	Humanistic	Radical Adult
To develop the intellectual power of the mind. To make a person literate in the broadest sense – intellectually, morally, spiritually, aesthetically	To bring about behavior that will ensure survival of human species, societies and individuals; promote behaviorial change	To transmit culture and societal structure; promote social change; give learner practical knowledge, problem solving skills	To enhance personal growth and development, self-actualization	Through education, to bring about radical social, political and economic change in society.

Description excerpted from J. Elise and S. Merriam, Philosophical Foundations of Adult Education, Robert E. Krieger Publishing, Co. 1980

Philosophies of Adult Education: The Learners

Liberal	Behaviorist	Progressive	Humanistic	Radical Adult
"Renaissance person;" cultured; always a learner; seeks knowledge rather than just information; conceptual; theoretical understanding.	Learner takes an active role in learning, practicing new behavior and receiving feedback; strong environmental influence.	To transmit culture and societal structure; promote social change; give learner practical knowledge, problem-solving skills.	Learner is highly motivated and self-directed; assumes responsibility for learning.	Equality with teacher in the learning process; personal autonomy enhanced; people create history and culture by combining reflection with action.

Description excerpted from J. Elise and S. Merriam, Philosophical Foundations of Adult Education, Robert E. Krieger Publishing, Co. 1980

Philosophies of Adult Education: The Teacher

Liberal	Behaviorist	Progressive	Humanistic	Radical
The "expert;" transmitter of knowledge; authoritative, clearly directs learning experiences	Manager, controller; predicts and directs learning outcomes.	Organizer; guides learning through experiences that are educative; stimulates, instigates and evaluates the learning process	Facilitator; helper; partner; promotes but does not direct learning.	Coordinator; suggests but does not determine direction for learning; equality between teacher and learner.

Description excerpted from J. Elise and S. Merriam, Philosophical Foundations of Adult Education, Robert E. Krieger Publishing, Co. 1980

Philosophies of Adult Education: Key words/concepts

Liberal	Behaviorist	Progressive	Humanistic	Radical
Liberal learning; learning for the sake of learning; rational, intellectual education; traditional knowledge; classical humanism.	Stimulus-response; behavior modification; competency-based; mastery learning; behavioral objectives; trial and error, feedback; reinforcement.	Problem-solving; experience based education; democracy; lifelong learning; pragmatic knowledge; social responsibility; needs assessment.	Experiential learning; freedom; individuality; self-directed; interaction; openness, cooperation; authenticity; ambiguity; feelings.	Consciousness raising; praxis; non-compulsory learning; autonomy; critical thinking; social action; deinstitutionali-zation; literacy training.

Description excerpted from J. Elise and S. Merriam, Philosophical Foundations of Adult Education, Robert E. Krieger Publishing, Co. 1980

Philosophies of Adult Education: People/Practices

Liberal	Behaviorist	Progressive	Humanistic	Radical
Socrates, Aristotle, Adler, Kallum, Van Doren, Hutchins, Maritain, Moule; Great Books, Lyceum, Elderhostel, Center for the Study of Liberal Education	Skinner, Thorndike, Watson, Tyler; competency-based teacher education; behavior modification programs.	James, Dewey, Bergevin, Lindeman, Benne, Blakely; citizenship education, ABE; ESL; Community Schools movement; cooperative extension; schools without walls	Rogers, Maslow, Knowles, May, Tough, McKensis; encounter groups, group dynamics, self-directed learning projects, human revelations training;	Holt, Kosel, Freire, Goodman, Illich, Ohliger; Freedom Schools; Freire's literacy training; free schools.

Description excerpted from J. Elise and S. Merriam, Philosophical
Foundations of Adult Education, Robert E. Krieger Publishing, Co. 1980

Philosophies of Adult Education: Methods

Liberal	Behaviorist	Progressive	Humanistic	Radical
Dialectic; lecture; study groups; critical reading and discussion; contemplation	Programmed instruction; contract learning; teaching machines; computer-assisted instruction; practice and reinforcement	Problem-solving; scientific methods; activity method; experimental method; project method; inductive method.	Experimental; group discussion; group tasks; team teaching; self-directed learning; individualized learning; discovery method.	Dialog; problem-solving; maximum interaction; discussion groups.

Description excerpted from J. Elise and S. Merriam, Philosophical Foundations of Adult Education, Robert E. Krieger Publishing, Co. 1980

Philosophy of Adult Education Survey

Take the PAE yourself to see how your own beliefs match up to one of the five main philosophies of adult education.

http://www.cals.ncsu.edu/agexed/aee523/paei.pdf

Thank you for coming and for your interest in serving a growing and deserving population of adult learners in American higher education.