Motivating Adult Learners: Self-Efficacy, Goal Setting, and the Learning Environment

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Objectives of Today's Session

- Summarize research highlights on motivation and (a) self-efficacy, (b) goal setting, and (c) the learning environment
- Provide an opportunity for participants to discuss the research highlights and implications for their practice, and
- Provide an opportunity for participants to share strategies they use to enhance learners' motivation.

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Research Base

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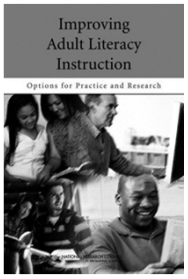
Improving Adult Literacy Instruction



http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=13242

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Also of Interest

- Improving Adult Literacy Instruction: Developing Reading and Writing (2012)
- Preparing Teachers: Building Evidence for Sound Policy (2010)
- Improving Adult Literacy Instruction: Supporting Learning and Motivation (2012)

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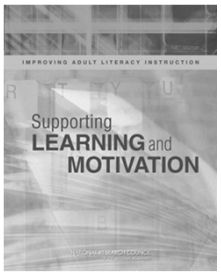
Companion Guide to Improving Adult Literacy Instruction



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Three Main Themes from the Report

- Self-efficacy
- Goal Setting
- The Learning Environment

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Definition of Terms: Motivation and Persistence

Motivation: *The reasons—including desire or willingness—one has for acting or behaving in a particular way*

- Intrinsic vs. extrinsic motivation
  - Intrinsic motivation is the willingness to undertake a behavior for its own sake, enjoyment or interest.
  - External motivation is the willingness to undertake a behavior in order to receive some type of reward or approval that comes from others.

Persistence: In adult literacy, persistence as defined as…

…adults staying in programs for as long as they can, engaging in self-directed study or distance education when they must stop attending services, and returning to program services as soon as the demands of their lives allow.

Comings, J.P. (2007). Persistence: Helping Adult Education Students Reach Their Goals. Chapter 2 in J. Comings, B. Garner, and C. Smith (eds), Review of Adult Learning and Literacy, Volume 7, p. 24

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Factors That Support or Constrain Persistence in Learning

FIGURE 5-1 Factors that support or constrain persistence in learning.

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Individual beliefs

Self-efficacy
Positive attribution
Incremental intelligence

Self-regulation

Error management
Self-directed, autonomous approach to learning

Student motivation and persistence

Goal setting

Proximal and distal goals
Mastery goals
Value of a task

Learning environment

Scaffolding/Zone of proximal development
Fine-grained feedback
Situational to personal interest
Goal structures

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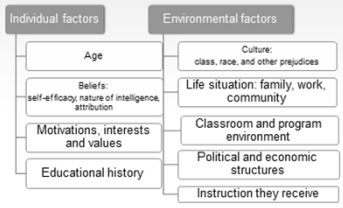
Individual Beliefs and Environmental Factors

Individual and Environmental Factors influence Motivation

- Students and their approach to improving literacy skills are influenced by:



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Self-efficacy

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Key Terms: What Is Self-efficacy?

Self-efficacy is the belief about whether you can be successful at a particular task that you attempt.

High or strong self-efficacy is the belief that you will be successful.

Similar concepts:

- *Expectancy belief*: the belief that your effort will result in you attaining your goal in a specific area
- *Self-concept of ability*: beliefs about your ability in a specific area
- Literacy examples of self-efficacy:
  - Belief that you can succeed at writing college papers.
  - Belief that you can understand letters sent home by a child's teacher.
  - Belief that you can pass the high school equivalency test.

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Activity: Self-Efficacy

- Think of a task you've never done but feel you *could successfully accomplish*…why do you feel you could be successful?
- Think of a task or accomplishment that you *aren't sure you could successfully accomplish*…why?
- Think of a task or accomplishment that you feel fairly certain *you would **not** successfully accomplish*…why?

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Research Findings: Self-Efficacy

- Self-efficacy related to literacy is associated with positive outcomes in literacy, while general self-esteem doesn't seem related to particular outcomes.
- Self-efficacy can be "adaptive" or malleable.
- Students' sense of self efficacy may be related to…
  - …An incremental view of intelligence.
  - …Stronger sense of self-control and autonomy, coupled with intrinsic motivation
  - …The ways students attribute success or failure.

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Why Is Self-efficacy Important?

- When learners expect to succeed, they are more likely to put forth the effort and persistence needed to perform well.
- More confident students are likely to be more cognitively engaged in learning and thinking than students who doubt their capabilities.
- Self-efficacy is a strong predictor of many educational, physical, and mental health outcomes and has been associated with better literacy skills.
- Self-efficacy in a particular domain, such as education or health, relates positively to outcomes in that domain.

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Activity: Self-efficacy

- Individually, review the research findings and implications for practice for self-efficacy on the self-assessment handout.
- In pairs, choose one self-efficacy finding and discuss specific strategies that you have used and/or identify strategies would you like to use in your classroom/program.
- We'll check in with the large group on what items are of most interest.

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Goal Setting

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Goal Setting: Key Terms

- Short-term and long-term goals
- Goal orientation theory
  - **Mastery goal**
  - Performance-approach goal
  - Performance-avoidance goal
- *Goal structures:* mastery goal or performance goal; how goals are emphasized in classrooms; how students perceive the way goals are emphasized

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Research Findings: Goals and Motivation

- Goal structures (emphasis of mastery vs. performance goals) influence the types of goals that students adopt
  - **If mastering a new ability for the sake of learning** is emphasized (e.g., "it will help in the future if you know how to…"), students will adopt **mastery goals**;
  - When **performance is emphasized** (e.g., "the best students make the Dean's list"), students will adopt **performance-related goals**.

