

Principles for Effective Work with Young Adult Learners
Recommendations of the New Hampshire Adult Education Youth Learner Task Force
based on the research and experience of members

Recommendations for teachers

- *Relationships with learners*
 - ⇒ Value individual differences
 - ⇒ Have a check-in time in which you relate to students one-to-one
 - ⇒ Give participants an opportunity to work at their own pace
 - ⇒ Encourage supportive relationships—among students and with other adults
 - ⇒ Have and maintain a positive attitude toward young learners.
 - ⇒ Establish that you are an advocate for the learner.

- *Classroom management*
 - ⇒ Manage classroom dynamics proactively
 - ⇒ Create an atmosphere of respect (Everyone in the class treats everyone else with respect; teacher should address any examples of non-tolerance directly.)
 - ⇒ Be fair and consistent.
 - ⇒ Communicate expectations that are high and clear.
 - ⇒ Take responsibility for providing a positive, safe atmosphere.
 - ⇒ Strive for a good mix of flexibility and structure
 - ⇒ Develop guidelines and expectations with the students so they have a sense of ownership
 - ⇒ Keep the guidelines simple; for example, one program uses, “Be kind. Do your best work.”

- *Creative activities*
 - ⇒ Provide food
 - ⇒ Provide rewards
 - ⇒ Emphasize hands-on active learning
 - ⇒ Vary activities
 - ⇒ Allow for fun
 - ⇒ Incorporate computer and multi-media instruction
 - ⇒ Build in instant success
 - ⇒ Develop activities that can be completed in one session

- *Contextual learning*
 - ⇒ Incorporate life skills/character building
 - ⇒ Focus on the improvement of skills for lifelong learning
 - ⇒ Develop lessons that are relevant for youth
 - ⇒ Help youth develop social skills
 - ⇒ Provide stimulating curriculum for each student and the class so that students learn about each other and learn to care about each other and the class
 - ⇒ Teach skills in context and connect to the GED or adult high school curriculum

Recommendations for Programs

- Coordination between intake and teachers
 - ⇒ Consider classroom guidelines/contracts
 - ⇒ Make a policy for working with under-18-year-olds and their parents including who should make the appointment, who must sign, how confidentiality will be treated. (See recommendations in the next section.)
 - ⇒ Emphasize accountability.
- Safe environment
 - ⇒ Zero tolerance for violence or threatening
 - ⇒ Clear guidelines for treating all with respect
- Counseling component
 - ⇒ It's ideal to have counseling support staff
 - ⇒ In some small programs, teacher may play a counseling role or make referrals.)
- Class configuration
 - ⇒ Smaller classes are ideal
 - ⇒ In larger programs, separate youth classes may be effective.
 - ⇒ Mixed level classes can work well with adults acting as role models; this works best when there is a balance of youth and older adults.
 - ⇒ Consider time of classes for youth; morning may not be best.

Recommendations for working with parents and teens

- Decide at the local program level whether to require a parent to sign when a student under 18 registers. (Decisions should be made at the local program level and may depend on the policies of the sponsoring agency.)
- Make it clear that the focus is on the student and that the student must take initiative to succeed in adult education.
 - ⇒ Include a parent at some point in the enrollment process if possible.
 - ⇒ Be sure the student has an opportunity to talk to you alone without the parent.
- Be transparent with everyone about procedures.
 - ⇒ If you will call a parent when a student is absent, be sure the student knows that you will.
 - ⇒ If you will not give information about test scores to a parent, be sure the parent knows that you will only give test scores to the student and why.
- Help parents who have been very involved with a child's education make a transition to a new role in which their child is more independent.
 - ⇒ Give them information about other resources.
 - ⇒ Be clear about the importance of the student taking initiative for his/her own learning.