



Texas Center
for the Advancement
of Literacy & Learning

STUDY GROUP OUTLINE

Learning to Listen, Learning to Teach: The Power of Dialogue in Educating Adults

By Jane Vella

Published by Jossey-Bass, Inc., Publishers, c 1994.

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Part One: A Proven Approach to Teaching Adults:

Chapter 1-Twelve Principles for Effective Adult Learning

1. Thomas Hutchinson (1978) sums up needs assessment as the WWW question: Who needs what as defined by whom? If "who" are needers; "what" are needs; and "whom" are definers, why does Ms. Vella say the WWW question "reveals the political issues involved in preparing a course for adult learners?" (Pg 4) (Principle 1)
2. "Teachers do not empower adult learners; they encourage the use of the power that learners were born with . . . The rise and fall of learners' energy is an accurate indicator of their sense of safety." (Pg 9) In your response to this statement, explain how you would create a "sense of safety" in your classroom. (Principle 2)
3. A positive relationship between the teacher and each student is paramount in creating a feeling of safety in the classroom. But the reality is that almost every teacher has had at least one student who was very unlikable, often to the point of creating tension within the class setting. If you have had already had a "difficult" student, how did you handle yourself? If you have not yet had a "difficult" student, what could you change about yourself at this point in your teaching career that would help avoid escalating tension between yourself and a "difficult" student? (Principle 3)
4. Sequence + Reinforcement = Adult Learning. Give two examples from your classroom experience: The first example is one in which you failed to provide either/both a logical sequence or sufficient reinforcement for a class activity; the result was that students were frustrated and the teacher was discouraged. Your second example is one in which you succeeded in preparing your students for what turned out to be an enjoyable and very effective classroom learning activity. Be specific in identifying what you did differently in the two situations. (Principle 4)
5. "Praxis is a process: doing-reflecting-deciding-changing-new doing." (Pg 12) Use the four open questions of praxis to focus on one aspect of your classroom behavior (for example, integrating new students at the beginning of winter semester into already-established student/teacher relationships, etc.). (Principle 5)
6. One piece of evidence that shows teachers respect their students-learners - is that the learners are presented with many opportunities for making choices. Ms. Vella cautions teachers to: "Don't ever do what the learner can do; don't ever decide what the learner can decide." She goes on to explain that "... learning is in the doing and the deciding. Teachers must be careful not to steal that learning opportunity from the adult learner." (Pgs 13-14) Have you ever "stolen" a learning opportunity from your students? At what point did you realize what had happened? Were you able to recreate that learning opportunity at a later time? (Principle 6)
7. Ms. Vella concludes her description of taking her first computer course with the words, "The mass of information frightened me off and I became another statistic: another adult learner who began a course and then dropped out." (Pgs 14-15) How does the following formula relate to Ms. Vella's story: Cognitive + Affective + Psychomotor = Learning? Do you have a story of a time when your ideas, plus your feelings, plus your actions produced a very painful learning experience? (Principle 7)
8. Most adults have very little time in which to acquire a large amount of information, whether that information is about learning a new language or about passing the GED test. For some, a date forced on them by an outside force (for example, an employer, government agency, need to find a job, etc.) is the strongest motivation for attending adult education

classes. What can a teacher do to make each class period of immediate value to the students? (Principle 8)

9. Educator Paulo Freire said, "Only the student can name the moment of the death of the professor." (Pg 17) Explain this in your own words and tell how, or if, it applies to you. (Principle 9)
10. Ms. Vella warns that "... negative energy can destroy the learning effort . . . Our task is not to make a perfect team but to perfect ourselves in the effort to make our team work effectively . . . perfect systems are not the end of learning. The end of learning is the personal development of the learner." (Pgs 19-20) An "optimal field" exists in your classroom when you create a "win/win situation" for all students. Have you ever turned some "negative energy" into a "win/win situation?" What was different about your classroom before and after the negative energy was rechannelled? (Principle 10)
11. Engagement between learners and what they are learning is a teacher's goal, but how do you as a teacher feel when learners are more engaged in what they are already learning than in what you want to teach them next? (Principle 11)
12. According to educator Thomas Kuhn (1970), a paradigm shift "will only occur when the present pattern has proven itself ineffective and impossible to live with." (Pg 22) What present pattern exists in your classroom that is both ineffective and impossible to live with? What are three possibilities you might incorporate in your teaching and/or behavior that would create a paradigm shift in that situation? (Principle 12)

Chapter 2-How the Principles Inform Course Design and Teaching

The Seven Steps of Planning focus attention on the learner, not the teacher (Pgs 23-28):

1. *Who* are these learners?
2. *Why* is a course or workshop needed?
3. *When* is a time that is the most convenient for everyone concerned?
4. *Where* will learners feel most comfortable (safest)?
5. *For What (What For)* purpose (verbs) is the information needed and how will learners and teachers be accountable to each other for establishing that learning has taken place?
6. *What* specific information (nouns) do learners need at this time?
7. *How* can a course be created that meets the needs of the learners and allows them to become proficient at using the information they learn within the time frame allowed?

