

Principles of Adult Learning

Based on work done Malcolm S Knowles, and other education theorists, ECA-LA has adopted the following principles as a way to aid your orientation to adult learning, program planning and good practices.

Adults must want to learn

- Adults learn effectively only when they have a strong inner motivation to develop a new skill or acquire a particular type of knowledge.

Working with adult learners is different than working with children

- Children learn skills sequentially whereas adults start with a problem and then work to find a solution.

Adult learners come with prior experiences

- Adults bring many different experiences, skills, and perspectives to a classroom. It is important to acknowledge and utilize the expertise in the room.

Adults learn best in informal environments

- Adults have different experiences and perspectives on formal education. It is important to acknowledge and understand that these experiences may affect their readiness to learn.

Adult learning needs to be practical and relevant

- Adult learners want to know how the topic or skill being taught will help them right now. The skills and lessons taught need to be relevant to their lives.

Adults learn by doing

- It is important to provide adult learners with activities and group work that get them to actively participate and engage with the topics and teachings.

Adults participate in their learning opportunities

- Adult learners want to be involved in the decision on what they will be learning. Having them help with the planning is important.

