

Defining the Approaches That Work



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The *Skills That Matter* are the foundational skills needed for an adult learner to function effectively within the workforce and civic and community life. The *Approaches That Work* to teach these skills in the adult education classroom include the following.

Project-Based Learning	
<p>Definition: In project-based learning (PjBL or PBL), students gain knowledge by addressing essential questions or lines of inquiry, setting and prioritizing goals, and engaging with real-world authentic tasks. Project-based units of instruction result in the creation of a product that demonstrates learners’ skills and content knowledge (e.g., a report, presentation, video, etc.). Project-based learning units require an array of basic skills and soft skills including communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity and are typically multidisciplinary. The project can be related to building learners’ knowledge of community needs, careers, changes in the workplace, or academic subjects (e.g., social studies, science). Project-based learning is a rigorous and engaging approach that prepares learners for postsecondary and career transitions.</p>	<p>Example: Students in an intermediate ESL class (focusing on the question, "How can we help our school community learn about the garden?") design and plant a garden one summer with their ESL teacher. Each student creates a short video showcasing a few of the vegetables growing in the garden, a recipe they make using at least one vegetable, and an explanation of why the garden is important for the school and students. Materials from this project and sample student videos can be found here, under “Our School Garden”: http://atlasabe.org/resources/project-based-learning/more-extensive-projects.</p>
<p>Research basis: ATLAS (ABE Teaching & Learning Advancement System). (n.d.). Project-Based Learning resource library. Retrieved from http://atlasabe.org/resources/project-based-learning PBL Works. (n.d.). Why PBL? Retrieved from https://www.pblworks.org/ Duke, N. K. (2014). Inside information: <i>Developing powerful readers and writers of informational text through project-based instruction</i>. New York, NY: Scholastic. Duke, N. K. (2015, March 3). Now is the time for project-based learning [Blog post]. Retrieved from http://pdkintl.org/blogs/learning-on-the-edge/now-time-project-based-learning/</p>	

Problem-Based Learning

Definition: In problem-based learning, instead of presenting facts and concepts directly, complex, real-world problems are used as the vehicle to promote student learning as concepts and principles. Problem-based learning is a student-centered approach in which students, working in pairs or teams, use procedures that require them to research and think through an authentic problem scenario in order to propose solutions. During the course of the problem-solving process, learners use analytical reasoning and creative thinking skills to consider both solutions and consequences. Instruction based on this approach culminates with students developing written and/or oral presentations that describe their approach to the problem.

Example: Learners are given the following problem: A family is looking for a place to live in (name local city/area). The father has a job at (choose place) and earns (income). The mother has a job at (choose place) and earns (income). They have a 14-year-old son and a 7-year-old daughter. Their son has diabetes and needs regular medical care. They do not have a car. Where should they live? To decide, please consider information about costs of available housing, public transportation, and health care services and prioritize their needs to make the best possible choice. Team members use a cost-of-living website to research the cost of living in their own city. Based on their research, they determine whether to look locally or in a nearby area for the services the family needs. Once team members have a solution that meets the family's needs, they create a poster and present their solution.

Research basis:

Center for Teaching Innovation. (n.d.). Problem-based learning. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University. Retrieved from <https://teaching.cornell.edu/teaching-resources/engaging-students/problem-based-learning>
 Mathews-Aydinli, J. (2007). *Problem-based learning and adult English language learners*. Washington, DC: Center for Adult English Language Acquisitions, Center for Applied Linguistics. Retrieved from http://www.cal.org/caela/esl_resources/briefs/Problem-based.pdf

Integrated and Contextualized Instruction

Definition: In planning integrated and contextualized instruction, the focus is on using relevant content areas as the context for instruction. The contextualized lesson builds content knowledge while simultaneously integrating instruction in, and practice with,

- reading and writing skills,
- math skills,
- language acquisition, and
- soft skills.

Research suggests that contextualizing curriculum and instruction has the potential to accelerate the progress of academically underprepared adult learners.

Example: An instructor chooses a financial literacy context to teach addition and subtraction of whole numbers. Pairs of learners are each assigned a family's set of expenses. Partners collaborate to respond to text-dependent questions asking for the total amounts each family spends in different categories. Pairs evaluate their assigned family's spending habits and present their suggestions on ways to economize, based on adding and subtracting amounts from the expenses.

Research basis:

Drake, S., & Burns, R. (2004). What is integrated curriculum? [Chapter 1]. In: *Meeting standards through integrated curriculum*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. Retrieved from <http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/103011/chapters/What-Is-Integrated-Curriculum%2%A2.aspx>
 National Institute for Literacy. (2010). *Integrating curriculum: Lessons for adult education from career and technical education*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from <https://lincs.ed.gov/publications/pdf/IntegratingCurriculum2010.pdf>

