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ABSTRACT

This module, one in a series of performance-based teacher education learning packages, focuses on a specific skill that vocational educators need to create appropriate learning environments and to plan and manage instruction that is well-suited to the learning and psychological needs of today's adults. The purpose of the module is to give the teacher skill in identifying kinds of information needed to determine individual training needs and in selecting appropriate strategies for gathering that information. Introductory material provides terminal and enabling objectives, a list of resources, and general information. The main portion of the module includes three learning experiences based on the enabling objectives: (1) demonstrate knowledge of the rationale for determining training needs and information for identifying those needs; (2) plan, conduct, and evaluate a needs assessment; and (3) critique a case study on maintaining student records. Each learning experience presents activities with information sheets, samples, worksheets, checklists, and self-checks with model answers. Optional activities are provided. Completion of these three learning experiences should lead to achievement of the terminal objectives through the fourth and final learning experience that requires (1) an actual teaching situation in which individual training needs can be determined, and (2) a teacher performance assessment by a resource person. An assessment form is included. (YLB)

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Determine Individual Training Needs

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FOREWORD

This module is one of a series of over 130 performance-based teacher education (PBTE) learning packages focusing upon specific professional competencies of occupational instructors (teachers, trainers). The competencies upon which these modules are based were identified and verified through research as being important to successful teaching. The modules are suitable for the preparation of instructors in all occupational areas.

Each module provides learning experiences that integrate theory and application; each culminates with criterion-referenced assessment of the instructor's performance of the specified competency. The materials are designed for use by teachers-in-training working individually or in groups under the direction and with the assistance of teacher educators or others qualified to act as resource persons. Resource persons should be skilled in the teacher competencies being developed and should be thoroughly oriented to PBTE concepts and procedures before using these materials.

The design of the materials provides considerable flexibility for planning and conducting performance-based training programs for preservice and inservice instructors, as well as business-industry-labor trainers, to meet a wide variety of individual needs and interests. The materials are intended for use by local education agencies, postsecondary institutions, state departments of education, universities and colleges, and others responsible for the professional development of instructors.

The PBTE modules in Category N—Teaching Adults—are designed to enable adult instructors to create appropriate learning environments and to plan and manage instruction that is well suited to the learning and psychological needs of today's adults. The modules are based upon 50 competencies identified and verified as unique and important to the instruction of adults.

Many individuals have contributed to the research, development, field review, and revision of these training materials. Appreciation is extended to the following individuals who, as members of the DACUM analysis panel, assisted National Center staff in the identification of the competency statements upon which this category of modules is based: Doe Hentschel, State University of New York at Brockport; David Holmes, Consortium of the California State University; Joanne Jorz, JWK International Corporation, Virginia; Jean Lowe, Fairfax County Public Schools, Virginia; Jim Menapace, BOC/Lansing–General Motors, Michigan; Norma Milanovich, University of New Mexico; Cuba Miller, Sequoia Adult School, California; Donald Mocker, University of Missouri; and Michael A. Spewock, Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

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Recognition for major individual roles in the development of these materials is extended to the following National Center staff: Harry N. Drier, Associate Director, Development Division, and Robert E. Norton, Program Director, for leadership and direction of the project; Lois G. Harrington, Program Associate, for training of module writers, assistance in the conceptualization and development of the materials, and maintenance of quality control; David J. Kalamas, Graduate Research Associate, for development of illustration specifications; Susan Dziura, for initial art work; and Shellie Tremaine and Cheryl Salyers, for their word processing.

Special recognition is also extended to the staff at AAVIM for their invaluable contributions to the quality of the final printed products, particularly to Sylvia Conine for typesetting; to Marilyn MacMillan for module layout, design, and final art work; and to George W. Smith, Jr. for supervision of the module production process.

THE NATIONAL CENTER
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The National Center for Research in Vocational Education's mission is to increase the ability of diverse agencies, institutions, and organizations to solve educational problems relating to individual career planning, preparation, and progression. The National Center fulfills its mission by:

- Generating knowledge through research.
- Developing educational programs and products.
- Evaluating individual program needs and outcomes.
- Providing information for national planning and policy.
- Installing educational programs and products.
- Operating information systems and services.
- Conducting leadership development and training programs.

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The American Association for Vocational Instructional Materials (AAVIM) is a nonprofit national institute.

The institute is a cooperative effort of universities, colleges and divisions of vocational and technical education in the United States and Canada to provide for excellence in instructional materials.

Direction is given by a representative from each of the states, provinces and territories. AAVIM also works closely with teacher organizations, government agencies and industry.

MODULE N-3

Determine Individual Training Needs

[illegible] Vocational Education, The Ohio State [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] by the American Association for Vocational Instructional Materials
[illegible] Engineering Center, The University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia 30602

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INTRODUCTION

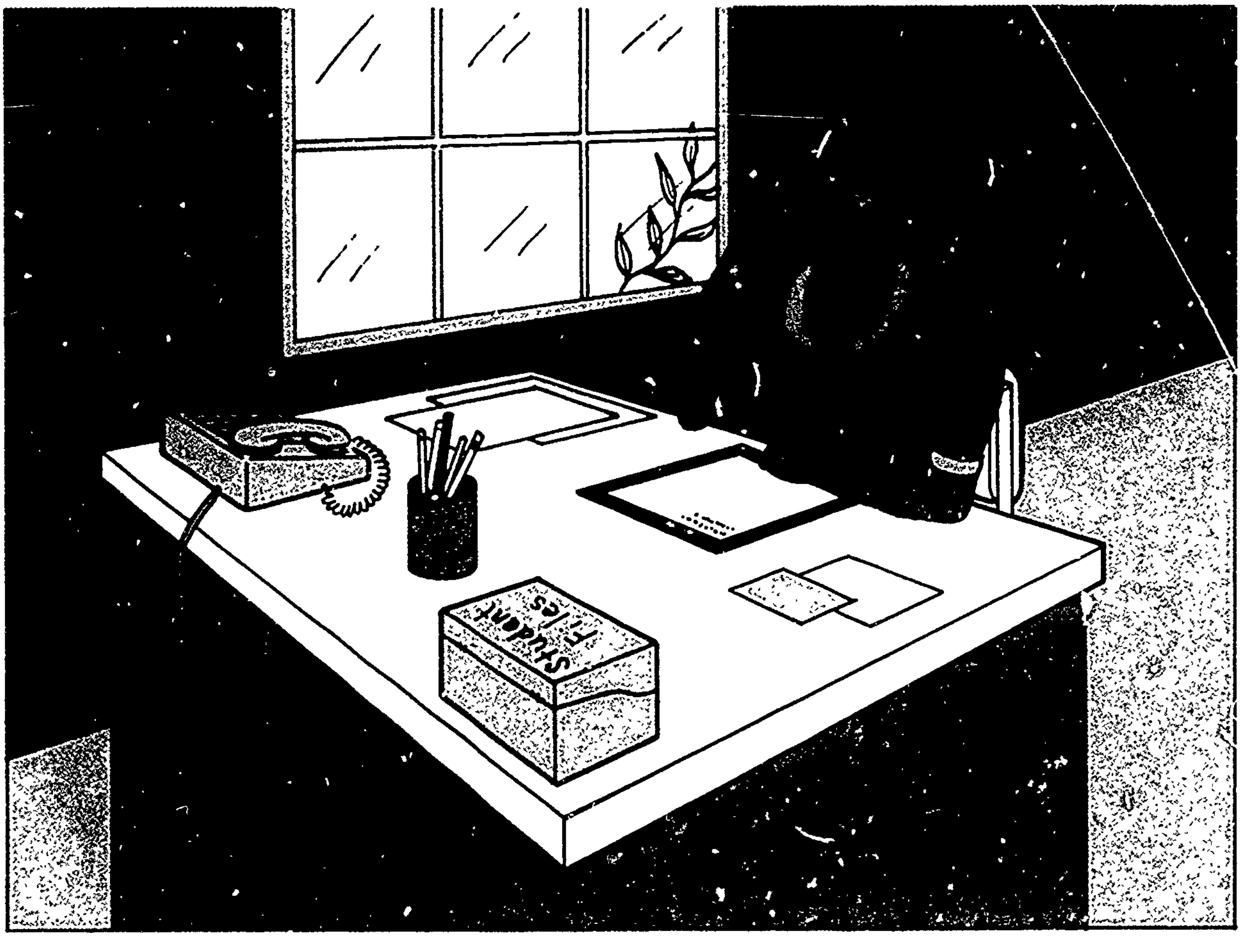
When adults are enrolled in formal educational programs, it is usually for a specific purpose. They are often goal-oriented and come to a learning situation in order to meet immediate needs. Whether enrollment is voluntary or involuntary, they expect that their investment of time and energy will bring tangible, useful results. They expect that their needs will be addressed and their goals will be met.

In vocational-technical programs, learners' needs and goals generally relate to the knowledge and skills required either to succeed in the world of work or to pursue an avocational interest. This may include basic skills, such as communication and computation. It invariably includes the technical knowledge and skills required for the vocation or avocation. In this module, we will refer to learners' knowledge and skill needs—their education and training needs—simply as *training needs.*

Determining the individual training needs of adult learners is an extremely important instructional task. No matter how completely you have planned instruction before going into the classroom, these plans are really just the foundation from which individual learners build their own learning experiences. In order to provide a solid foundation, the individual needs, abilities, experiences, and goals of the learners must be taken into account.

It is especially important that adult learners understand that they are not to be passive recipients of a set curriculum. On the contrary, as adults they have not only a voice, but a responsibility in determining their training needs and how they will be met.

This module is designed to give you skill in identifying the **kinds of information** you need in order to determine individual training needs and in selecting **appropriate strategies** for gathering that information. In addition, you will also learn how to keep simple **student records** that can be useful as a basis for day-to-day planning.



ABOUT THIS MODULE

Objectives

Terminal Objective: In an actual teaching situation, determine individual training needs. Your performance will be assessed by your resource person, using the Teacher Performance Assessment Form, pp. 63–64 (*Learning Experience IV*).

Enabling Objectives:

1. After completing the required reading, demonstrate knowledge of (1) the rationale for determining the training needs of adults and (2) various types of information that can help you identify these needs (*Learning Experience I*).
2. After completing the required reading, plan, conduct, and evaluate a needs assessment activity (*Learning Experience II*).
3. After completing the required reading, critique the performance of an instructor in a given case study in maintaining student records (*Learning Experience III*).

Prerequisites

To complete this module, you must have knowledge of the characteristics of adult learners and the process of adult development. If you do not already meet this requirement, meet with your resource person to determine what method you will use to do so. One option is to complete the information and practice activities in the following module:

- *Prepare to Work with Adult Learners,* Module N-1

Resources

A list of the outside resources that supplement those contained within the module follows. Check with your resource person (1) to determine the availability and the location of these resources, (2) to locate additional references in your occupational specialty, and (3) to get assistance in setting up activities with peers or observations of skilled teachers, if necessary. Your resource person may also be contacted if you have any difficulty with directions or in assessing your progress at any time.

Learning Experience I

Optional

A resource person and/or peers with whom you can discuss the material in the information sheet.

Learning Experience II

Required

A group of peers to role-play adult learners whose individual training needs you are assessing, and to critique your performance. If peers are unavailable, you may conduct your needs assessment activity with your *resource person.*

A resource person to evaluate your competency in planning, conducting, and evaluating a needs assessment activity.

Optional

Reference: Buros, Oscar K., ed. *The Eighth Annual Mental Measurements Yearbook.* Highland Park, NJ: Gryphon Press, 1978.

Reference: James, Wayne B., and Galbraith, Michael W. "Perceptual Learning Styles: Implications and Techniques for the Practitioner." *Lifelong Learning: An Omnibus of Practice and Research.* 8 (January 1985): 20–23.

Reference: Knaak, William. *Learning Styles: Applications in Vocational Education.* Columbus, OH: The National Center for Research in Vocational Education, The Ohio State University, 1983.

Reference: Orlich, Donald C. *Guide to Sensible Surveys.* Olympia, WA: Washington State Commission for Vocational Education, Research Coordinating Unit, 1975. ED 112 017.

Reference: Swirsky, Jessica, and Vandergoot, David. *A Handbook of Placement Assessment Resources.* Albertson, NY: Human Resources Center, 1980.

Experienced instructors, counselors, and other professionals in your occupational area whom you can interview in order to gain more information on how to conduct needs assessment activities.

Learning Experience III

No outside resources

Learning Experience IV

Required

An actual teaching situation in which you can determine individual training needs.

A resource person to assess your competency in determining individual training needs.

General Information

For information about the general organization of each performance-based teacher education (PBTE) module, general procedures for its use, and terminology that is common to all the modules, see About Using the National Center's PBTE Modules on the inside back cover. For more in-depth information on how to use the modules in teacher/trainer education programs, you may wish to refer to three related documents:

The *Student Guide to Using Performance-Based Teacher Education Materials* is designed to help orient preservice and inservice teachers and occupational trainers to PBTE in general and to the PBTE materials.

The *Resource Person Guide to Using Performance-Based Teacher Education Materials* can help prospective resource persons to guide and assist preservice and inservice teachers and occupational trainers in the development of professional teaching competencies through use of the PBTE modules. It also includes lists of all the module competencies, as well as a listing of the supplementary resources and the addresses where they can be obtained.

The *Guide to the Implementation of Performance-Based Teacher Education* is designed to help those who will administer the PBTE program. It contains answers to implementation questions, possible solutions to problems, and alternative courses of action.

Learning Experience I

OVERVIEW

Enabling Objective

After completing the required reading, demonstrate knowledge of (1) the rationale for determining the training needs of adults and (2) various types of information that can help you identify those needs.

[illegible] the information sheet, Identifying What Information Is [illegible]

You may wish to meet with your resource person and/or peers to further discuss the material in the information sheet.

[illegible] demonstrating knowledge of (1) the rationale for determining the [illegible] and (2) various types of information that can help you identify those needs by completing the Self-Check, pp. 17–19.

You will be evaluating your competency by comparing your completed Self-Check with the Model Answers, p. 19.

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Activity 1

Knowledge of individual training needs is essential for effective instructional planning. For information on the types of student information that can help you identify these needs, read the following information sheet.

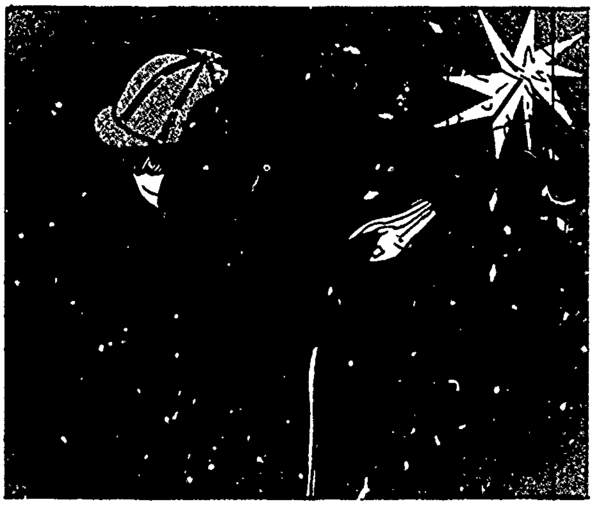
IDENTIFYING WHAT INFORMATION IS NEEDED

Consider the following situation. During the first class meeting of an introductory welding course for adults, the instructor distributed a course outline. The outline briefly described the learning experiences that would be included in the course. It also presented a schedule of the time allotted to each experience.

Class members who returned during the next few weeks exhibited widely varying amounts of interest in and enthusiasm about the learning experiences. Some attended sporadically and acted almost as if they weren't really interested in the activities that were presented. But they came anyway and waited for things to get better. Others came regularly and worked consistently and enthusiastically, as if the learning experiences were of real value.

The instructor noted one student's complete absence, as well as the irregular attendance and seeming indifference of other learners. On that basis, the instructor assumed that many of the participants weren't really interested in learning to weld. Not only that, the instructor assumed that the class as a whole was something of a failure.

In reality, the class was probably successful in many ways. The class could have been more successful, however, if the instructor had done a more balanced job of identifying training needs.



