Learner Persistence at Adult Education Programs

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I would rate my knowledge of this topic as
- 1. none
- 2. some
- 3. proficient
- 4. expert

My familiarity with practices to improve student persistence is
- 1. none
- 2. some
- 3. proficient
- 4. expert
Learner Persistence at Adult Education Programs

Agenda

1. Persistence and standards of quality
   - Defining persistence
   - Persistence drivers

2. Applications of persistence research
   - Strategies to enhance learner persistence
1  What is persistence?  
   How do persistence and retention differ?

2  What are the 6 drivers of persistence?

3  What persistence-enhancing strategies can programs use?  
   What strategies can teachers use?
Program quality standards

Colorado Standard 6: Learner Support and Retention

“Program helps learners persist in their learning until they reach their educational goals.”

Standards of Quality for Adult Education Programs: http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeadult/SoQ.htm
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>6.1 Identify persistence forces and barriers</th>
<th>6.2 Offer supportive environment</th>
<th>6.3 Provide sufficient intensity and duration</th>
<th>6.4 Address learner absences</th>
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<td>6.5 Share personal/family community resources</td>
<td>6.6 Recognize progress and achievement</td>
<td>6.7 Advise about next steps</td>
<td>6.8 Update learner eligibility status</td>
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Persistence and program quality

Persistence research

Program practices

Quality adult education programs
What is persistence?
“Well, at first I wanted to come to learn how to read and write ‘cuz of my kids and my grandkids, but now I enjoy coming here and I learned a lot. And it’s helped, it’s helped me, just gave me my self-esteem back and everything.”
What is persistence?

Persistence is continuing to do something, an effect that continues even after the initial impetus has been removed.
What is persistence?
Springfield MA
Read Right Now: Bree

“Well. Um. Being a teenage mom, I had my son; I was 15 when I had my son, so my focus was on him. And OMG. So I really didn’t have the time to go to school. I only got as far as the 8th grade. And I know that it was the time for me now to do something for myself, to better myself.”
What is persistence?

Persistence is continuing to do something, an effect that continues even after the initial impetus has been removed.

Persistence is returning to the classroom when the time is right.
Reflection

What forces or conditions could affect this student’s persistence?
What is persistence?

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What is persistence?

Persistence is continuing to do something, an effect that continues even after the initial impetus has been removed.

Persistence is returning to the classroom when the time is right.

Persistence is driven by an individual’s responses to positive and negative forces that are not necessarily under the school’s control.
Persistence vs. Retention

Students persist, programs retain.

Persistence allows that learning and growth can take place in people’s lives even when learners are not in school.
Persistence vs Retention

Student Profile: Edward
Adult Literacy Action

“Now I know I’m getting older now but I still have dreams. You know, I still have dreams that may be opening my own business. I’m a good painter. I could do drywall and stuff like that.”

“You mostly remember anything and everything. That’s how I got through life, you know – remembering little details.”
In your opinion. . .

. . . what’s driving Edward’s persistence?

. . . what did Edward’s program do to enhance his persistence?
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Welcome to the adult learner persistence website, where you can find tools, models, strategies, and research about ways to help adult students stay on their learning paths. Read more in the Overview.

Drivers of Persistence
Program Design & Management
Instruction
Counseling & Support
Student Involvement
Seeing Progress
Policy
New England Literacy Resource Center
Updated August 1, 2009
## New England Literacy Resource Center
### Drivers of Persistence

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<td>The instructional program is meaningful to the learners’ needs and interests.</td>
<td>The program offers the structure, predictability and sense of safety that learners need in order to feel confident about their progress.</td>
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Sense of belonging & community

Positive

• The learner experiences a sense of belonging and community at the program or class.

Negative

• The learner does not experience a sense of belonging and community at the program or class.
Positive

• The learner has established concrete goals.
• The learner sees measurable progress toward reaching goals.

Negative

• The learner has not established concrete goals.
• The learner does not see measurable progress toward goals.
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Focus on a student.

Think of a successful adult learner you have known. Describe the student to a partner.

