

Minimize Barriers and Maximize Learning

Maximize learning effectiveness with adult learners by:

Creating a nonthreatening environment

Establishing relevance

Using kinesthetic methods

Using a myriad of teaching methods

Providing structured learning opportunities

Providing timely and constructive feedback

Meeting individual learning needs

Making course content coherent

Utilizing neuroscience

Convey respect for all individuals that walk into the classroom, and express conviction and value in the learning process. Adults bring with them previous experiences that may well enhance the quality of the classroom.

Learn student names; it feels good when someone remembers your name, so make them feel valued. People may not remember course content, but they will always remember their sensory experience in how they felt in your classroom.

Listen to each student's questions and viewpoints. Create a safe environment, because after all these are the walls of academia, and they should be able to speak their truth...but not their mind. Explain the difference.

Never belittle a student. "You have to little to belittle", is a quote by Kalil Gibran. Be courteous and patient. Assure students that mistakes are a part of the learning process. And in correctional education, who knows that better than the incarcerated student. They are much too aware of the mistakes they have made and are looking for opportunities to better themselves, so look for opportunities to validate success. Encourage them to support one another in their goals. My own vision listed on the classroom door, here at the women's prison, is "women helping women".

Students need to know how course content relates to their immediate situation and how it will help them reach personal and career goals. It's human nature to ask, "What's in it for me?" Ask each student to develop their own personal goals for the course. Encourage them to write down specific actions they will take in response to the course. Begin with the end in mind.

Active participation will engage students in the learning process and enhance retention of new concepts. Some techniques to use are: lectorettes; student-centered activities; group discussions; Socratic questioning; guided practice of skills and application of knowledge. Not all students are going to learn in the same manner. Research indicates there are a myriad of learning styles and multiple intelligences (Howard Gardner Theory) that

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should be considered in the learning environment. Learning styles can be influenced by personality, intelligence, education, experiences, culture, sensory, and cognitive preferences. Behavioral issues in the classroom can be tapered by utilizing methods such as group discussions, role-plays, case studies, labs, guest speakers, games, structured note-taking, coaching, demonstrations, technologies.

Empower students to be self-directed learners as they strive to fulfill their goals and teach them how to become aware of their learning process and master course content. Incorporate problem-solving exercises; use brainstorming, progress logs, allow them to evaluate their own work as well as the work of others. Make them aware of their thinking patterns (critical thinking) and how they proceed to task completion. Encourage them to support each other (teamwork).

Provide timely and constructive feedback on assignments, and this can include instructor feedback as well as peer feedback. Don't forget that you have a group of learners with various abilities, experiences, emotions, and motivation. Get to know your students individually and consider each student's capabilities and interests. Encourage creativity and initiative and pay attention to individual communication as well as cultural differences.

Make course content relevant and coherent. Always begin with the basics and build on each part in sequential order when presenting course material. Incorporate exercises that can be applied to real-life situations for the student. Provide an overview of units with objectives; relate each new component to the previous component. As you present new material, present the overall concept first and use an experiential learning model; also provide examples of concepts in patterns that are relevant to their interests.

Become comfortable with silence. Adult students need breaks to process concepts and information.

Keep up with brain research and utilize techniques that are in sync with memory and emotion!

Now take a moment to name three techniques that enhance your own learning.

What are two specific actions you will take in response to this presentation?

What methods will you use in your classroom to decrease barriers to achievement?

What techniques will you incorporate in your classrooms that validate brain research?