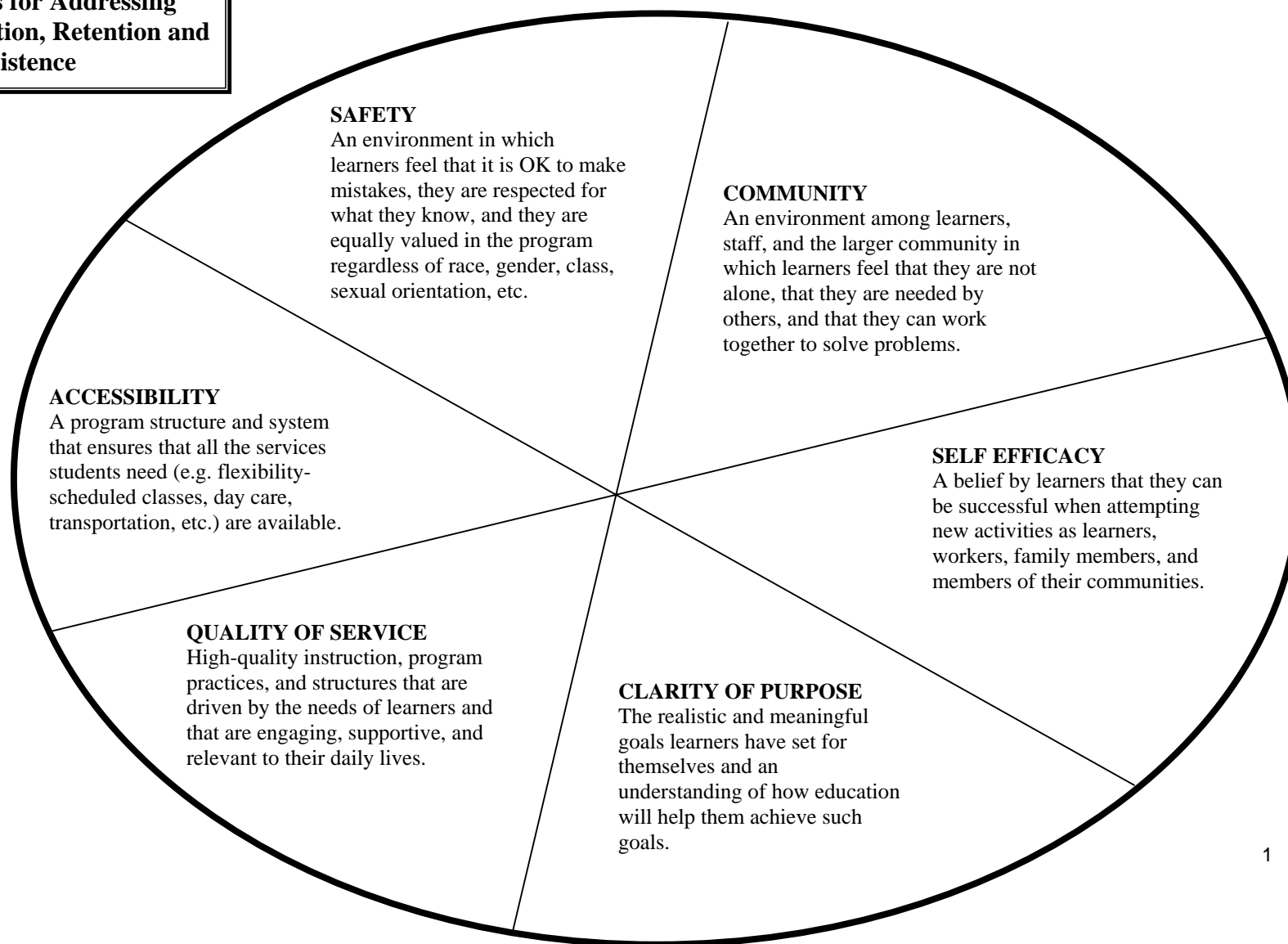


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## Strategies and Resources for Addressing Learner Persistence

**Six Strategies for Addressing  
Learner Motivation, Retention and  
Persistence**



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## SAFETY

An environment in which learners feel that it is OK to make mistakes, they are respected for what they know, and they are equally valued in the program, regardless of race, gender, class, sexual orientation, ability, etc.