What was driving his/her persistence?
What did the program do to help?
Agenda

1
- Persistence and standards of quality
- Defining persistence
- Persistence drivers

2
- Applications of persistence research
- Strategies to enhance learner persistence
NELRC program self-assessments

Tools to guide program design.
Recommend best practices.
Staff members can complete rubrics individually.
Staff members compare ratings and comments to identify priority areas for improvement.
Program improvement process

1. Self-assessment

2

3

4
Program self-assessment by program area

- Intake & Orientation
- Program Design & Management
- Instruction
- Seeing Progress
- Counseling & Support
- Student Involvement
Learner Persistence at Adult Education Programs

Program self-assessment by persistence driver

Sense of Belonging & Community

Clarity of Purpose

Agency

Competence

Relevance

Stability
Program self-assessments

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Updated August 1, 2009
## Promising Practices in Learner Persistence

### Intake and Orientation - --- 9 promising practices

1. **a.** Build a trusting, respectful, and caring relationship with students from the beginning by ensuring that the first contact with prospective students is welcoming (e.g. there is someone to greet new students, there is clear signage and information in students’ languages) and informative.

2. **b.** Provide clear and accessible information to enhance students’ ability to make informed decisions.

3. **c.** Allow students to sample program activities before enrolling as well as clarify mutual expectations for students, instructors, and the program.

4. **d.** Assess students’ skill levels and screen them for learning disabilities or other special needs, and make referrals as appropriate. Provide potential students with enough information that they can make an informed decision about enrolling, including a realistic assessment of skill levels and the time and effort required for achieving their goals. Etc.
### Promising Practices in Learner Persistence

#### Stability – 10 promising practices

1. Have a system for identifying students’ needs for support services; determine which needs the program is equipped to address and which cases should be referred to other agencies; document counseling activities and referrals; and follow up on each case.

2. Promote a support network within the program where staff, volunteers, or peer mentors make personal connections with specific students on a regular basis.

3. Develop student “cohorts” – groups of students who participate together in program activities (e.g. study groups, goal-related workshops, classes) as a learning community.

4. Implement a formal system for staying in contact with and supporting the continuous learning of students who are absent or stopping out, including admission policies that enable easy and timely re-entry to classroom instruction. (Etc. – 6 more on the list)
Discussion

Read and discuss one of the self-assessment rubrics. Talk about promising practices your program does well. Which practices need to be addressed?
Program improvement process

1. Self-assessment
2. Identify areas for improvement
3.
4.

Learner Persistence at Adult Education Programs
Techniques for Improving Learner Persistence - Summary of Participant Suggestions

Choosing strategies

Schedule drop-in classes once a week that serve as make-up classes or extra hours for currently enrolled students.

Hire an intake specialist.

Survey students more than once a year.

Offer a job readiness class. Have employers from the community come in and speak with the students about jobs.

Create a wall of graduates. Create a wall of photos and cards from students.

California Adult Learner Persistence Project
Building Community in the Classroom to Support Learner Persistence

**Dialogue: Building Community**

Plan a procedure to welcome new students to the class without putting the students on the spot or embarrassing them. Be careful about personal questions.

Assign class jobs, e.g. managing attendance, handouts, passing out books, lending supplies, welcoming new students. This encourages student-to-student interactions.

Get to class before students and greet them as they arrive. Learn their names quickly.

Rearrange desks so they face each other.

Periodically check to see that students know each others’ names. Put up questions at the beginning of class about people’s names, e.g. Name 4 students from Somalia.

Use a variety of grouping strategies that allow students to practice with different students every day.
Applications of research

1. Self-assessment
2. Areas for improvement identified
3. Choose strategies, implement for 1 semester
4.
Implementing promising practices

Sense of belonging & community

- Classroom is comfortable
- Students work in small groups and pairs
- Students create phone list to share
- Staff is friendly & welcoming
Implementing promising practices

Clarity of purpose

- Program uses adult learning principles
- Document counseling activities and referrals
- Systematic assessment and placement procedures
- Staff training on constructive feedback
Applications of research

1. Self-assessment
2. Identify areas for improvement
3. Choose strategies, implement for 1 semester
4. Track changes in attendance and completion rates
New student orientation

How is this guest speaker enhancing the persistence of new students?
Adult education providers can boost learner persistence by intentionally addressing the drivers through all facets and phases of their programs.

For example, an informative and welcoming student orientation that *begins the goal-setting process* and that *involves enrolled students as presenters* can address various needs for

- a sense of belonging
- clarity of purpose
- competence
- relevance
- and agency.

New England Literacy Resource Center
http://www.nelrc.org/persist/
## Conclusion

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We value your feedback!

• Please fill out the evaluation form.
• Return the evaluation to your presenter.