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Research Findings: Goal Setting

- Helping students set **short-term goals related to literacy skills**, and supporting them to be successful at these goals, increases self-efficacy and persistence.
- Goal structures (emphasis of mastery vs. performance goals) influence the types of goals that students adopt.
- According to research…
  - **mastery goals lead to better outcomes.**
  - performance-avoidance goals lead to poorer outcomes
  - performance-approach goals have mixed outcomes

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Activity: Goal Setting

- Think of one goal you have for the future.
- Think of the steps you need to do to reach that goal.
- Reflect – What parallels does this activity have in working with students in setting goals?

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Characteristics of Those with Mastery Goals

- Prefer challenging tasks
- Focus on task mastery and improving competence
- Believe that learning occurs at different rates
- Base satisfaction on effort exerted
- Increase efforts if faced with negative outcomes: "the harder it is, the more I need to try"
- Attribute failure to lack of effort
- Engage in extensive self-monitoring

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Activity: Goal Setting

- Individually, review the research findings and implications for practice for goal setting on the self-assessment handout.
- In pairs, choose one goal setting finding and discuss specific strategies that you have used and/or identify strategies would you like to use in your classroom/program.
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The Learning Environment

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The Learning Environment: Key Terms

- Scaffolding/Zone of proximal development
- Fine-grained feedback
- Situational to personal interest
- Goal structures

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Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development

Adapted from Hill & Crevola (unpublished)

State of Victoria Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2007

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Providing Feedback

Feedback helps learners fine-tune their knowledge, skills, and strategies, affecting learning in a number of ways that are well documented.

- **Accurate and timely feedback helps learning.**
- **Provide fine-grained feedbac**k—feedback detailed and specific to the task at hand—with hints that prompt learners to generate information or execute a behavior or skill.
- **Qualitative feedback** is better for learning than test scores and error flagging.

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Using and Inspiring Learners' Interests

Adult learners are likely to put forth more effort and stay engaged in tasks they find interesting.

- Researchers have made a useful distinction between **personal interest** and **situational interest**, and both types have implications for motivating adult learners.
  - **Personal interest** is the interest that learners bring into classrooms; it represents their longstanding preferences.
  - **Situational interest** is inspired by a particular event or characteristic of an experience, such as the features of a text or task.

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The Learning Environment: Research Findings

- Motivation, persistence, engagement and goal attainment are influenced both by individual characteristics, such as self-efficacy, **and** the environment.
- People regulate their learning and allocate energy to tasks that are neither too easy nor too hard.
- Students' motivation is increased when they have some autonomy and self-direction about the learning tasks they need to do.
- Students need feedback in order to assess their progress on tasks, a part of self-regulation of learning.

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The Learning Environment: Research Findings

- Students' motivation is increased when they value a task because it is part of the process of accomplishing their goals. (Intrinsic)
- Students' motivation is increased when they use error management and attribute success positively—to effort and strategies rather than to negative internal factors (e.g., "I'm not smart.").
- Students can learn self-regulation strategies from observing teachers and other students using them.
- Students are de-motivated when they feel that structures are pre-determined and too controlling of them.

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Activity: The Learning Environment

- Individually, review the research findings and implications for practice for the learning environment on the self-assessment handout.
- In pairs, choose one learning environment finding and discuss specific strategies that you have used and/or identify strategies would you like to use in your classroom/program.
- We'll check in with the large group on what items are of most interest.

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Questions?

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What is LINCS?

HTTPS://LINCS.ED.GOV

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What is LINCS?

WHAT IS LINCS?

LINCS, the Literacy Information and Communications System, is an initiative of the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE). LINCS aims to expand evidence-based practice in the field of adult education. The LINCS website provides high-quality, on-demand educational opportunities to practitioners of adult education, so those practitioners can help adult learners successfully transition to postsecondary education and 21st century jobs.

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How Can LINCS Help You?

- A **Resource Collection** containing high-quality, evidence-based materials in 16 topic areas critical to the field
- A **Learner Center** that connects adult learners to free online resources to reach life goals
- An online **Community of Practice** where you can share and collaborate with your peers
- A **Learning Portal** where you can engage in self-paced and facilitated professional development courses
- A **Professional Development Center** that provides evidenced-based professional development activities

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New LINCS Quick Reference Guide

Where do I Start?

LINCS COMPONENT	INSTRUCTORS	PROGRAM ADMINISTRATORS	PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPERS	STATE STAFF	ADULT LEARNERS
Community	✓	✓	✓		
Learning Portal	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Resource Collection	✓	✓	✓	✓	
State Resources				✓	
Learner Center					✓

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Contact

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Don't Miss a Beat; Connect with LINCS

- Join the **Community**: https://community.lincs.ed.gov
- Access the **Learning Portal**: http://lincs.ed.gov/courses
- Search the **Resource Collection**: http://lincs.ed.gov/collections
- Explore the **Learner Center**: https://learner.lincs.ed.gov/
- Follow the latest updates: **@LINCS_ED**
- Join our professional group: **LINCS_ED**
- Watch webinar archives and more: **LincsEd**

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LINCS Survey

Please complete the LINCS survey form.

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