SAMPLE ACTIVITY	EXPECTED RESULT
<b>Dialogue Journals:</b> Using a process for learners to share their concerns in a private way and for you to respond to those concerns	Greater communication about possibly unspoken barriers to participation that may exist and need to be addressed
<b>Learning Histories:</b> Using a technique for you and learners to reflect on and discuss your educational experiences	Greater understanding of what learners have faced in the past, or how this influences their present learning situation, and of the possible difference between your view of education and theirs
<b>Affirming Diversity:</b> Developing a plan of action, including staff training and possibly classroom activities, for addressing racism and other forms of oppression in the program	Greater respect for all learners' needs and greater appreciation for the commonalities and differences among people in the program
<b>Orientation to the Program:</b> Developing a thoughtful, formal process for helping learners understand what the program and class are all about	Greater understanding among learners of what the program can and cannot do for them, their responsibilities, and the structure of the program and class
<b>Policies and Protocols for Ensuring Physical Safety:</b> Establishing clear rules and policies for ensuring privacy and a safe environment in which learners can participate and learn	Greater comfort and assurance that learners' concerns about privacy and physical safety will be respected and met

## COMMUNITY

An environment among learners, staff, and the larger community in which learners feel that they are not alone, that they are needed by others, and that they can work together to solve problems.

SAMPLE ACTIVITY	EXPECTED RESULT
<b>Out-of-Class Activities:</b> Organizing orientations, potluck, field trips, extracurricular activities that bring learners together in different ways	Greater understanding among learners about each other and greater comfort when working together
<b>Project-Based Learning:</b> Implementing a curriculum that helps learners as a group identify and address community issues that are of concern to them (see “Accessibility” and “Quality of Service” for additional examples)	Greater cohesiveness among learners working together towards a common goal and enhanced belief among learners that they can work together to solve problems
<b>Student-Run Activities:</b> Providing opportunities for students to work together to lead activities inside and outside of the classroom	Greater cohesiveness among learners working together towards a common goal
<b>Small Group Instruction:</b> Organizing class activities so that learners work together rather than alone	Greater sense of being needed by others and of having something worthwhile to share and contribute
<b>Ground Rules:</b> Providing opportunities for learners together to set the rules for the class	Greater understanding of their roles and responsibilities for participating in class and in having a voice to improve the class
<b>Affirming Diversity:</b> Developing a plan of action, including staff training and possibly classroom activities, for addressing racism and other forms of oppression in the program (see “Safety” for a description of activity)	Greater feeling of community and inclusion for all people in the program
<b>Student-to-Student Dialogue Journals:</b> Pairing students to write and share thoughts, feelings, accomplishments with each other (see “Safety” for a description of activity)	Greater communication between learners
<b>Creative Writing:</b> Using teaching techniques that allow learners to express themselves	Greater communication and understanding among learners
<b>Buddy System:</b> Establishing a process whereby learners can work in pairs to help each other address issues of concern to them, possibly between new and returning learners	Greater bonding between learners and greater connection to the program
<b>Learner Address Lists:</b> Developing a contact list (with learners’ permission) and encouraging learners to contact each other if one of them has “stopped out” to follow up and provide help	Greater likelihood that learners stopping out will feel a connection to the program and return at some future date

## SELF EFFICACY

A belief by learners that they can be successful when attempting new activities as learners, workers, family members, and members of their communities.