A **need** represents the difference between where you are and where you want to be. It is a lack. For example, if Fran weighs 150 pounds and wants to weigh 132 pounds, Fran has a need: to lose 18 pounds. The source of this need may be **external** (e.g., the doctor says Fran must lose the weight for health reasons) or **internal** (e.g., Fran wants to lose the weight in order to look and feel better) or **both**.

The instructor in the previous example erred by considering only one source of needs: those suggested or required by the course content. Yet in vocational-technical programs, training needs come from two sources: the requirements and standards of **the occupation** and the goals and experiences of **the learners**. It is not surprising that the course failed to interest some of the learners, because their interests in enrolling were never considered.

To determine the training needs to be addressed in an adult occupational program, the two sources must be tapped. Only then can you accurately determine where the learners are, where they need or want to be, and consequently, what learning experiences should be included in the program.

One step, then, is to identify occupational requirements and standards. In other words, students enrolling in an auto body course, which is designed to train individuals to enter that trade, need to master the entry-level competencies **required by that trade.**

On the other hand, the evidence strongly suggests that adult learners require programs that meet their needs. As independent, self-directed, utility-oriented individuals, they insist that course work assist them in meeting their goals as effectively as possible. Their objectives in enrolling may vary. As a result of their past experiences, they may already be proficient in some of the competencies to be covered. Their other life roles may make it difficult to participate in some kinds of learning experiences. As an instructor, you need to identify these kinds of **learner requirements**.

Finally, in establishing training needs, you need to **balance** occupational requirements and learner requirements. Your own situation will determine what constitutes a proper balance. In some cases, occupational requirements may take precedence. However, in all cases. some flexibility should be possible—some attention can and should be paid to the individual needs of the adult learners in the class.

For example, an instructor of an adult education class, offered in response to community interest, may have a great deal of flexibility. He or she may be able to identify learners' needs and plan instruction geared specifically to those needs. Likewise, in a competency-based education program, an instructor usually meets individually with each student to devise a learning plan that details the specific competencies that student will work on during a particular time period.

On the other hand, an instructor offering a customized training program for a local industry may have very little flexibility. The industry wants workers trained in specific skills within a specific amount of time—no choice. Nevertheless, an effective instructor can identify and accommodate individual differences.

For instance, although all workers need to exit from the program on the specified date, with the specified skills, it is likely that not all of them will be starting at the same level. Instruction could then be varied so those learners who already possess certain skills do not need to repeat that instruction.

The focus in this module is on gathering training-needs information about and from learners—on securing learners' answers to such questions as the following:

- What would you like to know or be able to do as a result of completing this course? What specific knowledge and skills do you hope to gain?
- What related skills and knowledge do you already possess as a result of past education or experience?
- What is your preferred learning style? Through what types of experiences do you learn best?
- Do you have any special needs (e.g., weak basic skills, hearing problems) that need to be met for you to succeed in this course?
- How do you plan to use the knowledge and skills you gain? To gain entry-level employment? For professional advancement? To fulfill a personal interest?

How you gather this information is the subject of the second learning experience in this module. **What** information you need to gather and **when** is the subject of this learning experience.

Why do you need to gather this information? You need this information to ensure that learners secure the instruction they need, in the form that they need it. Furthermore, seeking learner input generates a sense of ownership and self-direction that is essential to adult learning.

Consider again the instructor in the example at the beginning of this information sheet. He or she could have handed out a **tentative** course outline and then gathered information about learners' needs and goals. In that way, the learners could have been actively involved in their own learning right from the start.

In addition, the instructor would have been able to identify that learners had goals and needs that would not be met by the course outline in its present form. Thus, he or she could have taken one or more of the following steps to ensure that learner needs were, in fact, met:

- Modification of the course outline to ensure that the needs of all learners were met
- Referral of some learners to courses that would better meet their needs
- Provision of more detailed information on occupational requirements and standards, so that learners understood why the course outline, as presently structured, was appropriate to their needs

Working with learners to identify individual training needs may take some extra time initially, but it is well worth it. It can save hours that could otherwise be lost in confusion, misdirection, "repeat" work, and missed learning experiences.

What Information?

Before you gather information about the adult learners in your class, you first need to pinpoint your information needs. Generally, instructors of adults find they need to obtain the following types of information about their students:

- Demographics (e.g., name, address, and phone number; life roles; employment status; ethnic background; motivation for enrollment)
- Learning styles
- Past experiences
- Past education
- Career goals
- Learning objectives
- Basic skills

The rest of this information sheet describes each of these information areas in some detail. The descriptions are designed to familiarize you with the **specific information** you might gather in each area, as well as the **instructional uses** of that information.

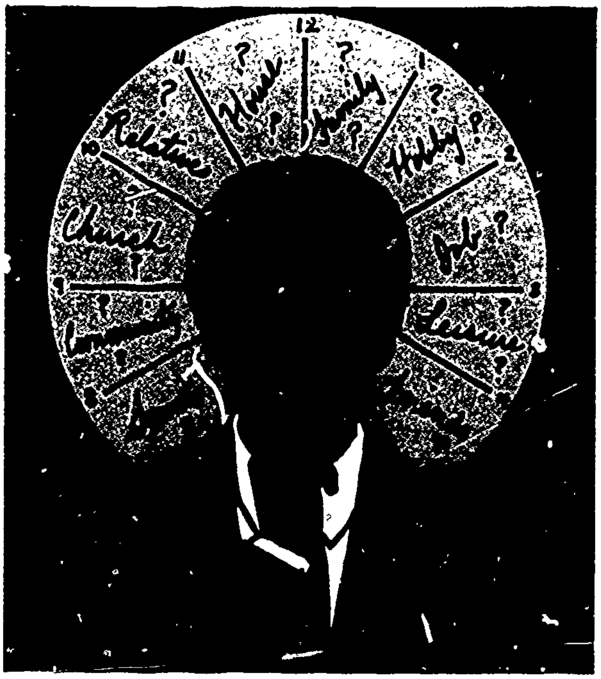
Do not let the detail mislead you. For one thing, as you will learn later in the module, you will not be gathering the information you need solely from the learners themselves. You will not, as the amount of information might suggest, be using huge quantities of instructional time to gather information. On the contrary, instructors generally agree that such information should be gathered quickly and efficiently.

For another thing, your teaching situation will determine exactly what information you need to gather. You do not necessarily need to gather all the information described in this information sheet. You need to limit your information gathering. The information you seek should be only the information you **must** have to plan effective, appropriate instruction.

Your planning time is limited. Instructional time is limited. Adults have legal and ethical rights to privacy. *Your job, therefore, is to be selective in the questions you ask and the information you seek.* If you do not need information in a particular area, don't ask for it.

Demographics

Instructors often begin individual needs assessment with questions related to **who** the learners are—both as individuals and as a group. It is important to identify individual characteristics and motivations that may influence instruction. Bear in mind that not all the following demographic factors affect learners' training needs in every instructional situation. You will need to determine which of the factors described here are really relevant in your situation.



Name, address, and phone number. This information will allow you to contact individuals should the need arise.

Life roles. Adult learners generally have many roles to play in addition to that of "student." For example, a student may also have to act as a parent, spouse, son or daughter, provider, employee, and civic leader. Knowing about learners' other roles can be useful to you. On the one hand, it can help you to help them identify their strengths. They may not be aware that the experience they have gained from their other roles can contribute to their ability to learn the skills and information that are part of your class.

On the other hand, it can help you to identify potential problems and needs. You may discover that learners' many responsibilities and commitments leave little time and energy for course work outside of scheduled class time. This has implications for your instructional planning. You may also become aware of learners' need for support services. For example, some learners may need access to child-care services while they are attending class. Others may need financial aid in order to continue their education.

Some adults may be self-conscious about their need for extra support; they do not want to feel singled out as needy or unable to help themselves. Thus, unless you tactfully and actively seek information about their needs, learners' essential needs for support may be neither identified nor met. And without the needed support, some individuals may be unable to successfully complete the instructional program.

Employment status and history. This can be important information when you are teaching in an occupational program. Are participants currently employed? If so, how long have they been working in their present occupations? What were their previous occupations? Are they considering professional advancement or a change of career? If not employed, how long has it been since they have been in the work force? Have their occupations been phased out due to economics or technological advances? What possibilities do they see for future employment?

Ethnic background. Awareness of an individual's cultural background may be important to understanding his or her attitudes and commitment to the program. For example, some cultures do not hold formal education to be nearly as important as other life responsibilities and activities. Involvement with and the financial support of an extended family, which traditionally has been dependent on the contributions of all its members, may be a higher priority, thus leaving little time for formal learning.[1]

Motivation for enrollment. Are learners enrolled voluntarily or involuntarily? Is this course part of the required curriculum? Has an employer required this training? If your learners are involuntarily enrolled, you will probably want to find out why this is so and what attitudes they have about it. If they resent forced participation, commitment to learning may be quite low or nonexistent. On the other hand, learners may have a high level of interest and commitment if they were selected for your program because of outstanding work or academic performance. Participation may be valued as an opportunity for recognition and advancement.

Questions regarding such issues—age, employment status, and ethnic background of participants—are not illegal if learners understand that they do not have to answer the questions should they not wish to do so. Answering such questions must be optional. In addition, it is extremely important that you make quite clear your reasons for asking questions that may otherwise seem to be intrusive and personal. Diplomacy and sensitivity to these issues are essential.

Learning Styles

Like all learners, individual adult learners approach academic tasks with different styles; the techniques through which they learn best (or prefer to learn) vary. Thus, individual paths to the same learning objective may vary greatly. By identifying students' learning styles, you will be more aware of the need to provide alternative learning activities and materials, and learners will be able to choose the ones that are most appropriate for their styles.

The scientific study of learning styles is an elaborate process involving philosophical models that form the basis for a series of sophisticated tests. These tests are designed to be administered and interpreted by trained experts. Some institutions routinely administer these tests and provide the results for instructors to use in instructional planning.

If these testing services are not available to you or if time in your course is limited, there are some strategies that you and the learners can use to get a general feel for their perceptual learning styles. Sample 1 illustrates one technique that can be used to identify students' preferred learning modes relatively quickly.

Sample 1 also outlines some common factors that distinguish learning styles. One of these is the variety of ways in which people prefer to get new information and ideas. Through what means do they do this best? Reading? Oral instruction? Demonstration? Audiovisual materials, such as slides, films, video presentations, and audiocassettes? Computer-based learning programs? Or, do they use some combination of all of these?

Another factor that determines learning styles is the way that individuals best learn to perform a new task. Some students prefer hands-on learning and need only brief introductory instruction, supplemented by some direction throughout the project. There are others who need detailed instruction and information about the new activity before beginning to work.

The extent of a learner's need for social contact and positive reinforcement is another variable factor. Some people will flourish when working in group situations, with peer support and regular, positive feedback. They may also prefer structured, collaborative activities; direct guidance; and involvement with the instructor. Others may learn best when they work independently and act as their own mentors—though they will make use of available resources when the need arises.

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[1] To gain skill in developing cultural awareness and in using your awareness of cultural differences to develop appropriate learning experiences, you may wish to refer to the modules in Category L: Serving Students With Special/Exceptional Needs

SAMPLE 1

PERCEPTUAL LEARNING STYLES

Questions Related to Perceptual Learning Style Identification

Questions Related to Identifying Strong Perceptual Elements		*Questions Related to Identifying Weak Perceptual Elements*
Print:		
Do you remember quickly and easily what you read?	OR	Do you have to read articles several times before grasping the important concepts?
Can you learn something better after seeing it or after writing it?		Do the words on the page all seem to run together?
Aural:		
Do you tend to remember and repeat those ideas you heard verbally presented?	OR	Do you find it difficult to remember information presented in lectures?
Do you "hear" what others are telling you?		Do audiotapes leave you wanting to read the information?
Interactive:		
Do you like to use other people as sounding boards?	OR	Do you find that you do not get much information from small-group/discussion activities?
Do you enjoy question/answer sessions or small-group discussions?		Would you prefer not to discuss things with others, preferring instead to work alone?
Visual:		
Do you need to have a "picture" in your mind before comprehending something?	OR	Do visual representations, such as graphs or tables, leave you wanting an explanation?
Do you "see" what others are trying to tell you?		Do you find it difficult to picture things in your mind?
Do you create visual images as you think?		Do you fail to understand displays or charts?
Haptic:		
Do you feel that you have to touch the new things you are learning?	OR	Do you find it difficult to distinguish the feel of different items?
Are "hands-on" experiences important to you?		Does touching objects fail to create a visual image in your mind?
Kinesthetic:		
Do you think you learn better when you are able to move during your learning?	OR	Do you find movement distracting?
Do you like to move your hands (knit, crochet, doodle) while learning, not from boredom, but because it helps you concentrate?		Is it hard to concentrate on learning something if you are also moving or doing something else?
Olfactory:		
Do smells have any special significance for you?	OR	Do you find smells basically offensive?
Can you associate a particular smell with specific past memories?		Do smells detract from your learning?
Are you frequently able to identify smells?		Do you find it hard to distinguish between different smells?

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Perceptual Learning Style Inventory

Check below the strategies/techniques through which you *think* you learn best:

1. ______ motion pictures
2. ______ lecture, information-giving
3. ______ group discussion
4. ______ reading assignments
5. ______ role-playing with you as a participant
6. ______ project construction
7. ______ odor discrimination activities
8. ______ television programs
9. ______ audiotapes
10. ______ panel discussions with you as a participant
11. ______ written reports
12. ______ nonverbal/body movements
13. ______ drawing, painting, or sculpting
14. ______ tasting
15. ______ slides
16. ______ records
17. ______ question-answer sessions
18. ______ independent reading
19. ______ physical motion activities
20. ______ model building
21. ______ scented materials (such as scratch and sniff)
22. ______ graphs, tables, and charts
23. ______ recitations by others
24. ______ interviews
25. ______ writing
26. ______ physical games with you as a participant
27. ______ touching objects
28. ______ photographs

CIRCLE THE NUMBERS YOU CHECKED.

If a majority of numbers for a particular style are circled, consider the possibility that you may have a learning style similar to the one indicated. Identification of your learning style orientation should identify ways in which to expand your learning effectiveness.

Strategy Numbers	**Style**
1, 8, 15, 22, 28	Visual
2, 9, 16, 23	Aural
3, 10, 17, 24	Interactive
4, 11, 18, 25	Print
5, 12, 19, 26	Kinesthetic
6, 13, 20, 27	Haptic
7, 14, 21	Olfactory

SOURCE. Wayne B. James and Michael W. Galbraith, Perceptual Learning Styles Implications and Techniques for the Practitioner, *Lifelong Learning: An Omnibus of Practice and Research,* 8 (January 1985): 22–23

You will want to identify not only your students' learning preferences but also how these preferences differ, depending on the particular learning activity (e.g., performing a task, learning new information, preparing a presentation).

There may be great variation in the extent to which adults in your course are aware of their learning styles. As you gather this information, learners whose learning experiences have been fairly limited may discover alternative techniques that allow them to capitalize on their strengths when acquiring new knowledge and developing new skills.

Past Experiences

Adults bring a broad range of experience to any learning situation. Many have acquired a wealth of knowledge and skills through life experiences and self-study activities. This experience provides a frame of reference for further learning and can include such things as employment, hobbies, everyday tasks, volunteer projects, community service, and special workshops in which learners have been involved.

A number of adults in your program may have occupational skills that are directly or indirectly related to course objectives. A job title alone does not usually indicate the range of skills and knowledge actually needed to perform the work. Thus, you may want to ask learners to briefly describe and identify (1) the skills they have gained from current and past employment and (2) the ways in which these skills might relate to the present learning situation.

You can also ask learners to identify relevant skills and knowledge that they have acquired through everyday activities. Many common, everyday tasks (e.g., home maintenance, car repair or maintenance, housekeeping, budgeting, cooking, and a variety of hobbies) require a wide range of abilities. Such tasks require skills in construction, calculation, planning, management, purchasing, transportation, child care, and the use of a variety of tools. These skills may be useful in the present learning situation, as well as in future employment.

In addition, you can often help individuals begin to identify their learning styles by asking how they learned the skill necessary for performing these tasks Did they learn by consulting people who were knowledgeable about these activities . . . through work experience . . . through observation . . . by studying reference manuals?

