



Learning Lens

TC3

A Focus on Exemplary Practices

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What's right with this picture?

Adult Student Orientation presents information to students in a variety of ways - small group discussion, physical tour with commentary, large group sessions, formal and informal activities involving "teacher"-generated and student-generated content. Variety improves learning through:

- repetition of core concepts, such as success through making connections and using the resources available, which strengthens the physical connections in the brain, and
- opportunities for students to process the information and key concepts in their preferred modes

A good discussion of the diversity of learning styles that students bring to the college can be found in "Diversity, Learning Style and Culture" at www.newhorizons.org/strategies/styles/guild.htm.

Appropriate use of humor improves learning by increasing attention and recall through stimulation of the frontal cortex and the emotional centers of the brain. Additionally, humor causes the release of endorphins, those "feel good" chemicals that cause relaxation and improved cognition. And don't forget that jokes, puns, and gags require connections, often novel or surprising ones, to be made, again increasing learning. You can learn more about the misconceptions many harbor about the use of humor in serious learning situations in "Making Sense of Humor" at www.newhorizons.org/lifelong/workplace/goodman.htm.

Got a great learning idea? Share it with the *Learning Lens* by contacting Teresa Davis at x4349 or Groupwise TMD.

Opening the Door to Lifelong Learning

Returning to school after several years can be an unsettling experience, sometimes marked by apprehension, fear of failure, or concern about fitting into a traditionally "young person's" environment. The typical adult student has been out of school five or more years and has other responsibilities - children, home ownership, full-time employment - and may be retraining for a new career after years of working in the field.

TC3's Adult Student Orientation is designed to diffuse these concerns. New students are hosted by peer leaders, who themselves returned to college as adults. They provide moral support and invaluable tips for survival on campus, such as understanding the coding system (R = Thursday) and the meaning of "matriculation." The volunteer peer leaders are trained to put the students at ease, answer questions, and reduce the overall anxiety of returning to school.

"Adult students have unique needs and we wanted to make sure those needs were addressed in an informal environment," says Joan Donovan, *Adult Orientation Program Coordinator*. "They get to meet staff, faculty and administrators and find out TC3 is a friendly and welcoming place. The peer leaders serve as role models. The new students look at them, and think if they can go to school with three children, a full-time job and a household to manage, then so can I."

Peer leader Cleveland Myers, who returned to school after thirty years, says he volunteers to help with the program because, "I know how it is when you first come to school... a whole, big, new different world." Cleveland was "nervous but excited" when he first came to TC3. Now he helps other people over that hurdle.



Cleveland Myers serves as a volunteer Peer Leader for Adult Student Orientation. If you know of any students who would embrace the role of "Peer Leader," please refer them to Joan Donovan, *Adult Orientation Program Coordinator*.

Students are welcomed to the orientation by President Haynes, and key staff people are introduced. A peer leader gives welcoming remarks and talks about how he or she handled the back-

to-school transition. The peer leaders then take small groups on a tour of the campus, visiting five areas important to student success: the Baker Center for Learning, Counseling, Career & Transfer Services, the Library, Academic Computing Services and Campus Activities. Librarian Barbara Kobritz, who returned to school at age 38, is on hand every semester to greet the new students. She remembers how hard the transition was and enjoys "the opportunity to let them know others have done it and they can, too."

After touring the campus, students gather for an informal dinner and entertainment by TC3's Dr. Dan Pukstas. Dr. Dan's presentation, "Tips for College Success," mixes humor with practical advice. The program closes with small group discussions, creating an atmosphere of safety where a peer leader and a counseling professional answer any remaining questions.

Student feedback from this program has been overwhelmingly positive. In evaluating the program one student wrote: "I am so glad I came, the fear has lessened a lot. Now I am really looking forward to starting," and another said, "If I'd known there was so much support I'd have come back two years ago!"