SAMPLE ACTIVITY	EXPECTED RESULT
<p><b>Student Leadership:</b> Providing opportunities for learners to take a leadership role through conducting peer orientations, peer teaching, serving on program board, advocating in the community, etc.</p>	<p>Greater commitment among learners to the program and a greater feeling that their participation is needed by the program and community</p>
<p><b>Learning Histories:</b> Using a technique for you and learners to reflect on and discuss your educational experiences (see “Safety” for a description of activity)</p>	<p>Greater understanding by learners of how their educational history affects them and of what they have already achieved</p>
<p><b>Assessment:</b> Changing assessment strategies to involve learners more e.g., portfolio assessment, conferencing, goal-setting activities, etc.; see “Clarity of Purpose” for a description of activity)</p>	<p>Greater understanding among learners about their progress</p>
<p><b>Dialogue Journals:</b> Using a process for learners to share thoughts and feelings about their accomplishments and setbacks with you, and for you to provide encouragement</p>	<p>Greater understanding among learners of the natural process of learning through reflection about their achievements and difficulties and a greater appreciation for their strengths and future possibilities</p>
<p><b>Recognition:</b> Establishing formal mechanisms for learners to be recognized for their achievements (e.g., graduation ceremonies, end-of-the-month class celebrations, etc.)</p>	<p>Greater feeling of accomplishment by being recognized for their achievements</p>
<p><b>Learner-Generated Materials:</b> Using a technique for learners to write and publish their learning histories or to read other learners’ writings about their educational progress</p>	<p>Greater understanding of their own and others’ path toward reaching their educational goals</p>
<p><b>Adult Multiple Intelligences:</b> Applying the theory of multiple intelligences in your classroom using alternative techniques (e.g., learning through music, art, movement, etc.) that help learners capitalize on their strengths (see “Quality of Instruction” for a description of activity)</p>	<p>Greater feeling of their strengths and accomplishments</p>

## QUALITY OF SERVICE

High-quality instructional and program practices and structures that are driven by the needs of the learners and that are engaging, supportive and relevant to their daily lives.

SAMPLE ACTIVITY	EXPECTED RESULT
<b>Mail Activities for Students:</b> Developing a system for sending fun and challenging activities to learners after “stopping out”	Greater likelihood that learners will remain involved in learning and re-enter the program
<b>Small Group Instruction:</b> Using an approach to instruction that supports learners to teach each other and not learn in isolation	Greater feeling of belonging and assistance from peers
<b>Follow-up:</b> Developing a system for contacting learners after they have “stopped-out” or dropped out to see if the program can help them resolve issues that might have lead to them dropping out	Greater feeling of belonging by learners to the program and greater likelihood that learners may be able to return
<b>Relevance of Instruction:</b> Using curriculum that corresponds closely to the lives, needs and goals of the learners in your classroom (not just the generic learner)	Greater sense by learners that the costs of attending the program are worthwhile in helping them meet their short- and long-term needs
<b>Counseling Services:</b> Providing chances to all learners to receive support and advice on careers, lives, and further learning	Greater likelihood that learners will articulate, focus on, and be able to reach their goals
<b>Enrollment and Attendance Policies:</b> Instituting policies that are both flexible to learners’ needs and encourage learners to commit to attending the program on a regular basis	Greater consistency in the classroom and better understanding by learners that what is expected of them is realistic
<b>Teacher Evaluation:</b> Developing a system whereby teachers receive clear and constructive feedback from all stakeholders (e.g., supervisors, learners, other teachers, etc.)	Greater opportunities for improvement in curriculum, instruction and support to learners
<b>Professional Development:</b> Participating in activities that help teachers and other staff to questions their assumptions and adopt new attitudes and new practices	Greater ability of staff to deliver high-quality, relevant instruction and services to learners
<b>Program Development Process:</b> Adopting and following an on-going, inclusive process of defining annual priorities and goals for program improvement and working as a program towards such goals	Greater quality of service across the board and greater likelihood that program will meet learners’ needs

## ACCESSIBILITY

A program structure and system that ensures that all the services students need (e.g., flexibly-scheduled classes, day care, transportation, etc.) are available.