With knowledge about learners' past experiences, you should be able to design instructional plans that make use of this experience. Furthermore, you may be teaching in a program in which learners are enrolled for educational credit or technical certification. For practical reasons, they may want to accrue credits and complete the program as quickly as possible. This process may be hastened if students' experiences qualify them for credits.

For example, there are some established formal systems for awarding credit for a person's skills and knowledge, regardless of how or where they were learned. Credits may be awarded for participation in a variety of learning experiences: conferences, workshops, clinics, tours, inservice training, media presentations, and so on. You can check with counselors at your institution for information on local procedures and policies concerning the awarding of credits for experiential learning.

Remember, adult learners may or may not be aware of the value of their past experience and its relevance to the new learning situation. As they review their past experience, they may discover that they have learned much more than they had realized. Equally important, awareness of their past successes in learning can help adults build confidence in their ability to learn new skills and information.

Past Education

Information about learners' past education can help you determine, in part, their range of knowledge and skills. Past education can include seminars, on-the-job training, and self-directed learning experiences, as well as formal educational programs.

Instructors usually begin to assess students' past education by asking about the extent and focus of their formal education. This can give you a general idea of their range of academic experience, how recent it is, and what prerequisite or related training they have had. With this knowledge, you can plan learning experiences that begin at a level appropriate to the students' knowledge and experience.

For instance, in teaching an introductory course in computer programming, an instructor would probably want to be certain that the learners had mastered basic keyboarding skills before he/she presented learning experiences in programming itself. The instructor might also want to know if they had taken other courses in which computers were used as resources. Did students learn to use computers in their occupations or at home? If so, what types of computers have they worked with?

The following is a broad sample of questions instructors often ask learners to respond to (in writing or in private) at the beginning of a course. Bear in mind, however, that extensive knowledge about academic experience is not always necessary or relevant to planning instruction. Your actual instructional situation will help you establish how much information you need.

- How many years of high school education have you completed?
- What type of diploma did you receive?
- In what type of program were you enrolled? Vocational? General? College Prep?
- If you left high school before graduating, what caused you to leave?
- When you were in high school, did you regard the experience as pleasurable? Why or why not?
- How many years of postsecondary education have you completed?
- What was your major area of study . . . minor area of study?
- Did you receive a degree or certificate?
- If so, which did you receive? When did you receive it?
- If you left a postsecondary program before completing it, what caused you to leave?
- What courses have you taken—or are you currently taking—that are related to this course? How are they related?
- How many years has it been since you were last enrolled in a formal education program?

This information can also help you assess individuals' familiarity with the role of adult learner. Participants who have had recent, successful experiences in formal learning situations often have different expectations and more confidence than newcomers. They are also more likely to be fairly well-prepared, having had opportunities to sharpen their time-management and study skills.

On the other hand, adults who have been away from school for some time may have some difficulty in adapting to their new role as learners. They may have weak (or rusty) study skills. They may also encounter some problems in learning to juggle added responsibilities with other obligations in their lives. If they were unsuccessful in school in the past, adults often tend to think that they are incompetent as far as school is concerned. These learners may need additional help.

For example, you may need to refer some learners to study skills materials or workshops. Often, just making adults aware that there are special skills involved in studying is quite effective. Letting learners in on the "secret"—letting them know that there are techniques that they can use for successful studying—can make an enormous difference. You might also need to pace learning activities more slowly at the beginning of the program and design some early-success learning experiences. Strategies such as these can increase learners' confidence and their overall performance.

It is critical to remember, however, that the total amount of time spent in formal education programs—and the number of degrees and certificates earned—make up only a portion of the learning that adults have done throughout a lifetime. In order to effectively assess past education, you also need to find out about students' additional learning experiences, such as participation in on-the-job training, workshops and clinics, recreational and community-based learning programs, and independent learning activities.

Career Goals

Approximately 60 percent of the adults participating in occupational programs are enrolled for job-related reasons. Given that job-related reasons play such a major role in adult enrollment, it is important to identify learners who expect that some or all of their career goals will be met as a result of participating in your program. You also need to identify their specific goals.

Several types of career-related goals motivate adults to enroll in educational programs. These can include training, retraining, job maintenance, career exploration, professional upgrading, professional development, and requirements for professional certification or licensing.

With information about learners' career goals, you can work with individuals to identify how training in your program relates to both their long- and short-term goals. With your knowledge of the occupational area, the students' experience and abilities, and the available resources, you can also help participants determine whether their goals are realistic.

Learners who are uncertain about their goals might want your help in clarifying them. Depending on the amount of time and information you have, you may be able to do this, or you may want to refer them to career counselors and materials available through your institution.

Not all learners **or** instructional programs, however, are oriented to training that is directed toward meeting career goals. Other factors, such as personal enrichment, avocational interests, and social contact, may be higher priorities. The nature of your program, combined with the learners' needs, will help you determine whether you need to gather information about career goals.

Learning Objectives

The learning objectives of adults may vary greatly from individual to individual. A number of factors will determine individual learning objectives. training needs, career goals, basic abilities, intellectual curiosity, and avocational interests. Gathering information related to these factors will help you clarify which skills and knowledge (i.e., learning objectives) learners must acquire in order to achieve their overall goals.

After gathering information about these factors, many instructors ask individuals to list their overall goals in order of priority. Then, using this list as a reference, they work with learners to identify and sequence individual learning objectives that are essential to meeting their overall goals. This activity can also help make each learning experience more manageable and, hence, more effective for the learner.

As you identify individual learning objectives, you also need to determine how these relate to the overall course objectives and available resources. Questions to consider include the following:

- In what ways do individual learning objectives relate to the instruction offered?
- Does your program provide the necessary resources?
- Do the learners have the prerequisite skills?

You may find that you will need to make some modifications to your original plan of instruction—and some individuals may find that they need to revise their objectives. In some cases, you may need to refer individuals to other resources that can help meet their need for remediation.

For example, some learners may not have realistic objectives, given the scope of your program and their skills, experience, and abilities. Some learners may have objectives that are simply not attainable within the limitations of the immediate situation. Some people may be ready for a higher or more specialized level of training. Others may need remedial instruction before beginning work in your program.

Some adults may have learning objectives that are quite broadly focused. They may have enrolled to gain general knowledge or skills in a particular area. Or they may simply wish for the opportunity to examine new ideas through group interaction, lectures, and reading.

There are also people for whom learning objectives, per se, are not of primary importance. They may see a group learning situation as a good opportunity for social contact or relief from the tedium or stress of other circumstances. With some experience in the program, these learners may discover real interests and develop learning objectives, but this does not necessarily happen. They may well consider their classroom experience to have been a success without these objectives.

In any situation, knowledge about learners' overall goals, combined with their specific learning objectives, can help you determine how to plan and present learning activities, address individual needs, and conduct evaluations.

Basic Skills

In some learning situations, you may need to know about learners' proficiency levels in basic skills, such as writing, reading, oral communication, and mathematical computation. The need for this information will depend largely on two major factors: (1) the content and objectives of the course and (2) the needs and objectives of the learners.

Even in training programs in which the main focus is on hands-on skills, learners often need basic skills in order to succeed in the program and in the workplace. In many situations, students will need to be able to read and comprehend written instructions, memos, and other reference and resource materials. Communication skills (speaking, listening) may also be needed in class and on the job.

In addition, because preparing reports and completing forms are integral parts of many occupations, learners are often required to possess some basic math and writing skills. Some adults may not be aware of the need to sharpen or gain skills in these areas.

The following questions can help you determine whether it is necessary to assess basic skills:

- Which, if any, basic skills do learners need in order to achieve the objectives of the program?
- What levels of proficiency in these skills are necessary in order to complete the learning activities?
- Which of these skills do individuals need in order to meet their short-term goals . . . long-term goals?
- What level of skill proficiency do they need in order to achieve those goals?

If you determine that some (or all) of these basic skills are necessary, you then need to gather information that will answer these questions:

- Have individuals mastered the basic skills necessary for success in your program?
- What levels of proficiency have they attained in each skill area?
- Do any students need remedial instruction in basic skills before or while they participate in the program?

It is not unusual to find that individual levels of proficiency in each of the basic skills vary greatly. The range of variation may include students whose skills are very well developed—and extend to those who need extensive remedial instruction.

In fact, adult literacy research has shown that an alarmingly high percentage of adults do not read well. Some studies suggest that 20 to 30 percent of native-born adults in the United States cannot read and understand signs that are commonly used. Further, textbooks and manuals are often prepared at reading levels too high for those adults who may not have completed high school.

As you gather information about basic skill levels, it is important to remember that you are working with autonomous **adults**. Those whose basic skills levels are low may feel embarrassed or defensive about this issue. Although they may never have had opportunities to develop basic skills, they may feel—due to social pressures and norms—that they "ought" to have developed them. In fact, to mask their inabilities, some adults have found skillful means of dealing with situations that require the use of these skills. They may well wish to gain basic skills—but **not** at the price of their self-respect.

It is crucial, therefore, to treat these skills as **skills**—not as barometers of intelligence or character. Tact and sensitivity are essential elements in a successful assessment of basic skills.

Some adult learners may also resist or resent having to deal with English and math skills as part of the technical curriculum. To help offset this problem, you will need to emphasize that possessing good basic skills is essential to success in the occupation. Guest speakers and occupationally related field trips can help reinforce this awareness.

With knowledge about your learners' basic skills, you can design learning experiences and choose a variety of learning materials that take into account both their skills and goals. Individualizing basic skills instruction, based on learners' overall training needs, is a most effective means of helping them meet their objectives.

In summary, the information that you gather should give you some knowledge of **who** your students are—their abilities, experiences, and goals—and **what** they need in order to meet those goals. There may be conflicts in identified needs. Some learners' perceptions of their needs may not mesh with their goals or with the requirements of the institution. With your experience and knowledge, you may be able to help reconcile these differences.

These are all important issues. If an adult takes on too heavy or too advanced a load, he or she may fail or drop out. With too light a load or too few learning experiences that meet his/her needs and priorities, an adult may drop out due to lack of interest.

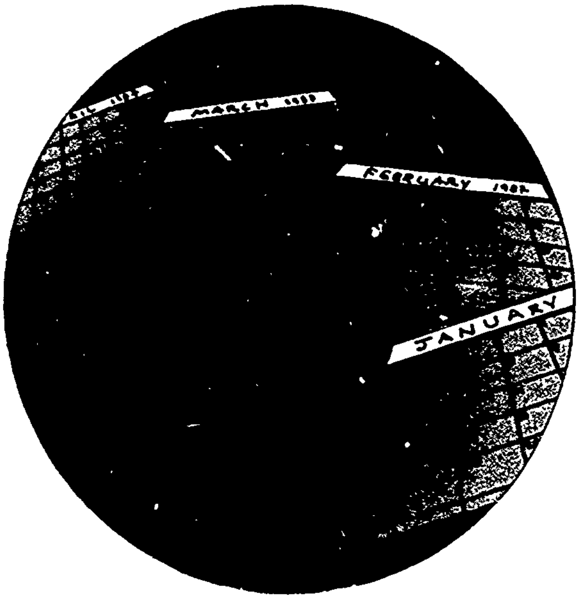
Remember that information alone is not sufficient—it needs to be evaluated and used in designing instructional plans that will meet individual needs. Careful consideration of all the relevant factors is essential when determining which needs to address and how to address them.

When to Gather Information

In order to assess and meet individual needs effectively, you will need to conduct information-gathering activities in both the initial and ongoing phases of your program. These activities do not need to be extensive or massive efforts at any time.

It is essential that you gather information prior to and/or during the initial class session so that both you and the learners know what to plan for in the program. Once the program is underway, you will need to continue gathering information. After they have gained experience in your program, learners will have had some time to evaluate (1) their original needs and objectives, (2) how well these are being met, and (3) how they might have changed.

To ensure that the program in fact meets—and continues to meet—learners' needs and objectives, you will need to develop a plan that provides for gathering information throughout the learning process. This plan can include the use of a variety of devices including in-process surveys, group discussions, and informal conferences with learners. All these activities will be most profitable if you have established and encouraged learner input from the outset of the program.



Optional Activity 2

You may wish to arrange to meet with your resource person and/or peers who are also taking this module. At this meeting you could (1) discuss what you have heard or read about individual training needs and (2) identify kinds of information that are useful in determining individual training needs in your occupational area.

Activity
3

The following items check your comprehension of the material in the information sheet, Identifying What Information Is Needed, pp. 6–16. Each of the three items requires a short essay-type response. Please explain fully, but briefly, and make sure you respond to all parts of each item.

SELF-CHECK

1. All good instructors plan instruction on the basis of the needs, interests, and abilities of their students. Why is this especially critical with adult learners?

2. In assessing the training needs of adults, you must gather information about each of the following areas. demographics, learning styles, past experiences, past education, career goals, learning objectives, and basic skills. Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?

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3. When is the best time to gather this information?

Feedback 4

Compare your written responses to the self-check items with the model answers given below. Your responses need not exactly duplicate the model responses; however, you should have covered the same **major** points.

MODEL ANSWERS

1. Because adults have many responsibilities (e.g., work, family, and community obligations), their time may be limited. In addition, they often bring immediate needs to a learning situation, and some needs may be quite pressing. For example, an unemployed single parent may need to gain entry-level job skills in order to support a family. They may also need access to support services in order to succeed in the program. It is thus important that such needs be identified and met as quickly and efficiently as possible.

   With these responsibilities, adult learners also bring a more diverse range of experience than that of younger learners. This experience can include a variety of knowledge and skills that they have gained through employment, past education, community involvement, hobbies, and life experiences. You need to identify adult learners' various experiences, skills, and abilities in order to design effective instructional plans that build on individual strengths.

   Finally, as mature, self-directed adults, these learners have both a need and a responsibility to play an active role in identifying their own needs and objectives, rather than being told what and how they will learn.

2. There **may** be some situations in which it would be necessary to gather all the types of information listed in the statement; however, in most cases it is neither necessary nor desirable. The information that you gather about adult learners should be limited to the information that is directly relevant to your particular situation. The collection of nonessential information is only time-consuming and frustrating for everyone involved.

   In addition, learners need to know how the information that you obtain is to be used. If your purposes are not clear, students may resent the time that is taken by information-gathering activities. They may feel that this time would be better spent on actual learning experiences. Learners may also perceive information gathering as an unnecessary invasion of privacy unless they are convinced of the practical need for it.

   In the process of identifying the student information that is relevant to your situation, you should consider the following two questions:

   - What specific kinds of information will help identify individual training needs in your course or program?
   - How can this information be used in developing learning experiences that will help meet individual needs?

3. Information gathering is a multiphase activity. If data about learners is generated from the intake process at your institution, you should obtain this information prior to the beginning of the course or program. Then, in the opening class session, you will need to obtain information that specifically relates to the overall objectives of the course. In order to ensure that individual needs are being met and that you continue to develop appropriate instructional plans, you will also need to gather student needs data throughout the course or program.

Level of Performance: Your written responses to the self-check items should have covered the same **major** points as the model answers. If you missed some points or have questions about any additional points you made, review the material in the information sheet, Identifying What Information Is Needed, pp. 6–16, or check with your resource person if necessary.

NOTES

Learning Experience II

OVERVIEW

Enabling Objective

After completing the required reading, plan, conduct, and evaluate a needs assessment activity.

Activity 1

You will be reading the information sheet, How to Secure Information, pp. 23–38.

Optional Activity 2

You may wish to refer to one or more of the following supplementary references: Buros, ed., *The Eighth Annual Mental Measurements Yearbook;* James and Galbraith, "Perceptual Learning Styles: Implications and Techniques for the Practitioner," *Lifelong Learning;* Knaak, *Learning Styles: Applications in Vocational Education;* Orlich, *Guide to Sensible Surveys;* and/or Swirsky and Vandergoot, *A Handbook of Placement Assessment Resources.*

Optional Activity 3

You may wish to interview professionals in your occupational area who have successfully conducted needs assessment activities to determine the devices and techniques they use.

