



PD PITFALLS

Adult Learners in the Education Field

By Meagan K. Rothschild

When establishing the professional development (PD) plan for the *Nā Hoa Hoʻōla* program at PREL, staff and curriculum designers took a critical look at adult learners in the education field and discovered that myths are prevalent in PD communities.

Myth #1: *Educators are often receptive to PD opportunities, as they want to improve the learning experiences of their students, and these opportunities will feed their natural desire for learning.*

Educators often balance hectic schedules and need a strong “What’s in it for me?” (WIIFM) to determine if a learning opportunity is a priority for them.

WIIFMs can include increasing knowledge, career growth, or credits toward credentials resulting in more pay.

Myth #2: *Because technology provides an “anytime, anywhere” avenue for information sharing, online learning is the most effective medium for PD.*

In an article in *TechKnowLogia* (2002, October–December) titled “Pedagogy of the Impressed: Introducing Teachers in Developing Countries to Educational Technology,” Dr. R.W. Burniske relates his findings that technology has a way of complicating things when overzealous instructors think more about their curriculum than their students. Appropriate

use of technology depends on both content and the specific learning needs of students.

Myth #3: *Learning processes for adults are more developed than those of younger students, so the designs for adult learning experiences do not need to address diverse teaching and learning strategies.*

In the article “Adult Learners in the Classroom” (*New Directions for Student Services*, 2003, Summer), Jovita M. Ross-Gordan makes several recommendations, including taking cultural, environmental, and learning style needs into consideration. The critical element for development is true for any teaching venture—know the needs of the learner.

These important factors will shape the design of future *Nā Hoa Hoʻōla* PD. The task that lies ahead requires the curriculum designers to take an objective look at the teachers who work daily with children and provide them with the most effective training to be successful in the classroom.

Stay tuned for the development of “Ho’oikaika Kino,” a culturally relevant prevention education curriculum for fourth–sixth grade Native Hawaiian students.

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