



Andragogy

Competency

The cooperating teacher understands and applies Knowles' six adult learning principles when working with their student teacher.

Key Method

The cooperating teacher understands the principles of adult learning and intentionally applies them when working with a teacher candidate. Using adult learning principles helps mentors support student teachers from all backgrounds - across race, language, and class - to grow into effective educators, rather than expecting them to learn through trial and error alone.

Method Components

Andragogy, or adult learning, is most effective when it draws on the six principles identified by Malcolm Knowles. Adult learning differs from traditional K-12 education because it focuses on how adults acquire new knowledge and skills. As a cooperating teacher, paying attention to these principles helps you support your student teacher as a learner.

Six Principles of Adult Learning

Although many teaching and learning concepts apply to learners of all ages, there are important distinctions between child/adolescent and adult learning. In the 1970s, Dr. Malcolm Knowles identified six adult learning principles:

1. Self-Directed

- a. Adult learners are accustomed to making their own decisions and value having choices about what and how they learn.

- b. Adults often learn better and faster when they have at least some control over their learning.

2. Experience-Based Learning

- a. Adults bring a wealth of experience to the learning process and prefer to connect new learning to what they already know.
- b. Facilitators should intentionally integrate this prior knowledge and experience into concepts they teach.

3. Readiness to Learn

- a. Motivation to learn is tied to goals, careers, and practical relevance. Adult learners are often intrinsically motivated and also respond to extrinsic rewards, such as career opportunities.
- b. Cooperating teachers create environments where student teachers can develop and sharpen their skills in ways that connect to their future classrooms.

4. Relevancy Oriented

- a. When connections to goals or careers are unclear, adults are less motivated to learn.
- b. Adult learners need to see how learning relates to their current situation or career goals.

5. Practical

- a. Adult learners expect to learn in contexts where ideas have direct application to their personal or professional lives.

6. Respected

- a. Adult learners are more successful when they feel that facilitators view them as colleagues rather than traditional students. This is especially important for student teachers from communities that have historically been excluded or underestimated in teaching (e.g., Black, Latino, Native, multilingual, and working-class educators).

Working with Student or Pre-Service Teachers

Cooperating teachers should understand the six principles of adult learning when working with colleagues and other adults. This understanding grows through self-reflection on their own learning style and on personal and professional biases. Educators who work with adult learners also consider what makes professional learning meaningful and relevant for themselves and other adults.

One way a cooperating teacher can provide appropriate learning opportunities for a student teacher is to create an action plan.

Creating an Action Plan

An action plan based on Knowles' six principles of adult learning, also known as andragogy, should be learner-centered and tailored to the specific needs, experiences, and goals of adult learners. These principles emphasize relevance, self-direction, and drawing from experience. Below is a step-by-step guide for creating an action plan that incorporates each principle:

1. Need to Know: Why Learners Need to Learn

Adult learners want to understand why learning is beneficial and necessary. Set learning objectives through the lens of real-world classroom needs.

2. Learner's Self-Concept: Autonomous and Self-Directed

Involve your student teacher in setting their goals. Co-creating the learning plan supports their ownership of the process.

3. Leverage Prior Knowledge

Student teachers bring expectations and prior experiences into the classroom. Incorporate these experiences and knowledge into the learning.

4. Readiness to Learn

Outline how learning during student teaching prepares the candidate for their own classroom. Align objectives with real-life challenges and explain how each new learning piece fits into preparation for solo instruction.

5. Orientation to Learning: Problem-Centered Approach

Adult learners are motivated when learning is organized around solving real problems. Co-create tasks that address issues relevant to daily routines or instruction.

6. Motivation to Learn

Recognize, name, and draw on both intrinsic and extrinsic motivators.

An action plan should include:

- **Goal:** A specific goal for your student teacher's learning

- **Strategy:** Concrete actions you'll take to support adult learning theory
- **Success Criteria:** Benchmarks to show how your student teacher is progressing towards the goal
- **Timeframe:** Timelines for benchmarks, feedback, and achieving the goal
- **Rationale:** A clear explanation of why this goal matters

Creating an action plan helps adult learners stay organized, motivated, and focused on achieving their goals. It's important to maintain flexibility, since the reality of student teaching may present new learning needs.

Invite cooperating teachers to include goals that help them learn to serve diverse communities (e.g., multilingual learners, students of color, students with disabilities), not just generic instructional skills.