Activity 4

You will be selecting a specific hypothetical course or program in your occupational area and developing a plan for securing the information that will enable you to assess individual training needs.

Activity 5

You will be conducting your planned needs assessment activity with a group of peers or with your resource person.

Your competency in securing information on individual training needs will be evaluated by your peers, using copies of the Training Needs Assessment Checklist: Peer Evaluation, pp. 41–45.

[illegible] your own competency in securing information [illegible] Needs Assessment Checklist: [illegible]

[illegible]

Feedback

Your competency in planning, conducting, and evaluating a needs assessment activity will be evaluated by your resource person, using the Training Needs Assessment Checklist: Resource Person Evaluation, pp. 49–50.

Activity
1

For information on a variety of techniques that you can use in securing information about individual training needs, read the following information sheet.

HOW TO SECURE INFORMATION

Your own teaching situation—the program content, the learning objectives, the length of the program, the participants, and the type of program in which you are teaching—will determine the kind of information you need to collect, as well as how and when to gather it.

Many instructors have found that the needed information is best secured through a variety of methods—methods that are useful both at the beginning of the course and on an ongoing basis. None of these methods need to be lengthy, complicated, or difficult. In fact, simple, direct techniques are likely to be the most effective tools that you and the learners can use to identify and clarify individual needs.

If you are a trainer in a business or industrial setting, training-needs assessment may involve much more elaborate procedures. In these situations, professionally designed needs assessment surveys are often conducted prior to designing the training program. Professional assessment techniques can include long-term formal observations, structured and unstructured interviews, reviews of existing personnel records, and lengthy questionnaires.

Even with information from these sources, however, you need to supplement these data with information from the individuals in your program. Once again, simple, direct techniques are likely to be most effective and efficient.

Your information-gathering activities will be most productive if you follow these simple rules:

- Identify the specific kinds of information you will need **before** you develop and implement information-gathering methods.
- Select the information-gathering methods that are most suited to obtaining the data that you need.
- Collect **only** the information that you need.

Commonly used information-gathering methods are as follows:

- Referral to existing information
- Information cards
- Group discussions
- Questionnaires/surveys
- Informal interviews
- Standardized tests
- Self-assessment tests

It is generally most useful to obtain a specific kind of information through more than one of these methods. For example you might first ask individuals to rank-order their career goals and learning objectives on a **questionnaire**. This would provide you with a reference for planning, and it would provide students with time and a private means for considering these issues. You could then **discuss** individual goals with the group if you feel that participants would benefit from sharing and exploring these goals.

One note of caution: Regardless of which method(s) you use to gather information, it is critical that you (1) explain to learners your purposes in information gathering and clarify any question they may have about it and (2) clearly state that any information learners give to you will be held in strictest confidence.

For learners to contribute information freely, they must understand how the information will be used. For a number of good reasons, many adults may be sensitive about disclosing personal information. If learners feel that you are asking personal questions just to ask—and that there is no good reason for your knowing this information—they may very well resent being asked or refuse to provide the information.

You need to explain that the information will be used to develop learning experiences designed to meet their individual needs. This may be the first time for many adult learners that an instructor has ever asked **them** what they want and need, rather than telling them what they need and should get. This kind of recognition and respect for the individual is essential in adult education.

It is equally important to communicate your respect for your students' privacy. You should assure them that what they tell you will be treated confidentially. Questionnaires and surveys should include a written statement that ensures the confidentiality of all information that the learners provide.

You will also need to ensure that sensitive issues are approached privately (e.g., in writing or in one-to-one conversation) and that questions that could embarrass learners are tactfully phrased. In addition, you should always provide students with the option of choosing **not** to supply information that they wish to remain private.

Let's look at each of the various methods a little more closely.

Referral to Existing Information

One excellent source of information about the students in your program may be the admissions office of the institution in which you are teaching. You need to find out what information the admissions staff gather from incoming students, and what they can pass on to you.

If your institution has a formal intake process, you may have access to data on the educational history, occupational experiences, basic skills, and goals of your students. Counselors may have also done preentry testing and counseling to ensure the correct placement of learners in your program.

The sponsors of industrial training programs often research both organizational and personnel needs, including such areas as career and personal development. These surveys often contain performance appraisals, self-evaluation materials, and counseling reports.

Another potential source of information is other program staff in your institution—staff that also serve your students. For example, if you have students who are (or have been) enrolled in compensatory-type adult education programs, you may have access to the pre- (or post-) assessment results from those programs.

Students in an Adult Basic Education (ABE) program, for instance, may have taken the Adult Basic Learning Examination (ABLE)—Harcourt Brace Jovanovich; Adult Performance Level (APL) or Assessment of Skills for Successful Entry and Training (ASSET)—The American College Testing Program; or Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE)—CTB/McGraw-Hill; to name just four such tests.

Students in a program using the California Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) approach also take pre- and posttests. CASAS is a total system, including curriculum, instruction, and assessment components. Use of CASAS enables adult educators to develop and evaluate a life skills literacy program.

The CASAS general life skills content areas include consumer economics, community resources, health, occupational knowledge, and government and law. Included in the system are a test-item bank of more than 2,000 field-tested test items, and three levels of survey achievement tests. (For more information, contact CASAS Director, San Diego Community College District, 3249 Fordham Street, San Diego, CA 92110.)

Information from such sources can give you a head start on group and individual needs assessment. It can provide you with a partial view of the range of learners' needs and experience and can help you avoid time-wasting "repeat" questions in class. With these data, you may also identify information, relevant to your particular program, that needs to be elaborated upon or that has not been addressed.

Information Cards

Traditionally, many instructors start gathering information by asking participants to complete basic information cards (or forms). Information cards should be designed to provide you with basic information about who the learners are, their program-related experiences, and their goals. The cards are useful as a quick reference for instructional planning and for contacting students should a special need arise.

In addition to requesting the learner's name, address, and phone number, you might ask for information that is most related to the course objectives. For example, you could ask learners to briefly list their current jobs, past occupational experience, previous education, hobbies, career goals, and what they hope to get out of the program.

You will probably want to ask students to complete and return these cards at the beginning of the first class session. This provides some psychological "breathing space" for the learners, allowing them time to adjust to the new environment and to consider the learning situation on their own.

If the course is short and time is at a premium, you may find that having learners complete basic information cards and participate in a brief group discussion about their goals, experiences, and learning styles may be all that you can do—or need to do—in initial needs assessment.

Group Discussions

A group discussion is an excellent device for getting to know many of the characteristics, goals, and experiences of the individuals in the class and of the group as a whole. It also provides learners with an opportunity to meet one another and explore their needs in a noncritical setting.

Many instructors gather information through group discussions both during the initial class session and on an ongoing basis. Conducted properly, a group discussion is an especially good opening session activity. You can gather a large amount of information relatively quickly, reinforce learners' sense of self-direction, and help develop a climate of mutual trust between you and the learners.

Group discussions can also be a valuable tool in assessing needs throughout the program. Topics for discussion might include the learners' assessment of how their needs are or are not being met, how they might be better met, and ways in which their objectives may have changed as a result of their experiences in the program.

Group discussions yield other benefits as well. They offer a good means for affirming your role as a resource person and facilitator, rather than as an authority figure. In addition, participants learn about the resources—skills, knowledge, and experience—that other learners can provide, as well as the support that they themselves can provide to others. Finally, during a group discussion, additional relevant information often comes to light as a participant responds to a specific topic.

Planning and selecting topics for discussion. A good group discussion has an informal and spontaneous atmosphere, which does not occur by accident. There is much that you, as the facilitator, can do to plan and guide the discussion so that it is rewarding for everyone involved.

You first need to establish what information you want to acquire, what issues you want learners to consider, and how much time is available for discussion. Depending on your particular situation, you may want to select all or some of the following topics. There may be additional course-specific topics, not mentioned here, that are particularly relevant to your situation and suited to group discussion.

- **Life roles**—You may be able to learn quite a bit about individuals' responsibilities and experiences by asking them to identify (1) three of their major life roles (e.g., employee, parent, spouse) and (2) how the skills they have learned in these roles might relate to your program. In the process, you can help make them aware of strengths and skills they already possess that will help them succeed in your program.
- **Motivation for enrollment and learning objectives**—You might begin by simply asking learners to talk about why they have enrolled and what they hope to get out of the program. You may also obtain important information by asking learners what they hope the course does **not** entail, and why.
- **Learning styles**—You can ask students to recall new skills or knowledge that they have gained in the last two years and to describe how they obtained it. Did they read about it . . . learn through watching someone else . . . have it described to them? These new skills could include such things as rewiring a lamp, learning to cook a new dish, or learning a foreign language for a trip abroad.

  Through group discussion, learners can explore the different ways in which they learn. This can help them (1) identify the methods that work best for them and (2) become aware of alternative methods they might wish to experiment with.
- **Career goals**—Identification of learners' career goals is especially important when you are teaching in a vocational-technical program. You may ask students to identify their short- and long-term career goals and discuss how your program will enable them to meet their goals.
- **Training needs**—You can determine individuals' training priorities by first asking them to identify and rank-order the five most important skills they expect or need to learn in the program. Through group discussion of these

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priorities, you may alert learners to skills they hadn't considered before, which may, in reality, be important to them.

- **Goals**—How do individuals rank, in order of priority, their overall learning, personal, and career goals? On what basis do they make these decisions? Again, group discussion can provide learners with valuable exposure to alternative decision-making processes and value systems.

Preparing questions for discussion. Once you have identified appropriate discussion topics, you need to prepare a list of questions that are pertinent (designed to cover the selected topics most effectively) and provocative (designed to stimulate discussion). You should choose questions that are **specific** enough to guide the discussion. In addition, they should be phrased so that the responses involve some **thought** and **exploration of ideas**, rather than simple yes or no answers.

It is also important to state questions in such a way that individual needs are emphasized as **objectives** to be met, rather than personal deficits. Using this approach, you are more likely to stimulate learners to reason out solutions to problems that might arise from their needs.

Futhermore, it is essential **not** to ask questions that could embarrass participants. Some issues are better approached privately or in writing (e.g., on questionnaires). For example, in a group discussion an instructor should not ask adult learners point blank, "Can you read and write? How well?" This would only serve to embarrass those who can't perform well and to alienate them from those who can.

Your role as facilitator. As facilitator of the discussion, you are in a position to create a friendly, relaxed, nonjudgmental atmosphere where all individuals feel free to participate. In doing this, it is important to recognize and consider **all** contributions (whether or not you agree with them). You may also need to encourage learners who are shy. A direct look of interest is often enough to stimulate their participation; or you may need to ask direct, nonthreatening questions and wait quietly for their responses.

Bear in mind, however, that silence does not necessarily mean that learners are shy or not responding to the topic. They may need time before answering to consider the questions you have posed. If learners are having difficulty in responding, you may be able to help generate discussion by giving an example, from your own experience, that relates to the subject. This may also be a good time to ask learners to raise any questions they may have.

Your active interest and support are essential ingredients in keeping a good discussion going. You can help by matching learners' diagnoses of their weaknesses with examples of their strengths—of how their skills and experience in other areas contribute to meeting their current objectives.

From time to time, a discussion may get off the subject. When this happens, you may need to guide participants back to the central issues. But remember, the aim of the discussion should be for learners to do most of the talking, while your role is to facilitate and listen.

Arranging the physical setting. Seating is an important element in an effective discussion. A common, workable arrangement is an informal grouping, with chairs in a semicircle or around a large table or grouping of tables. You should usually be located near the apex of the u-shaped group or wherever all the participants can see and hear you. With this arrangement, learners can see, hear, and participate in the proceedings with a minimum amount of strain.

Recording relevant information. You may wish to keep records of the important individual needs and issues that are identified during the discussion. By also summarizing this information, you can more easily identify the general characteristics, the range of abilities, and the goals of the class as a whole. In order to maintain a nonthreatening atmosphere, any note-taking should be done as inconspicuously as possible.

Limitations of group discussion. Group discussion is not an appropriate method for gathering every type of information. Data-oriented information is best obtained through institutional intake processes, information cards, questionnaires, and the like.

The public nature of group discussion can also limit the range or depth of the topics that can be covered. However, this often can set the stage for continued discussion on a one-to-one basis.

Furthermore, if it is not carefully planned and directed, group discussion can be time-consuming and generally fruitless. It may move slowly and may be dominated by talkative participants, while others remain outside the flow of conversation.

Questionnaires/Surveys

You can develop a relatively simple questionnaire (or survey) that can provide you with a wide range of objective information about individual needs, experiences, and interests, as well as knowledge about how learners assess themselves. You can also get a general sense of their written communication skills.

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If the questionnaire is thoughtfully planned and carefully phrased, you can gather a large amount of information in a relatively short period of time. Another benefit of this approach is that it offers learners a private means of conveying personal information that they may prefer not to share with the group.

Many instructors use questionnaires during the first class session, as well as in ongoing needs assessment. For initial needs assessment, some teachers expand a basic information card to include an interests and needs survey. Others prefer to develop separate questionnaires for each of these topics. For ongoing needs assessment, you can design questionnaires that both evaluate the soundness of the original needs assessments and identify new needs and interests that have surfaced.

The amount and range of written information you want to obtain will help you determine what type of questionnaire you need to develop. The steps involved in developing a questionnaire are as follows.

Selecting information. As with any other needs assessment procedure, you first need to identify the specific information that you want to gather. Questionnaires can be an effective means for gathering and recording the following types of information:

- **Objective information**—This can include the learner's address, phone number, past education, and occupational experiences. You can keep this information in your records as a reference for both planning and evaluation.
- **Basic skills**—Data about learners' educational history can provide you with some insight into their basic skills development. However, this does not necessarily tell you what level of skill they have achieved. If you determine that you need more information, you can design questions that will help assess learners' basic abilities in reading, writing, and math.

  For example, if you need to learn more about learners' writing skills, you might ask them to describe, in writing, the responsibilities of their current jobs or other life roles, or why they have enrolled in your program. To test their reading comprehension, you could include a course-related reading and ask them to respond to questions about what they have read. To assess learners' basic math skills, you might devise some items that require learners to use the computation skills that are required in your planned learning activities.

  You could also include some more-subjective items. For example, you could simply ask students whether they feel they need to improve any of their basic skills in order to meet their learning objectives or career goals.
- **Additional information**—Much of the information described in the section on group discussion (e.g., life roles, reasons for enrollment, learning styles, career and learning goals, and training needs) can also be obtained through written surveys and questionnaires. Many people will express their needs and interests from a different perspective and with a different emphasis when speaking in a group than when responding to a written form.

Formulating questions. The way in which you ask questions will help determine, in part, the nature and limits of learners' responses. The following are a few standard formats for obtaining a variety of written information. Examples of each major type of item are shown in sample 2.

- **Short-answer items**—Some information is best obtained through items that require only short, factual responses or simple yes or no answers (e.g., questions about past education or occupational experience).
- **Checklists**—With a checklist, you may be able to determine multiple needs and interests. You may also present possibilities that learners hadn't considered before. Checklists are particularly useful for gathering information about learning objectives and training needs, as well as rough data about learning styles.
- **Stem items**—Stem items provide a lead statement that the learner completes. Because these items are open-ended, they allow for a variety of individual responses. The lead statement, however, should be specific enough to stimulate thought about a particular issue. The amount of space you provide for response will depend on the maximum amount of information you desire.
- **Short essay items**—To get an overall view of what participants consider to be important and how they organize their thoughts and express themselves, you might ask them to briefly describe particular needs, interests, or experiences that you need to learn more about.
- **Priority lists**—You can obtain some direct, concise information by asking learners to list and rank-order various goals, experiences, and responsibilities. To make this manageable, you may want to ask them to list a specific number of items in each category.
- **Additional information, comments, requests**—Instructors often provide a section for any comments or requests learners would like to make. This provides learners with an opportunity to note any individual needs and interests that were not addressed earlier.

SAMPLE 2

QUESTIONNAIRE/SURVEY ITEMS

Short-Answer Items

How many years of education beyond high school have you completed? ____________

What type of program were you enrolled in? ____________

Did you receive a degree or certificate? ☐ Yes ☐ No

What courses have you taken or are you currently taking that are related to this course? ____________

____

Is this your first vocational-technical training experience? ☐ Yes ☐ No

What is your current occupation? ____________

Checklist Items

Why did you enroll in this course? Check all the items that apply.

