**Workshop Handout: Writing, Student Memory, and Performance**

**From:** Knowles, M. S., Holton, E. F., & Swanson, R. A. (2005). *The adult learner: The definitive classic in adult education and human resource development* (Elsevier: Burlington, MA, 6th Edition).

**Six principles of adult learning:** Adults learn best when they

**(1) Need to know.**

FD principle: develop multiple delivery methods (learning communities, workshops, webpages, resource pages, tips sheets, double-dipping, and more).

  **(2) Have a sense of autonomy.**

FD principle: provide choices (see 1, above), assess needs --or perceived needs (see 5, below).

**(3) Feel that their previous experiences and knowledge is acknowledged.**

FD principles: meet them where they are, let them cross-pollinate; think “yes, and” not “yes, but.” FD problem area: “expert syndrome.”

**(4) Have a readiness to learn (needed background).**

FD principles: When possible, know the faculty member’s pedagogical training; sometimes, be modest in your goals; look readiness moments.

**(5) Can apply learning now, to what most concerns to them, in a practical way.**

FD principle: satisfy need and encourage effective teaching (if the request is “fix my students,” it’s still an opening).

**(6) Have internal motivation.**

FD principle: tap or build motivation wherever you can (fulfilling mandated continuing ed credits? Not always internal motivation).

 Kolb’s experiential learning:

McLeod, S. A. (2013). Kolb - Learning Styles. Retrieved from [www.simplypsychology.org/learning-kolb.html](http://www.simplypsychology.org/learning-kolb.html)

So, if students transfer their previous writing identities from their schooling experiences, teachers most likely do also, and that impacts they way they use writing as a learning experience.

Kathleen Yancey (*Writing across Contexts: Transfer, Composition, and Sites of Writing,* co-authored with Liane Robertson and Kara Taczak: 2014) offer six recommendations for effective teaching for transfer in first-year writing courses:

1. be explicit;

2. build in expert practices;

3. tap prior knowledge and concurrent knowledge;

4. include processes and link them to key terms and a framework;

5. consistently ask students to create their own frameworks using prior knowledge;

6. build in metacognition.

**What we might expect** (based on *How People Learn*)

Tranfer of the teacher’s previous experience/knowledge of writing is crucial to learning how to teach writing effectively to students—“all learning involves transfer”

**Supporting student memory:**

* *Writer’s Notebooks/Journals*. Have students in class, on web blogs, during homework drafting, respond to questions and readings in ways that reiterate key terms from the class, rehearse important goals and learning you want them to retain.
* *Oral Discourse*. Begin class with oral check-ups that again reiterate key terms and ideas you want them to remember.
* *Hand-writing of class notes.* Research has demonstrated that retention increases with hand taken notes rather than digital. <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/a-learning-secret-don-t-take-notes-with-a-laptop/>
* *Implement classroom strategies for focus.* Neuroscience has demonstrated that multi-tasking is not real. To increase student memory, create activities that force students to focus on one thing at a time and not have digital technology available to distract. Or design activities that force students to use technology in concentrated and focused ways.
* *Scaffold into your class review.* Plan on repeating important class themes and key terms often in class. Develop activities that get student to orally and in writing repeat them. Shorter writing assignments that build to larger should revolve around those themes and key terms.
* *Think multi-modally*. When you design activities and projects, have your key terms and learning outcomes spinning in all of them, but ask the students to do various kinds of projects (oral, visual, aural, digital, written, etc.). Thus they will go through the process of repetition, but in different formats, reinforcing the learning in your class from differing angles and perspectives, with different learning tools.
* *Tell Stories, connect learning to life*: We are a narrative people. Connecting key terms and learning to mini-narratives boosts memory.
* *Add experiential learning to your class*. When students experience important concepts with their senses, they remember better.
* *Short In*-*class Writings*: If you find yourself with a bit of time at the end or any time during class, use it. Have the students jot down what impressed them during class, what they are taking way. Ask them to comment on how the learning that day might affect their next project. Ask them to reflect on how they think differently about something now that the class has considered that something. Use these opportunities for student reflection on their learning.