Motivating the Adult Learner
Motivating the Adult Learner

By Sugey Briones, CST, BHA
Our Calling: What it’s all about!
The evolution in the classroom has significantly changed in the last two decades and the evolution to the modern classroom has caused significant changes as well. We are faced with many challenges, whether is multicultural or multilingual students the impact of technology, admissions of students with different academic preparation have demanded a tremendous change in how we conduct the classroom. Furthermore, changes of economics and political pressures throughout the world have impacted education and also the instructors likewise.
Adult learners have a lot to juggle; family, friends, work, and the need for personal quality time. This is why it’s more difficult for an adult to make room for learning, while it is absolutely crucial to prioritize. If their lives is already demanding, then the learning outcome will be compromised. Taking that under consideration, an instructional designer needs to create a flexible program, accommodate busy schedules, and accept the fact that personal obligations might obstruct the learning process.

How do we make this happen? Is it possible to accommodate everyone?
With all of the different challenges that we are faced today, it is imperative to know how important our role in the classroom is. Let’s start with some facts.

In 2013 enrollment statistics were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution Type</th>
<th>Enrollment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public 4-year institutions</td>
<td>6,837,605</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private 4-year institutions</td>
<td>4,161,815</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public 2-year institutions</td>
<td>6,184,229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private 2-year institutions</td>
<td>303,826</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>17,487,475</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Enrollment Demographics:
Women  57.4%
Full-time 61.7%
Minority  30.9%
Foreign  3.3%
Single Parents 1.9 million
Even though the enrollment seems promising, a new report on the college dropout rate featured depressing statistics. 46% of those who enter a U.S. college fail to graduate within six years.

It has been released that nearly half of America’s college students drop out before receiving a degree.
### The Facts

#### Increase in dropout rates
Percentage of students who left educational institutions without graduating

2000 to 2004 cohort compared with that of 2005 to 2010

*Note: These figures include about 10% of students nationally who moved to other universities*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First-time students by intake group</th>
<th>2000 to 2004 group</th>
<th>2005 to 2010 group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contact institutions</td>
<td>Unisa*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All three- and four-year degrees</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three-year diplomas*</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All three- and four-year qualifications at all institutions</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>About 58%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The three-year diploma figure for the 2000 cohort comes from Technikon SA, which subsequently merged with Unisa.*

Data source: COUNCIL ON HIGHER EDUCATION, DHET, IAN SCOTT
Motivating the Adult Learner

With all of these factors at hand arises a question that is frequently asked by those individuals who take their classroom management seriously. Adults are characterized by maturity, self-confidence, autonomy, solid decision making, and are generally more practical, multi-tasking, purposeful, self-directed, experienced, and less open-minded and receptive to change. All these traits affect their motivation, as well as their ability to learn.

How do I motivate the adult learner?
The most potent motivators are internal rather than external. Adults need to know why it is important to learn something. They need patience and consistency. The biggest impact is in the classroom. They are going to have excuses, some valid some convenient.

Therefore, How Do I motivate them?

Motivating the Adult Learner
What is motivation?

Motivation is the force that drives people to fulfill a need. The reason or reasons one has for acting or behaving in a particular way. The general desire or willingness of someone to do something.
#1 Be Prepared
Over the past two decades, there has been a major movement in higher education called “the learning college”. The learning has become student-centered rather than instructor-centered. One of the biggest challenges that we faced today is to be able to “entertain” the students in order to keep them focused. Introduce yourself, learn your student’s name and if you are timid—take charge!
#1 Be Prepared

- Prepare your lessons. Being knowledgeable, organize and being in control are major characteristics that students are looking for in their instructors.
- Being in control pays off not only in eliminating barriers to classroom communication, but in developing self-confidence in teaching.
- There may be students who question why someone with your expertise would spend their time teaching at a college. Be prepared.
So how do we help those tentative, cautious learners who lack confidence in themselves and, above all else, want learning to be pleasant and painless?

There is good news: Teachers can play a key role in empowering students. They don't do it with baseless excitement about how wonderful students are or how students can do anything (especially when they know those students are missing key skills). They do it with accurate descriptions of those actions learners must take in order to succeed. They make the tasks clear and explain what steps to take and in what order.

They do it by identifying relevant resources and they do it by supporting student efforts.

**10 Ways to Motivate the Adult Learner**
#2 Be a Role Model

- Assert yourself as the type of leader that the students would like to follow and learn from.
- The best way to work with adults is to respect the fact that they are essentially your equal once you leave the classroom.
- Try to assert the kind of image that allows them to respect you outside of the classroom, as well.
- *Lead by example.*
#3 Be Firm

Structure your class
Set expectations on day one and hold all students accountable for their actions
Own your class and control in the direction you want it to go.

Being firm does not equals being a dictator. Remember, they are adults!
#3 Be Firm

Have high expectations and your students will naturally want to achieve highly. Students want to be taught about things that will be useful to their work, expect to have immediate results, seek for information that will be worth their while and not be a waste of their time or money.

This is why it’s important to create an environment that will maximize their advantages, meet their individual needs and address all the learning challenges.

10 Ways to Motivate the Adult Learner
#3 Be Firm
If they come to you seeking help, assist them in identifying their specific problem areas and provide resources that the student can use to improve their skills. Be a facilitator. Beyond teacher-student relationships, teachers can empower students by making sure the work students do is meaningful and important.

