Taking Action To Increase Learner Persistence

CALPRO's Study Circles on Learner Persistence

During CALPRO's October 2005 follow-up meeting for study circle facilitators and their administrators, participants identified specific steps agencies have taken to address learner persistence. These steps are presented below as suggested strategies for increasing learner persistence. Listing a strategy here does not imply endorsement by CALPRO staff or by study circle participants as a whole.

In addition to the actions noted below, study circle participants' suggested strategies for improving learner persistence are listed at
        http://www.calpro-online.org/announce/2004CircleSummary.pdf.

Steps Related to Program Structure
Programs can

• Create a persistence (or retention) committee;

• Offer 2-hour classes in basic skills (e.g., writing, reading, grammar, speaking) to support students' work in other courses;

• Start a distance learning class for students who want or need one;

• Introduce shorter curriculum models;

• Change the structure of the GED class;
   Example: The program restructured a 9-week program, which most students do not finish (and many repeat), by dividing it into GED-A (for new students) and GED-B (for those who take the course again).

• Provide more consistent monitoring;

• Increase the frequency of testing, which was shown to improve persistence;

• Create a "Vice President of Retention";
   Example: A front-office employee was given this title, and her responsibilities include calling people who have stopped coming to class.

• Create a student council; or

• Provide structure for open enrollment courses by having students attend an orientation.

Steps Related to Student Support
Programs can

- Schedule student "teas";

- Create a "Student of the Month" award to enable teachers to publicly recognize student accomplishments;

- Award students an incentive of one "Adult Education Buck" (that students can exchange for books or supplies) for every 12 hours in the classroom;

- Present certificates to students to recognize their achievement;

- Distribute syllabi to help students make more informed choices about courses;

- Increase the use of counseling staff;
  Example: One agency instituted mandatory counseling visits and required counselors to call students who stopped attending classes.

- Encourage teachers to talk to students about their educational goals and how long it may take to accomplish these goals; or

- Support students' transitions from one type of program to another (e.g., from GED to college, etc.);

Steps Related to Professional Development
Programs can

- Make learner persistence the theme for agency-wide professional development;

- Make presentations to faculty and staff who are not involved in study circles;

- Support teacher research;
  Example: Teachers in one agency's "Research-to-Practice" project used one or two strategies selected from the study circles manual for a year, and documented the experience in special logs. Participants received 5 hours' paid time for maintaining the logs.

- Hold goal-setting workshops;

- Create a weekly "Got Persistence?" e-mail to teachers, including research, classroom tips, and reflection questions;

- Present service stars to teachers;

- Identify key local statistics related to persistence (e.g., projected versus real ADA); or

- Download research based publications such as the following:

National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy. *Research-based Adult Learning Instruction*.2005. *http://www.ncsall.net/?id=892*.

Agencies also noted actions they took to support learner persistence that were not a result of participating in the study circles.

- One agency operates a child care center for students' children.

- Another agency provides bus transportation to and from classes.