____ To obtain vocational training
____ To retain present employment
____ For professional advancement
____ Considering a career change
____ For personal enjoyment and enrichment
____ To meet new people and have new experiences
____ Other (please describe) ____________

Stem Items

Please complete the following items.

In this program, I plan to learn to ____________

____

The easiest way for me to learn something is ____________

____

This program will help me in my personal development by ____________

____

Short Essay Items

Briefly describe the responsibilities of your current occupation.

How do you expect participation in this program to improve your career?

Briefly describe your reasons for enrolling in this program.

How do you most prefer to spend your free time?

Priority List Items

List and rank-order the five most important skills you expect to gain in this class.

List and rank-order the five most important things you expect to achieve/acquire as a result of gaining these skills.

List and rank-order your three most important life responsibilities at the present.

Designing the questionnaire or survey. Regardless of how you formulate questionnaire items, it is essential that the learners understand exactly what they are being asked to do and why they are being asked to do it. You may obtain misinformation or no response at all if learners have to guess at the meaning of a question or if they feel that it is purposeless. Thus, questionnaires (and surveys) should be clear, simple to follow, and easy to respond to. The following are some basic guidelines for effective questionnaire design:

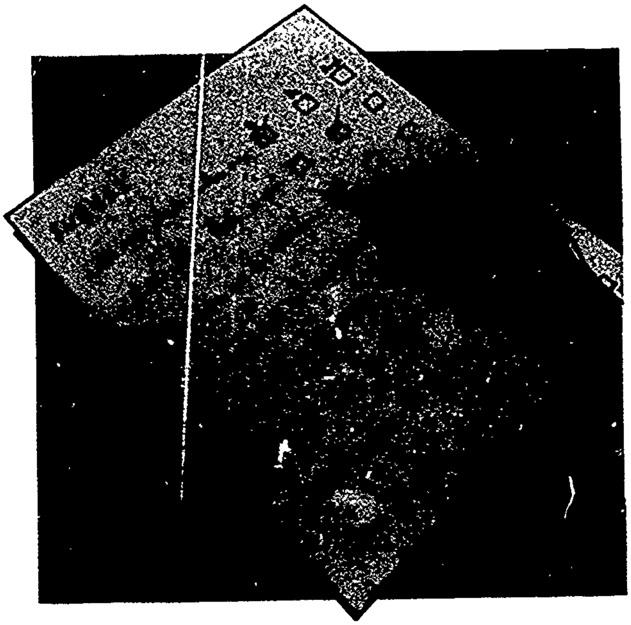
- State the purposes of the questionnaire. Learners need to know that this information is essential to meeting their needs.
- Clearly state that this information will be held in confidence. People are usually more willing to provide personal information if they know that their privacy is ensured.
- Sequence and group related items. For example, questions about previous education should be chronologically sequenced and grouped in one section of the form; occupational experience should be treated in the same manner; and so on.
- Be as brief as possible, including only questions that are relevant to your situation.
- Direct questions to your audience's level of comprehension. If you know the reading level is low, write short, simple sentences using basic vocabulary.
- Provide adequate space for response.
- Supply legible copies of the questionnaires.

After you have completed your original design, you may want to pilot test the survey using colleagues or a few representative students. Ask them to imagine that they have been asked to complete this form in an initial class session.

When they have completed it, review their responses to the questions. Did you learn anything about your "students" in the process? What special training needs did their responses reveal? How would you plan instruction based on this information?

You might also ask them these questions: Were there items that they had difficulty in understanding? Did some questions seem pointless? Why? Based on the results of your pilot test, you may choose to revise your original design.

Sample 3 is an example of one type of learner survey. The first page of the survey is designed to obtain basic learner information. Note that the purposes of the questionnaire are fully stated and the learners' privacy is ensured.



The competency checklist on the second page of the survey serves two important functions. The completed form provides information about individual needs, interests, and general skill levels. The list also serves to alert learners to the competencies they will need to acquire in the program.

On the third page is an interest survey. With it, you can help learners become more aware of their goals and needs. In addition, you will secure information about learners' interests, their capacity for written expression, and their reading habits. Keep in mind, however, that learners' responses provide the basis for further discussion; they do not provide an absolute description of the individual.

The follow-up survey on the fourth page of the sample can be valuable in assessing how well learners' needs have been met. This information can also help you improve instructional planning for future courses.

Limitations of questionnaires. Questionnaires provide only a partial view of an individual's needs and interests. The information that you obtain is limited, in part, by the questions included, the way they are stated, and the format of the questionnaire itself.

For example, some people do not like the impersonal nature of written forms and are much more open and responsive to more personal approaches to information gathering. Furthermore, if the questionnaire is not properly presented, learners may view it as just one more "unnecessary" piece of paperwork that they have to plow through before getting down to really learning.

SAMPLE 3

NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY

Learner Application

The purpose of this survey is to provide the instructor with an overview of your current skills, background, goals, and interests in the subject area. With this knowledge, the instructor will be able to design learning experiences that can better meet your needs in the program. *All information that you provide will be held in the strictest confidence.*

____________________ Date

____________________ Social Security Number

Name ____
Last First M.I.

Address ____
Street

____
City State ZIP

Telephone ____________ ____________ Occupation ____________
Home Work

In case of emergency contact ________________ Telephone ____________

Special Needs: Hearing __________ Vision __________ Other ____________

The highest grade I completed is (circle one): 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20

The last year I attended school was ____________.

I have attended other adult education classes. ☐ Yes ☐ No

I heard about the program from ________________________.

My goal is to (check all items that apply)

____ obtain vocational training
____ obtain employment
____ retain present employment
____ advance in my occupation
____ explore new career skills
____ enrich my personal knowledge
____ other (please describe) ________________________

SOURCE. The majority of this sample is adapted from an application from Fairfax County (Virginia) Public Schools, Department of Career and Resource Development Services, Adult and Community Education. The competency checklist on the second page of this sample is adapted from Sidney D. Borcher and John Joyner, *Secretarial Science Occupational Performance Survey*, Interim Report (Columbus, OH The Center for Vocational Education, The Ohio State University, 1973), pp. 43 and 50-55.

Competency Checklist

The following competencies are covered in the program in which you have enrolled. Indicate the skills that you entered this program to acquire by placing a check in the blank to the left of each of those skills. In the blank to the right of each item, rate your present level of ability in that skill, using the following rating scale:

1 = I don't possess this skill at all.
2 = I possess moderate ability in this skill.
3 = I am very skilled at this.
4 = I am skilled enough at this that I could supervise others who perform this task.

Secretarial Science

DUTY G: PERFORMING BOOKKEEPING AND ACCOUNTING ACTIVITIES

_____ 1. Perform paymaster functions _____
_____ 2. Administer imprest and petty cash funds _____
_____ 3. Administer credit purchases, such as credit card charges and installment purchase agreements _____
_____ 4. Age the accounts receivable _____
_____ 5. Approve bills of any kind _____
_____ 6. Approve customers' transactions, such as checks and charge purchases _____
_____ 7. Approve monthly group insurance bills _____
_____ 8. Arrange for insurance policies _____
_____ 9. Ascertain availability of funds _____
_____ 10. Calculate deductions, such as income tax, FICA, and insurance _____
_____ 11. Check bills and invoices _____
_____ 12. Check money orders and checks for accuracy and completeness _____
_____ 13. Check on supplies for reordering purposes _____
_____ 14. Close ledger accounts _____
_____ 15. Control the safekeeping of monies, bonds, and sealed bids _____
_____ 16. Compose business reports _____
_____ 17. Compute amount and percentage of markup and loss _____
_____ 18. Compute depreciation _____
_____ 19. Compute dividends _____
_____ 20. Compute interest charges _____
_____ 21. Compute payrolls for employees _____
_____ 22. Compute property taxes _____
_____ 23. Compute income taxes _____

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Interest Survey

Please complete each sentence with the first response that comes to mind.

1. Someday I want to learn to ______________________________.
2. One thing I know how to do very well is ______________________________.
3. One thing I do not like to do at all is ______________________________.
4. In my personal time I like to ______________________________.
5. The most difficult thing for me to do is ______________________________.
6. My best subject in school was ______________________________.
   My poorest subject was ______________________________.
7. One of the most important things I learned in school was ______________________________.
8. I have enrolled in this training program because ______________________________.
9. I'll be satisfied with myself when ______________________________.
10. My relatives would like for me to ______________________________.
11. The section of the newspaper I read most often is ______________________________.
12. My favorite television show is ______________________________.
13. My favorite magazine is ______________________________.
14. The last book I read was entitled ______________________________.
15. I'd rather read than ______________________________.
16. Learning is important to me now because ______________________________
    ______________________________.

Please check the one item that best describes you.

17. I think I would learn best by studying—
    ______ at my own pace at an adult learning center
    ______ with a tutor
    ______ by myself at home
    ______ with other students in a class

18. In order to remember something, I need to—
    ______ see it
    ______ hear it
    ______ hold or touch it
    ______ write it down

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Follow-up Survey

For instructor's or office use only

Follow-up was made on ______________________ 19 ____ by ______________________

The [illegible]

[illegible] ______________________

[illegible]

______ [illegible]

______ [illegible]

______ [illegible]

______ [illegible]

______ other ______ unknown

Impact Data (check all that apply)

______ completed program successfully

______ enrolled in another term

______ enrolled in another educational program

______ obtained employment in desired area

______ upgraded employment

Informal Interviews

Informal, one-to-one interviews are often used in both the initial and ongoing phases of needs assessment. They can be an effective means of doing the following:

- Developing a rapport with each learner
- Identifying learning activities that are essential to meeting the individual's needs, goals, and interests
- Providing an opportunity for individuals to talk about important personal experiences and issues that they found difficult to discuss in writing or in a group context
- Allowing learners to examine their progress and discuss whether and how their needs are being met
- Providing an opportunity for individuals to evaluate their original goals and expectations: a give-and-take interview situation can help learners determine whether these goals were realistic, given the range of the program, available time and resources, and their interests and abilities

It is possible to explore most types of training-needs information in a one-to-one interview. However, the interview will be most effective if you first identify a limited number of specific topics that you want to discuss. Through classroom observations and data that you have obtained from other needs assessment activities, you can identify topics that are most relevant to each individual.

You will need to formulate interview questions that are clear and direct, yet open-ended enough that individuals will feel free to bring up important ideas that you hadn't anticipated. Ideally, the one-to-one interview (1) provides a time and place for an exchange of ideas and (2) allows the person being interviewed to propose solutions to problems and to ask questions.

The interview can be quite informal and, in fact, is probably most effective if you approach it in this way. Learners are more likely to be relaxed and open if you are relaxed and receptive. Your supportive, interested, and noncritical attitude is essential in a good one-to-one interview. And don't forget, it is important to balance any diagnosis of a weakness with a recognition of the learner's strengths and progress.

Standardized Tests

Many excellent standardized learning style inventories, interest surveys, and diagnostic tests are available. There are, however, some cautions associated with their use, which you as an instructor need to clearly understand.

First, many of these tests were originally designed for children who had come from roughly similar backgrounds. As a consequence, these tests may not yield reliable results if administered to adults.

Second, the results were used to rank young learners in terms of their abilities. It is important to note that ranking adult learners according to test results should **not** be the objective of using standardized tests. Rather, the results should be used (1) to help stimulate learners' to think about their goals, abilities, and career directions, and (2) to help you design effective instructional plans.

Third, some learners find standardized tests intimidating. As a result, they may perform poorly and resent the procedure. Thus, these tests should be administered only when it is certain that they will provide necessary, relevant information. Furthermore, every effort should be made to make the test-taking situation as unintimidating as possible.

And finally, selecting the appropriate test, administering it, and interpreting the test results is a complex process. Because of this, most standardized testing is handled by trained specialists (e.g., counselors) who can select appropriate tests for the adults in your specific program. They can also interpret the results for you so that you can use them most effectively. Learners should also have access to the information provided by these tests.

Despite the very real cautions regarding the use of standardized tests, they can provide some useful information for learners and instructors—if they are appropriately selected and administered. Many of the following commonly used tests and surveys have been designed specifically for use with adults.

Interest surveys. Standardized interest surveys are designed to help individuals identify and understand their interests in and preferences for particular activities. From these preferences, a diagnosis is then made of the occupation(s) that most closely match their interests. Some widely used interest surveys include the *Kuder Occupational Interest Survey, Kuder Career Development Inventory, Ohio Vocational Interest Survey* (OVIS), and the *Strong-Campbell Interest Inventory* (SCII).

Cognitive and learning styles inventories. These inventories measure different dimensions of learning. Some assess preferences for various types of stimuli (e.g., oral, written, visual, hands-on). Others help identify such factors as how individuals process information, how they are best motivated, and their preferred social interactions in learning. Commonly used inventories include Dunn, Dunn, and Price's *Learning Style Inventory* (LSI); Hill's *Cognitive Style Interest Inventory,* Gregorc's *Transaction Ability Inventory;* and the *Meyers-Briggs Type Indicator* (MBTI).

Achievement tests. Achievement tests measure specific skills, such as verbal communication, mathematical computation, and a range of other problem-solving skills. There are two basic types of achievement tests: survey and diagnostic. The survey test can be particularly helpful in pointing out group strengths and weaknesses. These tests indicate a student's general level of achievement in such areas as reading and math. Examples of survey tests are the subtests of general achievement tests, such as the *Metropolitan Achievement Test.*

The diagnostic test is designed to analyze an individual's strengths and weaknesses in a particular area (e.g., reading) and to suggest causes for these difficulties. *The Adult Basic Learning Examination* (ABLE) and the *MEIP Diagnostic Math Test* are two examples of diagnostic achievement tests.

Aptitude tests. Aptitude tests provide a basis for confirming an individual's ability, with training, to acquire particular knowledge or skills. One commonly used aptitude test is the *General Aptitude Test Battery* (GATB), which is widely used by the U.S. Employment Service. The GATB is divided into separate tests that measure general learning ability (G), verbal ability (V), numerical aptitude (N), spatial aptitude (S), form perception (Q), motor coordination (K), finger dexterity (F), and manual dexterity (M).

Other commonly used aptitude tests include the *Differential Aptitude Test* (DAT) and the *Flanagan Industrial Tests* (FIT). These tests measure skills considered to be critical for performance in a wide variety of jobs.

Self-Assessment Tests

Self-assessment tests that include items reflecting the reading, writing, and math skills needed in a variety of different educational programs are also available in some institutions. By completing and scoring such a test in private—without the fear of embarrassment—adults can get a good picture of their readiness for the specific program they want to complete (see sample 4).

These tests help learners to identify their strengths. Thus, they gain confidence in their ability to succeed. In addition, identifying their weaknesses should not dampen their spirits if they know that adequate means are available to help them overcome those weaknesses.

You may determine that some or all of your students would benefit from gaining more awareness of their true abilities, skills, and interests. If so, you should check with the admissions or counseling office in your institution to identify what self-assessment tests are available, how they should be obtained and administered, and whether any have been administered during the intake process.

In summary, the old adage, "A little knowledge can be a dangerous thing," is especially pertinent when interpreting personal information. Using only limited knowledge provided by rudimentary information, it is far to easy to make stereotyped and false assumptions, founded only in cultural cliches about profession, age, levels of education, income, race, and so on.

Stereotypes of all kinds are often difficult to dispel. These assumptions are formidable barriers to understanding and communication—and are contrary to the purposes of learning. As a consequence, you need to be alert to your feelings about these factors, both negative and positive, and deal with them in order to be an effective teacher of adults.

The information you gather is meant to help you get to know each individual in the program well enough to design learning experiences that take into account their particular needs and interests. Remember that it is not necessary or desirable to collect all the data or use all the techniques that are described in this module. You will need to carefully identify what training-needs information is really relevant to **your situation**; then you can select the appropriate means of gathering it and determine how to interpret it effectively.

