

NADE CONFERENCE  
Albuquerque, NM  
March 9-12, 2005

This was my first time to attend the NADE Conference and I hope it won't be my last. It was exciting and energizing to hear about the latest research and practices in developmental education. Although I attended several worthwhile sessions, I'm going to highlight two in this report.

Preconference Institute: **“Brain Compatible Teaching Strategies”**, presented by Susan M. Perlis, Ed.D, Associate Professor of Education, Marywood University, Scranton, PA.

In this session we were introduced to the concept of brain-compatible learning and how the physiology of the brain affects learning. An important point we learned is that although the brain is only 2% of the body's weight it uses 20% of the body's energy. Complex carbohydrates and water are vital for proper functioning.

There is research to prove that the frontal lobe of the brain (responsible for judgment, creativity, decision-making, and planning) is still developing during adolescence so those students will learn and react differently than older, more mature students.

Learning is a chemical reaction and stress can interfere with neurotransmitter release and prevent learning. Therefore, it is important to provide a classroom setting that is as stress-free as possible. We can enhance the classroom environment through proper lighting, temperature control, fresh air, room arrangement and aroma (be sure to check for perfume sensitivity-vanilla has a calming effect and peppermint and cinnamon energize). Hydration is essential so it was suggested to allow students to bring water and simple snacks for use during long classes.

We also learned different mapping strategies and were given information on free mapping software (CMAP software).

Classroom strategies included shortening lecture-type situations to 20 minutes maximum, provide increased choices in learning, boost relevance and engagement, utilize more unconscious learning (posters, music, projects), provide a variety of learning experiences that engage more senses, and use videos to provide overviews. Cooperative learning groups (the brain is social), pre- and post-testing for effective assessment, and providing music in the classroom (helps cement neural pathways) are additional classroom strategies for enhancing learning.

Recognizing different intelligences (Howard Gardner's 8 Intelligences) and gearing our instruction with these in mind will enable more students to learn. For example, Verbal/Linguistic strategies would include lectures, discussion and videos while Visual/Spatial strategies would include chapter outlines, concept maps, graphs, charts, flipcharts, overhead projector and cartoons. Logical/Mathematical strategies might use QandA, timelines, graphing, "what-if" case analysis and Bodily/Kinesthetic strategies would incorporate experiential learning, simulations and creating scenarios.

Finally, we have to teach our students how to learn. Three phases of learning include preparation for learning, acquisition and performance, and transfer of learning.

**"Promising Practices in Adult and Developmental Education"**  
presented by Hunter Boylan, National Center for Developmental Education, Appalachian State University, Boone NC

This group presented a summary of a study they have conducted in conjunction with the Council for the Advancement of Adult Literacy (CAAL), a New York based research and advocacy group concerned with developing and improving policies for adult education, including Adult Basic Education, Adult High School (GED), and ESL programs. They emphasized the benefits of collaboration between developmental and adult education programs because of similar philosophies, similar instructional methods, similar "under developed" skills, and the cost effectiveness of increased collaboration.

After sending out questionnaires to college presidents and practitioners, 4 sites were selected to visit and study: Albuquerque Technical and Vocational Institute (NM), Davidson Community College (NC), Santa Fe Community College (FL), and Western Wyoming Community College (WY).

Sites with successful programs were characterized by strong support from administration, as evidenced by verbal, financial and political support (e.g. developmental education was included in strategic planning of the institution). There was also collaboration among personnel and programs such as regular meetings of adult and developmental education staff and a variety of collaborative projects.

Evaluation is essential in determining outcomes. There is a need to identify specific goals and outcomes and to measure these. There should be regular review of the data for program improvement.

The quality and location of the developmental and adult ed programs indicated the support from administration and contributed to the success of the programs. Adult and developmental educators often shared space. All services should be in close proximity for the students and the facilities are often the best the campus has to offer, thus affirming to the students their importance to the institution. In addition, these students are afforded all the services the institution has to offer.

Professional development is a key component to successful programs. The establishment of training is a priority, there is ongoing and regular participation in training (including adjuncts), and there is support of training through allocation of resources.

The full text of the report can be accessed on the website of the Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy ([WWW.CAALUSA.ORG](http://WWW.CAALUSA.ORG))