Supporting Rationale and Research

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<https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ930244>

Corley, Mary Ann. (2008). Adult Learning Theories. CALPRO Fact Sheet. Retrieved from:

<https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/read/48297660/adult-learning-theories-calpro>

Dan Goldhaber, John Krieg, Natsumi Naito, Roddy Theobald; Making the Most of Student Teaching: The Importance of Mentors and Scope for Change. *Education Finance and Policy* 2020; 15 (3): 581–591. doi:

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https://www.colorado.edu/plc/sites/default/files/attached-files/how_critical_reflection_triggers_transfo.pdf

Merriam, S. B., & Bierema, L. L. (2014). *Adult learning: Linking theory and practice*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, a Wiley brand. Retrieved from:

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Pappas, C (2023). The Adult Learning Theory-Andragogy-of Malcolm Knowles. Retrieved from:
<https://elearningindustry.com/the-adult-learning-theory-andragogy-of-malcolm-knowles>

Resources

Readings

[12 Principles of Adult Learning by Vella](#)

[Adult Learning Theories](#)

[The Adult Learning Theory-Andragogy by Pappas](#)

[Principles of Adult Learning Slideshare](#)

[Cooperating Teachers' Best Practices for Mentoring #2](#)

[Cooperating Teachers' Best Practices for Mentoring #3](#)

[Cooperating Teachers' Best Practices for Mentoring #4](#)

Templates

[Action Plan Template](#)

Videos

[Andragogy from EdTed](#)

Submission Guidelines & Evaluation Criteria

To earn this microcredential, you must receive a passing score in Parts 1 and 3, and be proficient for all components in Part 2.

Part 1. Overview Questions (Provides Context)

400-500 words

Please don't include any information that will identify you to reviewers.

Using Knowles's six principles of adult learning as your lens, respond to:

- Based on your experiences, when did you shift from being a child/adolescent learner to being an adult learner?
- Was this shift gradual or abrupt?
- How do you learn best as an adult, and why?

Passing: The response thoroughly answers each question using some or all of the six principles of adult learning and includes relevant examples from personal experience. Writing is organized and easy to understand.

Part 2. Work Examples/Artifacts/Evidence

To earn this microcredential, submit the following two artifacts as evidence of your learning. See rubric for passing scores.

Please don't include any information that will identify you or your students to reviewers.

Artifact 1: Scenario

Rewrite the scenario below as if Mrs. Benson was using adult learning theory principles.

- Self-Directed Learning
- Experience-Based Learning
- Readiness to learn
- Relevancy
- Practical Application
- Respect

Scenario to re-write

Alex is beginning his student teaching in a 5th-grade classroom. It has been challenging to reach the mentor teacher, so he's still uncertain what to

expect on his first day. When he arrives, the teacher, Mrs. Benson, isn't there, so he sits in the back. Mrs. Benson walks into the room, talks to students, and starts the morning routines. A bell rings before Alex has a chance to introduce himself. Mrs. Benson notices him as the students sit and says, "Who are you?" The tone takes Alex aback, but he introduces himself as best he can. Mrs. Benson remarks that she didn't realize he was starting today and directs him to sit in a chair at the back of the room. She doesn't offer him a place to hang his coat or store his bag. She continues with morning routines such as taking attendance.

After completing the routines, Mrs. Benson says, "Class, the young man in the back of the room is a student teacher who will be teaching you sometime in the next few weeks." Alex stands up to introduce himself further, but Mrs. Benson has already cued the students to move to the next activity. Alex sits down and takes out a notepad to jot down notes about how the classroom operates, balancing it on his lap.

Artifact 2: Action Plan

Using Knowles's six principles of adult learning, create an action plan for working with your student teacher. You may use the [template](#) in the Resources section or create your own. Your action plan should include:

- Two to three objectives or goals for working with your student teacher
- Strategies that apply adult learning theory to each goal
- Success criteria that show how you will know the student teacher is making progress
- Timeframes for implementing strategies and reviewing progress
- Rationales explaining why each goal is important

Example:

Goal: I will provide opportunities for my student teacher to be a co-decision-maker in the classroom.

Strategy: Meet daily to review lesson plans and adjust instruction together.

Success Criteria: My student teacher can make instructional decisions with me, and over time, independently.

Timeframe: Starting in week one

Rationale: The student teacher will learn how to make appropriate instructional decisions they can apply in future classrooms.

Part 2. Rubric

	Proficient	Basic	Developing
Artifact 1: Scenario	Explicitly applies some or all of the six adult learning principles to show Mrs. Benson's success with her student teacher.	Rewrites the scenario to show that Mrs. Benson has improved, but doesn't explicitly use the six adult learning principles.	Rewrites the scenario without evidence of increased success for Mrs. Benson and her student teacher.
Artifact 2: Action Plan	Applies adult learning theory to each goal and: - Completes all parts of the action plan - Uses measurable goals - Includes strategies that are relevant and doable in context	One or more of the following: - Adult learning theory is applied to only some goals - Not all parts of the plan are complete - Goals aren't measurable - Strategies aren't doable or relevant to context	Action plan is incomplete, goals or strategies are unrealistic, and there is no reference to adult learning principles

Part 3 Reflection

350-500 words

Use the word count as a guide to write a personal reflection about your work on this microcredential. For tips on writing a strong reflection, review the following resource:

[How Do I Write a Good Personal Reflection?](#)

Please don't include any information that will identify you to reviewers.

Reflect on what you learned by responding to:

1. How will applying the six principles of adult learning affect you as a cooperating teacher?
2. What specific actions will you take to serve effectively in this role?
3. What do you anticipate will be your greatest challenge when working with a student teacher, and how will you use Knowles' six principles to address it?

Passing: Reflection is complete, organized, and easy to understand. Examples are relevant to the six principles of adult learning theory.