SAMPLE 4

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC TEST ITEMS

Entry Standards Assessment: Cable TV Installer

This skills check is to help you and your counselor know if you have the math, reading, writing, and listening skills needed for training for this job. The instructor of the course asks that you have these skills before coming to training. If you don't have these skills, we offer classes to help you learn them. You'll only work on the skills you'll need, and then you'll move into training. Relax. Take your time. Don't worry. If you can't do it now, you will have the opportunity to learn.

Check the Items You Can Do

1. Cable TV installers need to solve practical math problems on the job. To show you can do this, solve the following problem:

   The signal from a TV channel loses 13 decibels when it travels through 100 feet of a certain cable. If it takes 25 feet of this cable to connect the antenna to the TV set, how many decibels are lost from the antenna to the TV set?

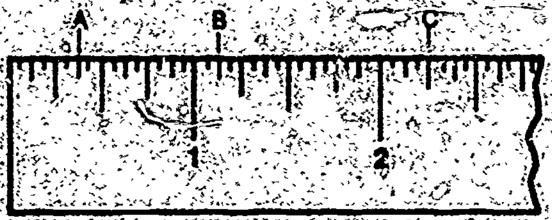
   ____ 1C.5

Check the Items You Can Do

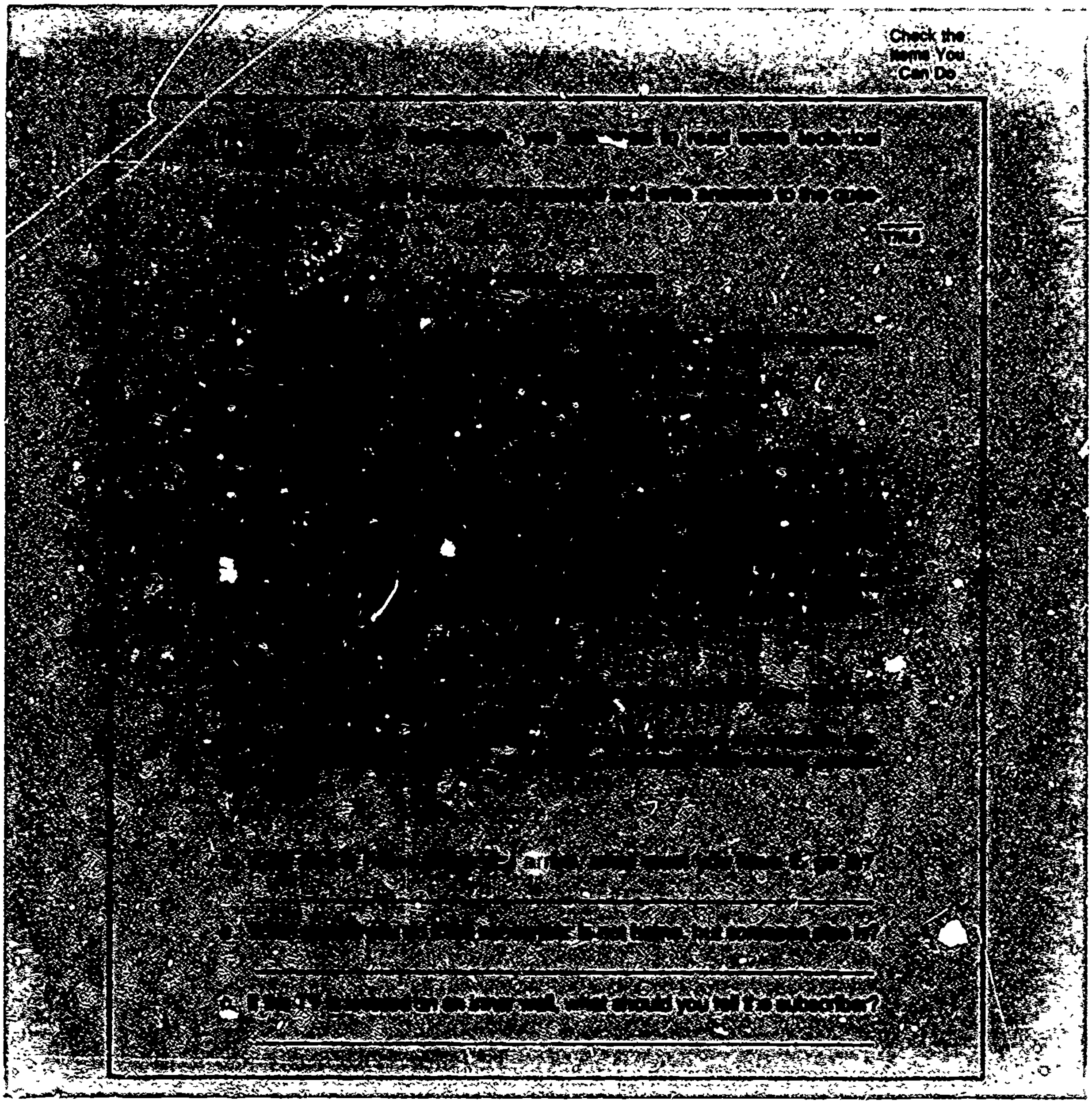
2. To drill holes for cable in the right place, a cable TV installer must be able to read a ruler.

   Write the measurements shown by the letters on the ruler below:

   ____ 8A.5c



A = ____ B = ____ C = ____



Check the Items You Can Do

[illegible]

SOURCE. CETA Staff Development project, San Mateo County Office of Education, Redwood City, California.

For further information on gathering learner information, you may wish to refer to one or more of the following supplementary references:

Optional Activity 2

- Buros, ed., *The Eighth Annual Mental Measurements Yearbook*—This reference manual provides information on a variety of standardized testing instruments designed to assess such elements as achievement, aptitude, interests, and cognitive styles.
- James and Galbraith, "Perceptual Learning Styles: Implications and Techniques for the Practitioner," *Lifelong Learning: An Omnibus of Practice and Research*—This excellent article describes the characteristics of each type of learning style. Information on how to help learners identify their individual styles and practical applications of this knowledge is also provided.
- Knaak, *Learning Styles: Applications in Vocational Education*—Included in this document are descriptions of a range of philosophical concepts about learning styles and their applications in vocational education. It also provides basic information on learning styles assessment instruments, including sources from which they can be obtained.
- Orlich, *Guide to Sensible Surveys*—This handbook provides clear, solid information on how to develop questionnaires and surveys.
- Swirsky, *A Handbook of Placement Assessment Resources*—This is a good reference volume, covering a variety of standardized tests. The book provides descriptions of each test cited, how each is administered, and suggested uses for the information obtained from test results.

Optional Activity 3

For advice on how to secure training-needs information effectively and efficiently, you may wish to interview instructors, counselors, or other professionals in your occupational area who are experienced in conducting needs assessment activities. Your resource person may be able to help you identify appropriate people to interview.

Activity 4

Select a specific hypothetical course or program in your occupational area, and then develop a written plan for securing initial and ongoing information that will enable you to determine individual training needs. Review the type of program you are teaching in, its objectives, and its time limits. With this knowledge, develop a needs assessment plan that describes the following:

- The information that you need to secure, and how you will use it
- When you will gather this information
- The techniques that you will use in gathering this information

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Activity 5

In a simulated classroom or laboratory situation, use your plan to secure initial training-needs information from a group of peers. These peers will serve two functions: (1) they will role-play adult learners in the hypothetical course or program for which you have developed a needs assessment plan, and (2) they will evaluate your performance. If peers are not available to you, you may ask your resource person to role-play an adult learner in your course or program.

Feedback 6

Multiple copies of the Training Needs Assessment Checklist: Peer Evaluation are provided in this learning experience, pp. 41–45. Give a copy to each peer or to your resource person before conducting your needs assessment activity in order to ensure that each knows what to look for during the activity. However, indicate that, during the activity, all attention is to be directed toward you and that the checklists are to be completed **after** the activity is finished.

Feedback 7

While your peers are completing their evaluations, use the Training Needs Assessment Checklist: Self-Evaluation, p. 47, to evaluate your own performance.

TRAINING NEEDS ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST: Peer Evaluation

Directions: Place an X in the NO, PARTIAL, or FULL box to indicate that each of the following performance components was not accomplished, partially accomplished, or fully accomplished. If, because of special circumstances, a performance component was not applicable, or impossible to execute, place an X in the N/A box.

Name ______________________

Date ______________________

Resource Person ______________________

LEVEL OF PERFORMANCE

During the needs assessment activity:	N/A	No	Partial	Full
1. the instructor explained why the information was needed and what it would be used for	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. the instructor's questions were clearly stated and easy to understand	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. I had ample opportunity to provide the instructor with the information I consider important	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. I had ample opportunity to ask questions about the information-gathering process and the course or program	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. the instructor acted genuinely interested in the information I provided	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. I gained some insight into my abilities, interests, and goals	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. I was comfortable with the activity	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. I felt that my privacy and individuality were respected	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. if written forms were used, the directions were clear and easy to understand	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. if there was a group discussion, there was ample opportunity for all learners to express themselves	☐	☐	☐	☐

NOTES

TRAINING NEEDS ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST: Peer Evaluation

Directions: Place an X in the NO, PARTIAL, or FULL box to indicate that each of the following performance components was not accomplished, partially accomplished, or fully accomplished. If, because of special circumstances, a performance component was not applicable, or impossible to execute, place an X in the N/A box.

Name ____________________

Date ____________________

Resource Person ____________________

LEVEL OF PERFORMANCE

During the needs assessment activity:	N/A	No	Partial	Full
1. the instructor explained why the information was needed and what it would be used for	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. the instructor's questions were clearly stated and easy to understand	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. I had ample opportunity to provide the instructor with the information I consider important	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. I had ample opportunity to ask questions about the information-gathering process and the course or program	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. the instructor acted genuinely interested in the information I provided	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. I gained some insight into my abilities, interests, and goals	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. I was comfortable with the activity	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. I felt that my privacy and individuality were respected	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. if written forms were used, the directions were clear and easy to understand	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. if there was a group discussion, there was ample opportunity for all learners to express themselves	☐	☐	☐	☐

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NOTES

TRAINING NEEDS ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST: Peer Evaluation

Directions: Place an X in the NO, PARTIAL, or FULL box to indicate that each of the following performance components was not accomplished, partially accomplished, or fully accomplished. If, because of special circumstances, a performance component was not applicable, or impossible to execute, place an X in the N/A box.

Name ____________________

Date ____________________

Resource Person ____________________

During the needs assessment activity:

	LEVEL OF PERFORMANCE			
	N/A	*No*	*Partial*	*Full*
1. the instructor explained why the information was needed and what it would be used for	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. the instructor's questions were clearly stated and easy to understand	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. I had ample opportunity to provide the instructor with the information I consider important	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. I had ample opportunity to ask questions about the information-gathering process and the course or program	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. the instructor acted genuinely interested in the information I provided	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. I gained some insight into my abilities, interests, and goals	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. I was comfortable with the activity	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. I felt that my privacy and individuality were respected	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. if written forms were used, the directions were clear and easy to understand	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. if there was a group discussion, there was ample opportunity for all learners to express themselves	☐	☐	☐	☐

NOTES

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TRAINING NEEDS ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST: Self-Evaluation

Directions: Place an X in the NO, PARTIAL, or FULL box to indicate that each of the following performance components was not accomplished, partially accomplished, or fully accomplished. If, because of special circumstances, a performance component was not applicable, or impossible to execute, place an X in the N/A box.

Name

Date

Resource Person

	LEVEL OF PERFORMANCE			
	N/A	No	Partial	Full
In your needs assessment plan:				
1. you identified the information necessary for determining individual training needs in your situation	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. you selected needs assessment techniques that were most appropriate to obtaining the various types of information sought	☐	☐	☐	☐
Using your needs assessment plan:				
3. you succeeded in securing the types of training-needs information required, including (if appropriate):				
a. demographic information	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. individual learning styles	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. relevant past experiences	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. relevant past education	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. individual career goals	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. individual learning objectives	☐	☐	☐	☐
g. basic skills and abilities	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. the information gathered was sufficiently detailed so as to be useful	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. the process was quick and efficient	☐	☐	☐	☐

Activity 8

Review all the completed checklists, identify the strengths and weaknesses of your needs assessment activity, and determine what caused each element of your plan to work—or not to work—in the expected manner. On the basis of your analysis, revise your initial plan so as to improve the information-gathering process in the future.

Feedback 9

After you have revised your initial plan, arrange to have your resource person evaluate your initial needs assessment plan, the results of your needs assessment activity, and your revised plan. Give him/her the Training Needs Assessment Checklist: Resource Person Evaluation, pp. 49–50, to use in evaluating your work.

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TRAINING NEEDS ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST:
Resource Person Evaluation

Directions: Place an X in the NO, PARTIAL, or FULL box to indicate that each of the following performance components was not accomplished, partially accomplished, or fully accomplished. If, because of special circumstances, a performance component was not applicable, or impossible to execute, place an X in the N/A box.

Name

Date

Resource Person

In planning to secure information on individual training needs, the instructor:	LEVEL OF PERFORMANCE			
	N/A	No	Partial	Full
1. identified the information needed for determining individual training needs in the specific training situation	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. selected appropriate techniques for obtaining the necessary information, including (if appropriate):				
a. reference to information provided by the institution's intake processes or other existing information	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. group discussions	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. basic information cards	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. written questionnaires or surveys	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. informal interviews	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. standardized testing	☐	☐	☐	☐
g. self-assessment tests	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. planned appropriate initial needs assessment activities	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. planned appropriate ongoing needs assessment activities	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. suitably structured questions so as to obtain the necessary information	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. formulated questions that were brief and clear	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. planned adequate time for the needs assessment activities	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. provided adequate time and/or space for participants to provide information	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. made provision for recording pertinent information, once obtained	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. ensured the confidentiality of personal information	☐	☐	☐	☐
11. developed an overall needs assessment plan appropriate to the situation	☐	☐	☐	☐

In improving the original plan, the instructor:	N/A	No	Partial	Full
12. correctly identified all areas in which the original plan needed improvement	☐	☐	☐	☐
13. revised the plan in ways that were both appropriate and adequate	☐	☐	☐	☐

Level of Performance: All items must receive FULL or N/A responses. If any item receives a NO or PARTIAL response, the instructor and resource person should meet to determine what additional activities the instructor needs to complete in order to reach competency in the weak area(s).

Learning Experience III

OVERVIEW

Enabling Objective

After completing the required reading, critique the performance of an instructor in a given case study in maintaining student records.

You will be reading the information sheet, Maintaining Student Records, pp. [illegible].

You will be reading the Case Study, pp. 56–57, and critiquing the performance of the instructor described.

You will be evaluating your competency in critiquing the instructor's performance in maintaining student records by comparing your completed critique with the Model Critique, pp. 59–60.

Activity 1

Well-organized student records serve an important function in needs assessment, instructional planning, and student evaluation. For information on some basic guidelines and methods for keeping simple student records, read the following information sheet.

MAINTAINING STUDENT RECORDS

Some form of individual student records are kept by most instructors as a basis for day-to-day planning and evaluation and to meet institutional requirements for documentation. Well-organized and maintained records enable you to follow a student's progress, determine his/her areas of strength and/or weakness, and more fairly evaluate whether he/she is meeting instructional and personal objectives. Consequently, you will be better equipped to help learners meet their goals.

Depending on the specific learning situation, student records may include some or all of the following items:

- Basic information cards or sheets
- Completed needs questionnaires or surveys
- Information provided from the intake process
- Standardized test results
- Attendance records
- Brief summaries of tasks learners have performed, dates performance occurred, and the performance rating given
- Grades, dates, and evaluations of learners' projects
- Notes from observations, interviews, and group discussions
- Notes about learners' individual instructional plans, modifications, and additions to the plans
- Notes about group instructional plans, modifications, and additions to the overall plan
- Copies of model student papers and tests
- Copies of student work that may serve as documentation should evaluations and grades be challenged later

Bear in mind that it is not necessary nor is it helpful to accumulate records of everything a learner does or says. Nor is it sound ethical practice to retain information that is potentially harmful to the individual if it is viewed out of context or without adequate documentation.