Using the Seven Steps of Planning make an outline for one of the following scenarios:

1. You teach a pre-literacy class with 20 students. Fifteen of your students have lived in the United States for more than five years; only one student is a recent immigrant. Most have held jobs, although mostly as maids or gardeners, before attending your class.
2. Your large beginning ESL class has a wide range of abilities with some students eager and almost ready to move up to a higher level but with other students simply filling the seats, meeting the minimum attendance requirement. They all want to learn "English grammar" but don't really understand what grammar involves, nor do they integrate what grammar lessons you do teach into their spoken and written grammar.
3. You teach a high (or low) intermediate ESL listening and speaking class. Some of your students are college educated in their native language; some are just beginning to read and write coherently in English.
4. This has been a difficult year for the students in your class. You are the fourth teacher they have had in four months and each teacher has started teaching something different. Your students have one goal - to "get" their GED. You realize that they need to learn far more than just how to pass the GED test if they are to be able to cope with a rapidly changing world, which will require that employees undergo retraining many times in their lives if they are to stay employed. Your students want to focus just on passing the test with the minimum required score.
5. An employer in a small community has just announced that it is closing its doors and all 50 employees will be unemployed in six months. A community development grant allows you to provide 25 weeks of instruction to employees who now have an average of an eighth grade education, although the actual literacy scores range from second to eleventh grades. Some of the employees also have weak English language skills.
6. An employer invites you to teach an ESL class for his employees on-site. The plant is expanding and the employer wants to help his employees get ready for the change. Consider this question: Would your course be any different if the employees came during work hours and received wages for attendance OR if they came after work hours and purchased their own text materials?

Part Two: The Principles in Action-Across Cultures and Around the World

Chapter 3-Needs Assessment: The First Step in Dialogue

1. Author Jane Vella says that, "Here is the key to adult learning . . . the key is the loving, respectful relationship of learner and teacher." (Pg 45) Have you ever experienced this type of relationship with a student, and, if so, how did it develop? Do you have a continuing relationship with that former student?
2. "A protocol, in this situation," according to Ms. Vella, "was a system of related activities, in a very strict sequence, that got a job done with assured quality. These protocols related one to the other so that the whole program could be seen as a flow of activities." (Pg 47) Can you identify one or more protocols in your classroom instruction? Is there a situation where protocol planning might have improved the effectiveness of your instruction?
3. What does the author mean when she says that this question - "Who Needs What as Defined by Whom?" - is "never definitively answered. It must be asked again and again." (Pg 48)
4. "They felt safe to disagree with one another. In time, they would feel safe to disagree with me and the program director. I have found that the moment of dissent in a course is a rich moment of learning for all. Modeling a true attitude of inquiry and learning is perhaps the most useful thing a teacher of adults can do." (Pg 50) Do your students feel safe disagreeing with you? Do you feel safe ... or under attack ... when they disagree with you? Do you agree or disagree with the author that dissent creates a rich learning opportunity? Why?
5. When you were in adult classes - adult education programs, community outreach classes, college classes or other classes specifically for adults - did an instructor ever consult you individually to see if the course was meeting your needs and/or expectations? Would such a consultation have affected your opinion of the class? Have you met individually with one or more of your current students to ask them if they are receiving the kind of instruction they expected to receive before the class began? If you have, what comments have you received, and what, if any, changes have you made in your class instruction?

