

## Support 1: Build on Strengths while Reducing Barriers



1. **Evaluate Life Demands:** At intake, help potential adult students consider life demands that might stand in the way of reaching their goals. Discuss plans they feel they need to make in order to participate. If some feel their life demands are too great for participation, discuss what may need to happen before they feel they will be able to enroll in the program.
2. **Use a force-field analysis.** Include a force-field analysis as a formal part of orientation. Help new students identify positive and negative forces affecting their ability to persist, and create strategies for managing those forces, such as contingency strategies should child care or transportation matters present barriers to participation, and strategies to continue learning if they need to stop out of the program.
3. **Identify Positive Relationships:** Identify personal, official, and/or other positive relationships with individuals who support the student's enrollment and continued participation in the program. Formally designate one of these individuals to be the student's "sponsor" – a personal cheerleader!
4. **Small Group Instruction & Project-based Learning:** Organize class activities so that learners work together rather than alone. Implement a curriculum that helps learners as a group identify and address community issues that are of concern to them. This helps build positive relationships with the teacher and other students.
5. **Alternatives to Classroom Instruction:** Provide alternatives for students who begin attending intermittently. Provide ways students can reinforce what they have learned by providing "practice" materials or videotapes so they can learn at home. Send books home with students; don't require them to keep them at the program. Develop a system for sending activities to learners after "stopping out" and encourage them to re-enter studies. Change policies to offer alternatives for students who have barriers for attendance or need to "stop-out." Use distance learning, make-up sessions, etc., to meet students' needs.
6. **Support Services:** Change program structure to include resources for day care, transportation, etc. and network with community agencies to provide needed services for learners which the program is not able to offer. Or provide good referrals for these services.
7. **Managed Intake, Enrollment and Orientation:** Use a scheduled structure for new student orientation and class schedules in cycles with beginning and ending dates. Provide enough information for potential students can make an informed decision about enrolling. Communicate what students might expect to gain by participation with what kind of time requirements and level of commitment. Give potential students the opportunity to participate in sample activities before enrolling in the program.

Adapted from North Carolina Online: [http://ncbsonline.net/Student\\_Retention.htm](http://ncbsonline.net/Student_Retention.htm) and Program Administrator's Sourcebook <http://www.ncsall.net/?id=1039>.



## Support 2: Build Self-Confidence in Ability

1. **Student Testimonials and Role Models:** Establish a process for more experienced learners to talk with new learners about their educational learning histories. Arrange for students to have contact with role models who have succeeded in prior adult education classes. Bring these students in as guest speakers at intake and orientation activities.
2. **Student Leadership:** Provide opportunities for students to work together to lead activities inside and outside of the classroom, such as through conducting peer orientations, peer teaching, serving on a program advisory committee, advocating in the community, planning potlucks, field trips, and extracurricular activities.
3. **Early Success:** Provide ways for students to see success early in program participation. During the first three weeks (the most critical for persistence), focus on one area in instruction in which most students should be able to improve. Then retest the student after three weeks, to show gains and allow them to experience an immediate success. ***This also demonstrates progress (Support 4).***
4. **Learning Styles and Special Learning Needs:** Administer learning style inventories and using the results to help students understand how they learn best; administer special learning needs screening instruments to determine if some students would benefit from further diagnosis to increase their learning potential.
5. **Student-centered Learning:** Allow student interests and needs to drive instruction.
6. **Follow-up with Inactive Students:**
  - a) Develop system for contacting learners after they have “stopped-out” or dropped out to see if the program can help them resolve issues that might have lead to them dropping out.
  - b) Track students who dropped out by hiring current students to interview students who have left.
  - c) One-to-two months after they drop out, contact students who have departed to ask them what impact participation in the program had on their lives, what they did and did not like, why they left, and what might help them come back to the program if they feel they need to do so. Use this data to change your program’s instructional approach or the program’s structure to better support student success.

## Support 3: Set Clear Goals



1. **Connect Specific and Broad Goals:** Find out about students' purposes for attending during intake or orientation, and connect these purposes to their specific and broad goals. Help students recognize how achieving specific short-term goals is a step toward succeeding long-term broader goals.
2. **Set Realistic Short-Term Goals:** Make sure you realign student's initial short-term goals with the reality of their skills assessment and the timeline (average hours of study) they may need to achieve them.
3. **Use a Variety of Goal Setting Activities:** Provide a number of ways for students to set goals, such as (1) conduct goal setting in small groups as students go through a student orientation; (2) have students participate in one-on-one goal setting with a teacher, intake counselor, or student mentor; or (3) make goal setting part of a classroom activities, which might include:
  - a) **Learning Histories:** Use a technique for you and learners to reflect on and discuss your past educational goals and experiences.
  - b) **Fears and Hopes:** Use this activity to help learners articulate their fears and expectations related to learning.
  - c) **Goals in an Envelope:**
  - d) **Goal Setting through Metaphor:**
4. **Identify Benchmarks:** Ask students to identify benchmarks for success. During the goal-setting process, establish ways for students to determine how they will know that they are successful and how they will document their progress. You can also help them identify benchmarks such as you can use attendance hours, Texas Content Standards benchmarks, GED practice tests, or any other appropriate benchmarks.
5. **Set Group Goals:** Set up mechanisms for classes or cohorts of students to establish group goals and action plans for attendance, transportation, childcare, money for GED tests, etc.



## Support 4: Demonstrate Progress

1. **Alternative Assessments:** Use a variety of assessments for determining students' skills and needs, and provide students with information about their skills and needs. Change strategies from just academic assessment to involve learners more e.g., portfolio assessment, conferencing, goal-setting activities, etc.; use of at-risk identification instruments, (e.g., *Prior Schooling and Self-Perception Inventory*).
2. **Goal Conferences:** Reassess students on a regular basis and communicate the results to students. Establish a process for you and individual learners to meet individually to discuss short- and long-term goals, realistic timeliness, and interim success benchmarks that will need to occur in pursuit of the goal/s.
3. **Teacher-Student Dialogue Journals:** Use this process for learners to share thoughts and feelings about their progress with you, and for you to provide encouragement.
4. **Student-to-Student Dialogue Journals:** Pair students to write and share thoughts and feelings about their progress and accomplishments with each other, and to provide encouragement for each other.
5. **Recognition and Incentives:** Establish formal mechanisms for learners to be recognized for their achievements (e.g., graduation ceremonies, end-of-the-month class celebrations, incentive store, hours attained, units completed, tests passed, levels completed, etc. perfect attendance recognition, National Adult Honor Society, etc.)
6. **Celebrate Classroom Wide Achievements:** Set goals for class achievements, such as number of hours attained by all students, levels completed by all students, etc. Then celebrate with a fun classroom or outside activity.