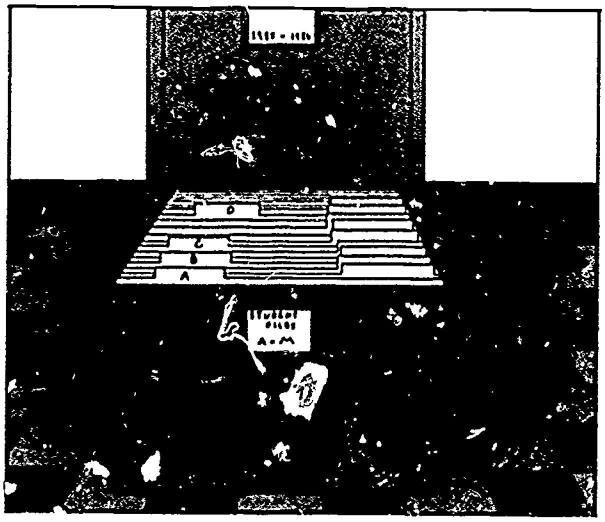
Your situation—the type of program in which you are teaching, the length and scope of the program, and the institution's requirements—will help you determine what records you need to keep and how you will keep them. For example, you may be required to provide student records to the institution that employs you. Some institutions require instructors to submit regular reports regarding instructional plans and learners' attendance, achievements, and skill levels.

Thus, you will need to consult with your employer to determine what records you are required to keep, how long they must be retained, and when they must be forwarded to administrative offices. Forms that outline all required information and the deadlines for submitting it may be provided.

Retaining records can also be useful for your own future reference. For instance, if a former student asks you to write a letter of recommendation, memory alone may not tell you much. With student records that include a range of information, you will be able to speak more fairly and honestly about the individual.

Legal and Ethical Concerns

There are federal, state, and local laws governing the retention and dissemination of information from student records. Guidelines for access to records are established by law and local policy to protect the rights of individuals, as well as to safeguard the institution from legal challenge. You will need to consult with administrators or counselors at your institution or with local or state education agencies to identify guidelines for access, privacy, and civil rights pertaining to adult student records.



It is important to note that the laws governing the dissemination of information about adult students vary from those governing students who are still legal minors. If you have been an instructor in a secondary institution, you may be accustomed to sharing information about students' activities, grades, attendance, and progress with their parents. It is neither appropriate nor legal, however, to share this information with parents, spouses, or others when students are adults. Respect for and protection of the confidentiality of student records are essential elements of record keeping.

Safe storage of student records is one way of ensuring confidentiality. Records should be stored in places that are accessible only to people who are authorized to see them. Many institutions provide storage spaces (e.g., lockable filing cabinets, desks, closets, or offices) for this purpose. If a secure space is not available, you may need to store these records at home. The most effective way to ensure confidentiality, however, is to minimize the amount of sensitive, personal information that you record and retain.

Nevertheless, there may be some situations in which it is necessary to make brief notes containing personal information. For example, you may have noted that an individual was having difficulty coping with a broken leg while enrolled in your course. During that time, the learner's attendance and performance were poor, resulting in a low final grade average—even though previous work had been of a consistently high quality.

Information about the learner's condition could be initially valuable in understanding and evaluating the individual's needs and total performance. Later, it would be useful in writing fair recommendation letters (e.g., to prospective employers). Remember, however, that such records are only for your reference as an instructor and should not be forwarded to an institution, hiring agency, or employer.

When compiling student records, it is also essential to differentiate between objective and subjective data. For instance, assume you have observed learners' classroom performance and attendance and gathered information about their prior education and work experiences. On that basis, then, you have formulated a picture of learners' personal characteristics, overall abilities, and motivations.

For better or for worse, this picture may be little more than conjecture. Thus, it is best omitted from student records. Information that is not objective can be damaging and unfair, diminishing an individual's prospects for future success in employment and education.

For more detailed information about laws regarding the gathering, retention, and dissemination of student information, you may want to refer to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act passed by Congress in 1974 (see sample 5). This act is oriented primarily to the privacy rights of secondary students and their families. However, this sample is included because the act provides an overview of the points to consider in maintaining the confidentiality of information concerning adult learners.

In addition, state law may specify how information about adult learners is to be handled. These laws will vary somewhat from state to state. Thus, you will need to check with administrators or state personnel to identify privacy laws that apply in your own state.

Organization of Records

With a well-organized and streamlined record-keeping system, you can easily locate and add important information whenever necessary. You need to prepare and maintain your system so that records are logically ordered and easily accessible and require a minimal amount of clerical work.

It is relatively simple to set up a record-keeping system that will meet these needs. There are a few basic rules in this procedure:

- Minimize, as much as is practical, the number of records you keep.
- Include only information that is relevant to meeting individual needs, evaluation needs, and institutional requirements.
- Record grades, attendance, etc., in chronological order.
- Logically sequence related types of information (e.g., by date, by type of project, by grade, by written evaluation).
- File information about individuals in alphabetical order by surname.
- Make records easy to use—whether for quick reference, for adding new information, or for forwarding information to program administrators when required.
- Keep up-to-date with record-keeping activities. If you wait until the end of the course to complete your records, they cannot help you in instructional planning—nor is it likely that they will provide information that is accurate and complete.

SAMPLE 5

THE FAMILY EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS AND PRIVACY ACT

Basic Points of the Act

Parents have the right to inspect and review any and all records [illegible] directly related to their children. [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

- [illegible]
- [illegible]
- To [illegible] Comptroller General [illegible] administrative head of an education agency [illegible] educational authorities.
- In compliance with a judicial order or subpoena.
- In connection with a student's application for, or receipt of, financial aid.

The use of students' or parents' names or social security numbers is prohibited for reporting in federal programs without written consent of parents. Exceptions are made in the case of student applications for financial aid, and where compliance with a court order or subpoena is involved.

The law requires all persons, agencies, or organizations desiring access to sign a written form, which is kept permanently with the file of the student.

Exceptions to the general prohibition against the release of student records without the consent of the parent or the "eligible student" have been [illegible] as follows.

Release of records without written consent. The following guidelines [illegible] release of records without consent:

- [illegible] in connection with a student's application for financial aid.
- [illegible] for the purpose of [illegible] in such a way [illegible]
- Accrediting organizations may receive information to carry out their accrediting function.
- Parents of [illegible] may also receive information [illegible] to parents of an 18-year-old living at home. One could assume dependency of the student if he lives within the home. However, for students 18 or older not living at home, consent for release of records should come from the student.

Students at the high school level who maintain separate residences can be presumed to be "independent."

- Information can also be released in an emergency situation [illegible] to protect the health or safety of a student.
- [illegible] may receive information [illegible] no longer [illegible]

[illegible] to the following:

- [illegible] by those [illegible]
- [illegible] student is [illegible] and have an opportunity to receive a copy of it and challenge the record.
- Written consent by a parent or an "eligible student" (18 years of age or attending a postsecondary institution) specifying the records to be released — The parent or student is given an opportunity to receive a copy of the record released if desired.
- Information furnished to comply with a judicial order or subpoena.
- Records kept on persons requesting the students' record, specifying the legitimate interest — This record of access is available only to the parent or "eligible student," and school officials who maintain the records.
- Transfers to third parties — These are permitted only on condition that the third party will not permit anyone else to have access to the information.

Directory information. If the school gives public notice of the information it considers "directory" in advance and gives parents a reasonable time to inform the school not to release the information, this type of information can be released. Directory information is defined as follows:

- Student's name
- Address and telephone listing
- Date and place of birth
- Major field of study
- Participation in officially recognized activities and sports
- Weight and height of members of athletic teams
- Dates of school attendance
- Degrees and awards received
- The most recent previous educational agency or institution attended by the student

[illegible] inspection of records. The law is silent concerning [illegible] the right to inspect their [illegible] record [illegible] their own [illegible] to [illegible] records [illegible] in confidence.

Persons required to be present during inspection. The law also is silent on the matter of who must be present during a records inspection by the parent or student. Many school [illegible] that this person should be a member of the [illegible] staff, but counselors, principals, or deans will [illegible] this responsibility.

Release of information to a prospective employer. Since a prospective employer would be considered a third party, records must not be released without written parental consent or consent from an "eligible student."

Basic Methods of Record Keeping

It is possible to develop a relatively simple record-keeping system by using one or more of the following methods. Your situation, as well as your personal preferences, will help you determine which to use.

Record books. Many instructors find commercially designed instructional record books useful for keeping concise and easily accessible records. A number of formats are available for recording a variety of information, including grades, attendance, and instructional plans.

These books are organized to provide for clear and systematic record keeping. They are usually spiral bound and lie flat when open, making it easy to record and refer to the data. Some institutions provide record books for their instructors. These books are also available at school supply stores (see the Yellow Pages of your phone book).

Record-keeping forms. Some instructors design their own record-keeping forms. These often provide a one-page reference for individualized instructional planning and evaluation. They may also include space for a summary of individual needs, related learning activities, and any additional information that is relevant to the specific learning situation.

Index card files. Index card files can also provide a quick, convenient system for filing basic information cards, as well as cards with brief notes about learners' needs, goals, and progress on projects. File guides are available, with alphabetic headings, numeric headings, or blank tabs that allow for headings of your choice. Using these guides, you can group information in manageable, easy-to-find sections.

File folders. Manila file folders offer a convenient means for organizing loose information, such as needs surveys, intake information, student work, and information forms. These folders are available with alphabetic or blank index tabs that allow you to clearly identify and systematically organize records.

Some teachers provide a separate folder for each learner and include all or most information about the individual in that folder. This method provides easy access to an individual's records for reference and quick insertion of new information.

Expandable file folders are designed to accommodate materials requiring more space than the standard manila file folder. Some expandable folders have multiple pockets so materials can be sorted by type or subject. Some have a flap and tie. These folders can be particularly convenient for storage and/or transportation of materials.

Loose-leaf notebooks. Some instructors prefer to use loose-leaf notebooks for filing, recording, and transporting information. Tab-indexed subject dividers allow you to divide subject areas according to your needs. With this simple, portable system, you can add or remove information efficiently and review records at a glance. An investment in a loose-leaf binder and a hole punch may pay excellent dividends.

Other storage devices. If you have a large number of records to keep, you may want to use a filing cabinet or box for more efficient storage. Most institutions provide these for their instructors. If not, you may wish to purchase an inexpensive filing box or carton at an office supply or discount store.

With the emergence of the small, inexpensive personal computer, electronic filing also provides an efficient and effective method of maintaining records. This may be particularly appropriate if your home computer is compatible with the school's.

Many personal computers can, with the use of simple commands, sort student information rapidly and present the information on a screen or on hard copy. If your records are stored on disks, security and safety are enhanced—you can simply carry them in your pocket or briefcase.

Regardless of the record-keeping methods that you use, remember that your methods should be selected and developed for practical use in your particular situation and that the confidentiality of these records must be safeguarded.

Activity 2

Read the following case study describing how Sarah Morris, a new occupational instructor, organized and developed a student record-keeping system. As you read, keep in mind the basic concerns, principles, and methods involved in keeping student records. After completing your reading, **critique in writing** Sarah's record-keeping plans and practices.

CASE STUDY

Sarah Morris was teaching her first course in electrical maintenance, and she was delighted to have been selected for this new position. An adult vocational program had recently been developed by the local public school system, and Sarah had been asked to teach because of her reputation as a top-notch electrical engineer. She, too, felt that her experience provided solid groundwork for this new venture, and she was eager to begin teaching.

As part of her preparation for the course, Sarah had talked with experienced instructors. She had also participated in the orientation program that the school held for new teaching staff. Sarah had been surprised at the emphasis placed on having a good instructional record-keeping system. In her view, record keeping really didn't seem to have much to do with good teaching. However, if the experienced teachers thought it was a good idea, she'd have to consider it.

Nevertheless, keeping student records sounded like it could involve a lot of unnecessary paperwork. Sarah was the head of a division at the plant, and she knew what could happen when the need to document activities got out of control. A complete division could be overwhelmed by record keeping and filing—to the extent that no one was getting any real work done.

As a matter of fact, a business could end up keeping records of its records. And the real problem was that nobody ever really read most of the records anyway—or did they? Regardless, Sarah kept the records needed to satisfy company requirements. (But it was lucky that there was a secretary to do most of the work involved, because she didn't have time to do it herself.)

True, there were some records that had proved to be really helpful. Sarah remembered that the files on a pilot project had provided good background information for planning the multiple phases of a big account that they were currently handling. She'd been able to review production time factors, successes and mistakes in earlier planning, resources, and the scope of tasks involved in meeting projected goals.

Well, Sarah thought. Maybe it **was** a good idea to keep some records of instructional plans—as long as they didn't get out of hand. And regardless of her personal views, it was clearly important to keep whatever records the school **required**.

Sarah decided that the best way to handle record keeping was to buy a teacher's planning book, stay up-to-date with it, and then take the rest of it as it came. As a matter of fact, the most efficient way of handling "the rest" might be to keep everything that seemed related to the course and to sort it out later if anyone needed it.

Satisfied with her plan, Sarah finished other preparations for the course and started teaching. Now this was the real thing. Working with adults was exciting. They had such a broad range of experience and brought so much knowledge and enthusiasm to the course.

Jim, for instance, had done some elementary circuitry design in his current job and was considering a major career move into some field of electrical engineering. Was it automotive or industrial engineering? Or was it Maria who was interested in industrial engineering and Jim who was interested in computers? So much had been said during that class discussion, it was hard to keep it all straight.

Well, it wasn't really important. What was important was that learners knew what they wanted to do. Sarah's job was to teach electrical maintenance so that they could get on with their careers, not to keep tabs on their personal lives.

Sarah was concerned about one thing though. It was difficult to give enough attention to everyone at once, especially since information about each individual came from so many different sources—tests, questionnaires, conversations, class performance, and so on. It was a shame that she hadn't had time to do much with some of that information, but she felt glad just to have gotten it all collected and onto her desk. Maybe she'd ask Shirley, the secretary from the plant, to come in some night to work with her on sorting it all out.

However, all in all, class seemed to be going pretty well, and Sarah was managing to keep up with most things. Having records of instructional plans had turned out to be a real asset, and the grade book that the school had provided was quite useful, too. Not only had she been able to keep up-to-date with learner progress, but she'd also been able to identify places where people were having problems and to help them out with some specialized instruction.

In addition, by keeping attendance records in the grade book she'd been able to tell Ms. Spinella's husband that his wife had in fact been in class on October 18. It had also allowed her to note that Dolores Fletcher had missed class for three consecutive sessions.

Dolores was going to miss more important learning experiences if she didn't show up soon. It was a bit odd. At the beginning of the course, Dolores had seemed serious about the program, yet now she wasn't showing up. If her telephone number was around somewhere, thought Sarah, maybe she should give Dolores a call and see if everything was all right.

Even with all of the planning and paperwork, Sarah found that she liked teaching. The students were great, and most of them were making a lot of progress. Thank heavens the ones who hadn't been able to make the grade had had the sense to get out early Some people just didn't have what it took to master a subject as complex as electrical maintenance. There was no harm in giving it a try of course. But now that they were gone, it was really much less stressful for everyone.

NOTES

Feedback 3

Compare your written critique of the instructor's performance with the model critique given below. Your response need not exactly duplicate the model response; however, you should have covered the same **major** points.

MODEL CRITIQUE

Sarah Morris put her best foot forward when, having drawn on her occupational experience, she acknowledged the usefulness of some records in planning and carrying out activities. It was also fortunate that the school had provided her with a grade book, which she put to good use by keeping up-to-date with grades, evaluations, and attendance records.

Because Sarah maintained and reviewed these records, the learners who kept up with the course were able to benefit from her awareness of the progress they were making and the problems they were encountering. Sarah's records allowed her to modify and individualize her instructional plans to meet learners' actual needs—in some cases.

However, although Sarah kept (and made use of) some good basic records on items such as instructional plans, grades, evaluations, and attendance, her record-keeping practices could be much improved. She definitely needs to rethink and revise a large part of her record-keeping plans and procedures.

Sarah was correct in thinking that completing unnecessary paperwork is essentially a waste of time. However, she failed, in many ways, to distinguish between valuable and valueless record keeping. Some ineffective record-keeping practices in her regular workplace had apparently colored her attitude. As a result, she (1) failed to take the time to organize, summarize, and file the information she obtained from various sources (e.g., information cards and questionnaires) and (2) planned to haphazardly collect far more information than was necessary for meeting individual needs.