SAMPLE ACTIVITY	EXPECTED RESULT
<p><b>Project-Based Learning:</b> Implementing a curriculum that helps learners address both life and societal barriers that keep them from attending class (e.g., day care, transportation, changes in welfare policies, etc.) while they work to affect personal and community change (see “Community” and “Quality of Service” for additional examples)</p>	<p>Greater ability of learners to attend class if project-based learning results in successfully addressing the particular accessibility barrier</p>
<p><b>Intake Process:</b> Using a mechanism for finding out what potential hindering forces may be and providing assistance (directly or through referral) for learners to address those forces</p>	<p>Greater consistency in helping learners access program and other services that reduce hindrances to attendance</p>
<p><b>Support Services:</b> Changing program structure to include resources for day care, transportation, etc. and network with community agencies to provide needed services for learners which the program is not able to offer.</p>	<p>Greater possibility of meeting learners’ needs so they can attend class</p>
<p><b>Enrollment and Attendance Policies:</b> Changing policies to reduce chaos in the classroom resulting from constant entering and exiting of students</p>	<p>Greater consistency of attendance and sense of community, stability and routine in classroom where students</p>
<p><b>Flexible Scheduling:</b> Changing class schedules to accommodate learners’ needs</p>	<p>Greater likelihood that learners will be able to attend when it is most convenient for them (e.g., Saturdays)</p>
<p><b>Advocacy:</b> Engaging in actions that promote adult literacy funding</p>	<p>Greater resources for providing direct services to learners (e.g., day care, transportation, etc.) that increase the accessibility of the program</p>

## CLARITY OF PURPOSE

The realistic and meaningful goals learners have set for themselves and an understanding of how education will help them achieve such goals.

SAMPLE ACTIVITY	EXPECTED RESULT
<b>Goals in Envelopes:</b> Asking learners to state their goals and thoughts at the beginning of cycle, in order to present them again at end of cycle for them to reflect on their progress	Greater feeling of accomplishment by seeing how they have progressed towards the goals they set for themselves
<b>Fears and Hopes:</b> Using an activity to help learners articulate their fears and expectations related to learning	Greater ability among learners to talk about internal barriers that may be preventing them from reaching their goals, and greater likelihood that you may be able to reduce their fears and meet their expectations
<b>Goal Setting through Metaphors:</b> Using a classroom technique for learners together to articulate their individual goals and the steps needed (including education) for reaching them	Greater clarity of goals learners have and increased ability to set up a plan for reaching goals
<b>Assessment Strategies:</b> Using a variety of assessment strategies to inform teachers and learners of the progress learners are making	Greater feedback to learners about their real progress towards the goals they have set
<b>Conferencing:</b> Establishing a process for you and individual learners to meet periodically to discuss goals and progress	Greater likelihood that learners will be able to set realistic goals based on the progress they are making
<b>Dialogue Journals:</b> Using a process for learners to share their accomplishments and setbacks in a private way and for you to provide encouragement	Greater understanding by you of the sense of purpose learners have and of what you can do to help them believe that they are able to set and reach their goals
<b>Intake Process:</b> Developing a comprehensive process for finding out what learners' goals, skills and needs are as they enter the program	Greater ability by staff to understand how to help learners set clear goals
<b>Learning Histories:</b> Using a technique for you and learners to reflect on and discuss your educational experiences	Greater ability of learners to articulate goals for further education based on an understanding of their past
<b>Student Mentors/Testimonials:</b> Establishing a process for more experienced learners to talk with new learners about their educational path	Greater sharing among peers about the different options available as a result of acquiring further education
<b>Equipped for the Future:</b> Using the EFF framework to help guide learners in clarifying their goals as workers, family members, and community members	Greater match between curriculum and what learners identify as their goals (what they want to know and be able to do)

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## CLARITY OF PURPOSE (continued)

<b>Creative Writing:</b> Using teaching techniques that allow learners to express themselves	Greater communication and understanding of their accomplishments and challenges
<b>Bridge to Next Steps:</b> Providing opportunities for learners to become familiar with options for further education or work (e.g., field trip to community college, intern program with local company, etc.)	Greater likelihood that learners will clarify long-term goals by understanding the options available to them