10 Ways to Motivate the Adult Learner
#4 Be Diverse

If there is any area of teaching that demands common sense, it is the diversity found in today’s classrooms. Our classrooms today are full of students of various age groups, ethnic backgrounds, cultural experiences, and educational abilities as I mentioned before. For educators, diversity poses significant challenges. Get to know your student’s backgrounds.
#4 Be Diverse
A diverse classroom provides several opportunities. Diversity provides an enriching experience when students have share with each other and with the instructor, and may assist in reducing cultural barriers.

The diverse class provides a forum for understanding the differences among individuals and social classes.
#5 Be Fun!

Be the kind of teacher that is interesting and fun. Don't be so by-the-book that the students find you dry, but also don't be wild and unpredictable.

Maintain strictly professional relationships with students, but feel free to loosen your tie, or let your hair down, when the occasion calls for it. They are adults.

Teachers celebrate successes with students, even small ones, and teachers are there showing students how to make learning experiences out of failures. Students are empowered by good coaching.
#6 Be Tech Savvy

With all the new technology and all the different devices coming out we need to stay on top of the changes.

It all comes down on how well prepared we are in the classroom.

We cannot be beat by technology!
Teaching with technology is not just about staying current on the latest tools, it is mostly about knowing how to successfully incorporate the best tools into your teaching when and where it makes sense.

10 Ways to Motivate the Adult Learner
#7 Be Creative
Creativity engages students in their learning. It causes an impact on students. They remember, they are excited to come into the classroom and learn the next exciting step. More importantly, you’ll see a significant progression. Creativity is the most useful tool.
Don’t forget, the learning styles. Kinesthetic, auditory and visual learners.

10 Ways to Motivate the Adult Learner
Can a teacher design instruction that addresses all these individual differences?
Of course not! “The point is not to match teaching style to learning styles but rather to achieve balance, making sure that each style reference is addressed to a reasonable extent during instruction.”

The most powerful message of the learning styles movement is that content must be delivered in different ways. Variation in instructional methods develops a broad range of learning skills. The learning styles provide no indication of what the students are and are not capable of, nor are they legitimate excuses for poor academic performance, we all understand that.

Students may have a learning preference, but that is not the only way they can learn, nor should it be the only way they are taught.

10 Ways to Motivate the Adult Learner
#7 Be Creative

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Shark Dissection Lab
#8 Be Respectful

Adults who return to the classroom after a long time away, or who approach a new learning situation with hesitation, they need to feel valued, know their opinion is appreciated, and feel they have been heard, they need to know they are respected.

- Effective instructors show respect in many ways: tone of voice, body language, active listening, and word choice. You, too, are an adult; how would you like to be treated as an adult learner?
10 Ways to Motivate the Adult Learner

#8 Be Respectful

Remember, most adults are attending voluntarily – they can choose not to attend a class in which they do not feel comfortable.
# 9 Be Positive

Use the Law of Attraction
# 9 Be Positive

Resilient to change: be flexible.

Dedication- Selfless devotion: serve your students with dedication and integrity.

Pick your battles.

Don't get sucked in.

A positive attitude is a great asset in life. You will be thrown many curve balls in life and especially in the teaching profession. A positive attitude will help you cope with these in the best way.
#10 Be Inspirational

Have empathy. Probably the greatest quality a teacher can have. Creating empathy is about bonding with your students. Get to know them well.

Remember that your students are Individuals.

Know that teaching is a noble profession. The day a teacher realizes that they have been given a great gift - the power to change lives, is the day an inspirational teacher is born.
#10 Be Inspirational

When teachers use their inner talents and strengths in the classrooms and feel what it is like to be “in the zone” students are more likely to become engaged and focused. Rather than wasting time trying to be like someone else, a strengths-based teacher can use her own talents to develop strengths that will take her/him to greatness. If you do not sound inspiring, if your materials are not exciting, how will you motivate your learners? Get them emotionally involved too – come up with controversial statements, tap on memories, add real-life stories.
#10 Be Inspirational

- We all know that teachers who used their strengths made the greatest difference in our lives by allowing us to use our own unique strengths and talents.
- Teachers need to talk about how beliefs affect behavior. Student beliefs about what they can and can't learn powerfully influence what they do and don't learn.
10 Ways to Motivate the Adult Learner
In conclusion

Don’t waste time.
Give meaningful feedback.
Ask for feedback.
Get your students pumped!
Present the benefits of this wonderful career path.
Create a lifetime experience!
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- [http://elearningindustry.com/8-important-characteristics-of-adult-learners](http://elearningindustry.com/8-important-characteristics-of-adult-learners)
- [http://www.wikihow.com/Be-an-Inspirational-Teacher](http://www.wikihow.com/Be-an-Inspirational-Teacher)
- [http://www.futureeducators.org/goteach/2013/03/15/inspiring-your-students-by-being-you/](http://www.futureeducators.org/goteach/2013/03/15/inspiring-your-students-by-being-you/)
- [http://www.c-pal.net/course/module1/m1_respectful.html](http://www.c-pal.net/course/module1/m1_respectful.html)
Thanks to Erica Clipps for providing wit the lab pictures

What’s the Story on Learning Styles?
By: Maryellen Weimer, PhD in Learning Styles, Teaching Professor Blog
http://www.theshotokanway.com/whatmakesagoodinstructor.html