Chapter 4 - Safety: Creating a Safe Environment for Learning

1. Ms. Vella describes a situation in which she and her partner, both women, were only "tolerated" (pg 55) by the church authorities in Tanzania. It wasn't until those leaders recognized that villagers had learned and were applying new information that their initial toleration was replaced by respect and interest in the village education project. Have you ever had a student whose initial reaction to you was one of distance and disinterest? If that student's reaction changed over a period of time do you know why it changed? Do you feel you have to "prove yourself to each new group of students?"
2. In your teaching situation do you feel that the administrators are familiar with what you are doing in the classroom? Do you feel that curriculum planning for your classes is a collaborative activity (administrators + teachers + students)? (Pg 56)
3. "Mr. Makame was seen as the girls' friend." (Pg 57) A close friendly relationship between the teacher and only one or two students can be perceived as favoritism by other students even if favoritism doesn't exist. In Ms. Vella's account, her entire educational project was endangered because of distrust and resentment. (Pg 57) Has this ever happened in your class? What caused the perception of favoritism, and how did you handle the situation?
4. Six aspects of effective adult learning and teaching are identified: political, problem-posing, part of a whole, participative, person-centered, and prepared. (Pg 58-59) Which two would you select as most important to you at this point in your teaching career?
5. Donald Oliver (pg 63) is quoted as identifying two different types of knowledge:
 - a. "Technical knowledge refers to adaptive, publicly transferable information or skills;
 - b. Ontological knowledge refers to a more diffuse apprehension of reality, in the nature of liturgical or artistic engagement. In this latter sense, we come to know with our whole body, as it participates in the creation of significant new occasions - occasions which move from imagination and intention to critical self-definition, to satisfaction and finally to perishing and new being.Give examples from your classroom of these two types of knowledge. In your opinion, is one better, more important, more effective for adults than the other?
6. What does this Swahili proverb mean: "By losing the way one learns the way?" (Pg 64)

Chapter 5 - Sound Relationships: The Power of Friendship and Respect

1. Educational theorist Freire said, "Only the student can name the moment of the death of the professor." Ms. Vella adds, "But the professor has to welcome that moment in order to surely die as professor." (Pg 67) Has there been a "death moment" in your teaching career? Describe that event and what effect it had on your teaching.
2. Have you ever been a mentor? Have you ever been mentored? What were the benefits and/or disadvantages you experienced in each role? Is either role one you want to experience again, and in what contexts would you seek to be either a mentor or a mentoree? Have you approached someone you admire to be a mentor to you, and, if so, what was the reaction? Are you currently in a mentor/mentoree relationship?
3. One example from the chapter is of a hospice program in North Carolina. Every three months one half of the staff received nurturing from the other half. (Pg 69) What was your first reaction to this story? Did your feeling change later? How are you at receiving - not giving - compliments?
4. How do you express affirmation in your classroom? Give examples.
5. "We teachers have to honor our own need to learn and talk about it honestly. This is the greatest respect we can offer adult learners." (Pg 70) When was the last time you admitted to your students that you "don't know?" How did you feel exposing your weaknesses? Do you have any sense of how the students felt?
6. Negative capability is the ability "to not intrude, to wait, to be patient, to be on call, accessible as a resource" (pg 71) to your students when they are involved in an activity. Does this come easily to you? If so, share your secret. If not, how might you improve your patient waiting skills?
7. Ms. Vella says, "We teach the way we were taught." (Pg 72) How were you taught? Were your role models ones you admired or detested? What are you passing on to others?
8. Is an "examination" in your classroom a way "to test knowledge, skills, or attitudes?" (Pg 74) In what ways can you verify that students "know that they know" without giving an examination? What does "engagement in significant work" mean? Would your evaluation methods stand up to scrutiny under federal and state-mandated accountability standards?
9. How are roles defined in your classroom, and how is that clarification communicated to students? (Pg 74) Who holds what roles and how have those roles changed over the last three months? Six months?
10. When a student interrupts your lesson with a question relating to the material you are teaching about at that time what do you do? When the question concerns something discussed *several days/weeks ago* what do you do? When the question *has nothing to do with any past instruction* what do you do?
11. What "aha! moment" (Pg 76) do you most enjoy remembering? What was happening just before, during and after that moment? Is it possible to structure your classroom instruction so "aha! moments" occur more frequently? What changes would you need to make in your present methods to increase those golden moments for your students?