Her record-keeping "plan" was not really much of a plan at all; it was primarily a shotgun approach to collecting and organizing information. The dangers of record keeping that Sarah had shunned earlier lay in this approach. Using her nonsystem, potentially valuable information was lost in a pile on her desk, and many of the benefits that might have been gained from her accumulation of relevant information were never realized.

At the outset, Sarah should have reviewed all the facts that she knew about the teaching situation. On the basis of that knowledge, she could then have developed some criteria for identifying **relevant** information to include in her records. Had she done this, Sarah could have avoided massive and counterproductive information gathering. And with less information to deal with, organizing and maintaining a record-keeping system would be less awesome a task.

As she reviewed the situation, Sarah also might have recognized the need to keep brief notes on pertinent data that surfaced during discussions (e.g., Jim's and Maria's goals). With this information as a reference, Sarah would have been better able to design instructional plans that addressed the precise needs and interests of her students.

The evidence indicates that Sarah made no provisions for organizing, storing, and reviewing any student records that did not make it into the planning and grade books. This created a frustrating situation. The organization and review of records depended mainly on Sarah's sorting it all out at some vague, future date when, in all likelihood, the information would no longer be useful.

Consider those unfortunate ex-students "who hadn't been able to make the grade." They may have been quite capable of learning electrical maintenance. Quite possibly they provided her with information about their specific training needs and goals as part of the paperwork they completed at the beginning of the course. But that paperwork is buried on Sarah's desk; thus, their goals and needs remained buried as well.

With Sarah's background in engineering, she is probably adept at using a microcomputer. This could have solved many of her record-keeping problems. She probably would have found it relatively simple to design a program for a record-keeping system that provided for easy entry and retrieval of information.

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Regardless, if Sarah had developed any organized and convenient system for maintaining and reviewing student records, she would have been better able to do the following:

- Have better access to important information when she needed it
- Keep up-to-date with recording and filing information
- Make quick reviews of the information, noting individual needs and when they would need to be addressed
- Use this information to make specific modifications in the instructional plans in order to meet individual needs
- Make provisions for ensuring the confidentiality of student information

Regarding that last item, it is apparent that Sarah neglected to obtain specific information about the laws and policies regarding the confidentiality of information about adult learners. Or she did not comprehend the seriousness of this matter, since she (1) left student information lying unsecured on her desk top, (2) provided a husband with information about his wife's attendance record, and (3) tentatively planned to have an outsider sort through personal information to which she did not have legal access.

These serious breaches of legal and ethical codes could have been avoided if Sarah had obtained information about these policies and handled records accordingly. In short, if Sarah had developed an organized and accessible record-keeping system, based on the needs of the teaching situation, the whole process could have been ultimately more profitable and fair for everyone involved.

Level of Performance: Your written critique of the instructor's performance should have covered the same **major** points as the model critique. If you missed some points or have questions about any additional points you made, review the material in the information sheet, Maintaining Student Records, pp. 52–55, or check with your resource person if necessary.

Learning Experience IV

FINAL EXPERIENCE

Terminal
Objective

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* For a definition of "actual teaching situation," see the inside back cover.

NOTES

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TEACHER PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT FORM

Determine Individual Training Needs (N-3)

Name ____________________

Date ____________________

Resource Person ____________________

Directions: Indicate the level of the teacher's accomplishment by placing an X in the appropriate box under the LEVEL OF PERFORMANCE heading. If, because of special circumstances, a performance component was not applicable, or impossible to execute, place an X in the N/A box.

LEVEL OF PERFORMANCE

In determining individual training needs, the instructor:	N/A	None	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
1. identified the appropriate information necessary for determining individual training needs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. selected and used appropriate techniques to obtain the necessary information	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. explained to the learners why the information was needed and what it would be used for	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. conducted appropriate initial needs assessment activities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. conducted appropriate ongoing needs assessment activities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. succeeded in securing a sufficient amount of training-needs information	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. secured information that was sufficiently detailed to be useful	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. provided adequate time for needs assessment activities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. secured necessary information quickly and efficiently	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. maintained a supportive, noncritical climate during all needs assessment activities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11. helped learners gain insights into their abilities, interests, and goals	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12. provided opportunities for learners to ask about the needs assessment process and the course	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13. worked with learners individually to evaluate their needs and interests	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

In maintaining a record-keeping system, the instructor:

	N/A	None	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
14. established an appropriate means for storing information	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15. recorded and filed pertinent needs information in a timely fashion	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
16. arranged to protect the confidentiality of the information collected	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17. identified and followed legal or policy procedures for gathering and recording information	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Level of Performance: All items must receive N/A, GOOD, or EXCELLENT responses. If any item receives a NONE, POOR, or FAIR response, the instructor and resource person should meet to determine what additional activities the instructor needs to complete in order to reach competency in the weak area(s).

ABOUT USING THE NATIONAL CENTER'S PBTE MODULES

Organization

Each module is designed to help you gain competency in a particular skill area considered important to teaching success. A module is made up of a series of learning experiences, some providing background information, some providing practice experiences, and others combining these two functions. Completing these experiences should enable you to achieve the terminal objective in the final learning experience. The final experience in each module always requires you to demonstrate the skill in an actual teaching situation when you are an intern, a student teacher, an inservice teacher, or occupational trainer.

Procedures

Modules are designed to allow you to individualize your teacher education program. You need to take only those modules covering skills that you do not already possess. Similarly, you need not complete any learning experience within a module if you already have the skill needed to complete it. Therefore, before taking any module, you should carefully review (1) the introduction, (2) the objectives listed on p. 4, (3) the overviews preceding each learning experience, and (4) the final experience. After comparing your present needs and competencies with the information you have read in these sections, you should be ready to make one of the following decisions:

- That you do not have the competencies indicated and should complete the entire module
- That you are competent in one or more of the enabling objectives leading to the final learning experience and, thus, can omit those learning experiences
- That you are already competent in this area and are ready to complete the final learning experience in order to "test out"
- That the module is inappropriate to your needs at this time

When you are ready to complete the final learning experience **and** have access to an actual teaching situation, make the necessary arrangements with your resource person. If you do not complete the final experience successfully, meet with your resource person and arrange to (1) repeat the experience or (2) complete (or review) previous sections of the module or other related activities suggested by your resource person before attempting to repeat the final experience.

Options for recycling are also available in each of the learning experiences preceding the final experience. Any time you do not meet the minimum level of performance required to meet an objective, you and your resource person may meet to select activities to help you reach competency. This could involve (1) completing parts of the module previously skipped, (2) repeating activities, (3) reading supplementary resources or completing additional activities suggested by the resource person, (4) designing your own learning experience, or (5) completing some other activity suggested by you or your resource person.

Terminology

Actual Teaching Situation: A situation in which you are actually working with and responsible for teaching secondary or postsecondary vocational students or other occupational trainees. An intern, a student teacher, an inservice teacher, or other occupational trainer would be functioning in an actual teaching situation. If you do not have access to an actual teaching situation when you are taking the module, you can complete the module up to the final learning experience. You would then complete the final learning experience later (i.e., when you have access to an actual teaching situation).

Alternate Activity or Feedback: An item that may substitute for required items that, due to special circumstances, you are unable to complete.

Occupational Specialty: A specific area of preparation within a vocational service area (e.g., the service area Trade and Industrial Education includes occupational specialties such as automobile mechanics, welding, and electricity.

Optional Activity or Feedback: An item that is not required but that is designed to supplement and enrich the required items in a learning experience.

Resource Person: The person in charge of your educational program (e.g., the professor, instructor, administrator, instructional supervisor, cooperating/supervising/classroom teacher, or training supervisor who is guiding you in completing this module).

Student: The person who is receiving occupational instruction in a secondary, postsecondary, or other training program.

Vocational Service Area: A major vocational field: agricultural education, business and office education, marketing and distributive education, health occupations education, home economics education, industrial arts education, technical education, or trade and industrial education.

You or the Teacher/Instructor: The person who is completing the module.

Levels of Performance for Final Assessment

N/A: The criterion was not met because it was not applicable to the situation.

None: No attempt was made to meet the criterion, although it was relevant.

Poor: The teacher is unable to perform this skill or has only very limited ability to perform it.

Fair: The teacher is unable to perform this skill in an acceptable manner but has some ability to perform it.

Good: The teacher is able to perform this skill in an effective manner.

Excellent: The teacher is able to perform this skill in a very effective manner.

Titles of the National Center's Performance-Based Teacher Education Modules

Category A: Program Planning, Development, and Evaluation
A-1 Prepare for a Community Survey
A-2 Conduct a Community Survey
A-3 Report the Findings of a Community Survey
A-4 Organize an Occupational Advisory Committee
A-5 Maintain an Occupational Advisory Committee
A-6 Develop Program Goals and Objectives
A-7 Conduct an Occupational Analysis
A-8 Develop a Course of Study
A-9 Develop Long-Range Program Plans
A-10 Conduct a Student Follow-Up Study
A-11 Evaluate Your Vocational Program

Category B: Instructional Planning
B-1 Determine Needs and Interests of Students
B-2 Develop Student Performance Objectives
B-3 Develop a Unit of Instruction
B-4 Develop a Lesson Plan
B-5 Select Student Instructional Materials
B-6 Prepare Teacher-Made Instructional Materials

Category C: Instructional Execution
C-1 Direct Field Trips
C-2 Conduct Group Discussions, Panel Discussions, and Symposiums
C-3 Employ Brainstorming, Buzz Group, and Question Box Techniques
C-4 Direct Students in Instructing Other Students
C-5 Employ Simulation Techniques
C-6 Guide Student Study
C-7 Direct Student Laboratory Experience
C-8 Direct Students in Applying Problem-Solving Techniques
C-9 Employ the Project Method
C-10 Introduce a Lesson
C-11 Summarize a Lesson
C-12 Employ Oral Questioning Techniques
C-13 Employ Reinforcement Techniques
C-14 Provide Instruction for Slower and More Capable Learners
C-15 Present an Illustrated Talk
C-16 Demonstrate a Manipulative Skill
C-17 Demonstrate a Concept or Principle
C-18 Individualize Instruction
C-19 Employ the Team Teaching Approach
C-20 Use Subject Matter Experts to Present Information
C-21 Prepare Bulletin Boards and Exhibits
C-22 Present Information with Models, Real Objects, and Flannel Boards
C-23 Present Information with Overhead and Opaque Materials
C-24 Present Information with Filmstrips and Slides
C-25 Present Information with Films
C-26 Present Information with Audio Recordings
C-27 Present Information with Televised and Videotaped Materials
C-28 Employ Programmed Instruction
C-29 Present Information with the Chalkboard and Flip Chart

Category D: Instructional Evaluation
D-1 Establish Student Performance Criteria
D-2 Assess Student Performance: Knowledge
D-3 Assess Student Performance: Attitudes
D-4 Assess Student Performance: Skills
D-5 Determine Student Grades
D-6 Evaluate Your Instructional Effectiveness

Category E: Instructional Management
E-1 Project Instructional Resource Needs
E-2 Manage Your Budgeting and Reporting Responsibilities
E-3 Arrange for Improvement of Your Vocational Facilities
E-4 Maintain a Filing System
E-5 Provide for Student Safety
E-6 Provide for the First Aid Needs of Students
E-7 Assist Students in Developing Self-Discipline
E-8 Organize the Vocational Laboratory
E-9 Manage the Vocational Laboratory
E-10 Combat Problems of Student Chemical Use

Category F: Guidance
F-1 Gather Student Data Using Formal Data-Collection Techniques
F-2 Gather Student Data Through Personal Contacts
F-3 Use Conferences to Help Meet Student Needs
F-4 Provide Information on Educational and Career Opportunities
F-5 Assist Students in Applying for Employment or Further Education

Category G: School-Community Relations
G-1 Develop a School-Community Relations Plan for Your Vocational Program
G-2 Give Presentations to Promote Your Vocational Program
G-3 Develop Brochures to Promote Your Vocational Program
G-4 Prepare Displays to Promote Your Vocational Program
G-5 Prepare News Releases and Articles Concerning Your Vocational Program
G-6 Arrange for Television and Radio Presentations
Concerning Your Vocational Program
G-7 Conduct an Open House
G-8 Work with Members of the Community
G-9 Work with State and Local Educators
G-10 Obtain Feedback about Your Vocational Program

Category H: Vocational Student Organization
H-1 Develop a Personal Philosophy Concerning
Vocational Student Organizations
H-2 Establish a Vocational Student Organization
H-3 Prepare Vocational Student Organization Members for Leadership Roles
H-4 Assist Vocational Student Organization Members in Developing and
Financing a Yearly Program of Activities
H-5 Supervise Activities of the Vocational Student Organization
H-6 Guide Participation in Vocational Student Organization Contests

Category I: Professional Role and Development
I-1 Keep Up-to-date Professionally
I-2 Serve Your Teaching Profession
I-3 Develop an Active Personal Philosophy of Education
I-4 Serve the School and Community
I-5 Obtain a Suitable Teaching Position
I-6 Provide Laboratory Experiences for Prospective Teachers
I-7 Plan the Student Teaching Experience
I-8 Supervise Student Teachers

Category J: Coordination of Cooperative Education
J-1 Establish Guidelines for Your Cooperative Vocational Program
J-2 Manage the Attendance, Transfers, and Terminations of Co-op Students
J-3 Enroll Students in Your Co-op Program
J-4 Secure Training Stations for Your Co-op Program
J-5 Place Co-op Students on the Job
J-6 Develop the Training Ability of On-the-Job Instructors
J-7 Coordinate On-the-Job Instruction
J-8 Evaluate Co-op Students' On-the-Job Performance
J-9 Prepare for Students' Related Instruction
J-10 Supervise an Employer-Employee Appreciation Event

Category K: Implementing Competency-Based Education (CBE)
K-1 Prepare Yourself for CBE
K-2 Organize the Content for a CBE Program
K-3 Organize Your Class and Lab to Install CBE
K-4 Provide Instructional Materials for CBE
K-5 Manage the Daily Routines of Your CBE Program
K-6 Guide Your Students Through the CBE Program

Category L: Serving Students with Special/Exceptional Needs
L-1 Prepare Yourself to Serve Exceptional Students
L-2 Identify and Diagnose Exceptional Students
L-3 Plan Instruction for Exceptional Students
L-4 Provide Appropriate Instructional Materials for Exceptional Students
L-5 Modify the Learning Environment for Exceptional Students
L-6 Promote Peer Acceptance of Exceptional Students
L-7 Use Instructional Techniques to Meet the Needs of Exceptional Students
L-8 Improve Your Communication Skills
L-9 Assess the Progress of Exceptional Students
L-10 Counsel Exceptional Students with Personal-Social Problems
L-11 Assist Exceptional Students in Developing Career Planning Skills
L-12 Prepare Exceptional Students for Employability
L-13 Promote Your Vocational Program with Exceptional Students

Category M: Assisting Students in Improving Their Basic Skills
M-1 Assist Students in Achieving Basic Reading Skills
M-2 Assist Students in Developing Technical Reading Skills
M-3 Assist Students in Improving Their Writing Skills
M-4 Assist Students in Improving Their Oral Communication Skills
M-5 Assist Students in Improving Their Math Skills
M-6 Assist Students in Improving Their Survival Skills

Category N: Teaching Adults
N-1 Prepare to Work with Adult Learners
N-2 Market an Adult Education Program
N-3 Determine Individual Training Needs
N-4 Plan Instruction for Adults
N-5 Manage the Adult Instructional Process
N-6 Evaluate the Performance of Adults

RELATED PUBLICATIONS
Student Guide to Using Performance-Based Teacher Education Materials
Resource Person Guide to Using Performance-Based Teacher Education Materials
Guide to the Implementation of Performance-Based Teacher Education
Performance Based Teacher Education: The State of the Art, General Education and Vocational Education

For information regarding availability and prices of these materials contact—AAVIM, American Association for Vocational Instructional Materials, 120 Driftmier Engineering Center, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia 30602, (404) 542-2586

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