Chapter 6 - Sequence and Reinforcement: Knowing Where and How to Begin

1. The chapter begins with the statement, "Sequence and reinforcement are a set of principles that work remarkably well in language learning and in every other kind of teaching as well." (Pg 78) Have you used sequence and reinforcement in a language learning setting, and, if so, what type of material (greetings, response to commands, etc) did you present that way?
2. Ms. Vella was asked to design an English language and literacy training program for Haitian migrant workers. She sacrificed part of the time she had for instruction at the beginning of the summer so she could learn about migrant workers and life in a migrant camp. (Pgs 78-79) Why was this "delay" such a key part of the success of the training problem that evolved?
3. "Sequence means begin at the beginning: move from small to big, slow to fast, easy to hard." (Pg 80) Think back to your childhood and teen years. How did you learn to read or ride a bike or dance the latest steps? What hobby have you mastered and how did you go from dabbler to master?
4. Sometimes teachers feel that everything they teach must be "important" and of significant long-term value to their students. Ms. Vella would disagree, (pg 82) She feels that what we as teachers teach should be of immediate satisfaction to the students so they will experience two things: the pride of learning something new and the desire to reinforce their new knowledge. What have you taught your students in the past month that they really wanted to learn, enough that the students surprised you later with their integration of that new information with other, previously learned information?
5. "I am convinced that fidelity to the principle of sequence is harder on the teacher than on the adult learner." (Pgs 82-83) When have you been bored or frustrated by how often your students need to repeat something before they have mastered it? Have you ever quit teaching the material before the students finished learning it?
6. Ms. Vella says that a needs assessment "has to be open at both ends." (Pg 84) What does she mean by that? After a needs assessment has been completed on your students do you re-evaluate it to see if it needs to be revised or broken into smaller categories?
7. How do you feel inside when you look at your students and one or more of them look dazed, confused, scared, embarrassed? (Pgs 85-86) Do you blame them for not paying attention? Do you blame yourself for being a poor communicator?
8. Ms. Vella believes that the size of a group, especially one that is smaller than 10, has a significant bearing on the effectiveness of the instruction, (pg 86) In the real world of adult education, few teachers ever have such small classes. Consider the size classes you have taught; how has class size impacted positively or negatively on the learning opportunities available to your students?
9. The application of humor and rhythm to classroom instruction is often neglected. (Pg 86) If these are methods you have used successfully, when and how were they used? If you have not used humor and/or rhythm how might you try it in a lesson next week?

Chapter 7 - Action with Reflection: A Lesson in Leadership

1. Praxis is the Greek word for action with reflection. (Pg 87) One reading skill taught to ESOL students is *RTRW: Read, Think, Read, Write*. This skill is particularly helpful when students are reading test questions or preparing to write an essay. First, Read the question. Second, Think about what the question means and how many separate items of information are involved in the wording of the question. Third, carefully Read the question again. Finally, Write the answer. How does praxis apply to this reading strategy?
2. One of the primary development issues in the Maldives project (pg 89) was that the field staff that would be attending Ms. Vella's training program was focused on doing things for villagers (construction ethic of development) rather than on teaching the villagers to do things for themselves (empowering communities). When you work with other people in a group ... teachers, friends, church committees, etc ... are you a constructionist or an empowerer? How does that affect your relationship with your students?
3. According to Ms. Vella, it is the teacher's responsibility to set objectives at the beginning of a course. It is the students' - her word is "participants" - responsibility to discuss freely with the teacher about how the entire group (teacher + students) will achieve those objectives. (Pg 90) Is this how you decide what topics to cover in your classes each semester? If yes, do you revise your plans later if needed? (Pgs 90-91) If no, do you think you would be a more effective teacher if you made semester planning a more collaborative process?
4. "Dependency, whether on foreign specialists or on national experts from the capital town of Male, eats at the heart of a development process." (Pg 91) What does this statement mean to you?
5. Two ways to get groups reactivated are to ask someone for help and to increase the physical activity level of the group. (Pg 92) Have you used either or both of these methods? If so, what results did you get? If not, do you have another idea that works for you?
6. Ms. Vella describes a funny, but sad, event that occurred near the end of the training program. The topic for that day was leadership; the application of the topic was moving a small boat from one location to another location. Suddenly everyone was rushing to move the boat, and the natural result was chaos. (Pgs 93-94) Have your students ... or you ... ever been guilty of jumping in without planning? What happened? What did you learn from the experience?
7. Consider this contrast in definitions of a development specialist. (Pg 94)
 - A. A development specialist is "a person who does the job."
 - B. A development specialist is "a person who leads others, organizes them, inspires them, helps them to determine what they want to do, and shows them how to do it most effectively."

Which definition fits your idea of the word "teacher?"

Chapter 8 - Learners as Subjects of Their Own Learning

1. If a "subject" is a decision maker, and an "object" is a person at the disposal of other people, which are you? (Pg 97)
2. Is the setting of your classes conducive to making or breaking educational opportunities for your students? (Pg 98) Where are the classes located in relation to where the students live? Is transportation a problem for some? Are the chairs, tables, desks or whatever you are using comfortable, an appropriate size, and in sufficient numbers to accommodate all students? Is the location handicapped accessible? What about lights, heat, air conditioning, air circulation etc? If the setting creates a hindrance to learning what can you personally do about the problems? What can a group of you do about the problems?
3. Do you encourage ... allow ... students to make decisions about classroom management, field trips, side trips away from the established curriculum? Do you affirm their decisions? (Pgs 100-101)
4. In Nepal, Ms. Vella worked with highly skilled community development fieldworkers, many of whom held professional degrees from universities and graduate programs. There was no question about their professional ability, but their communication skills sometimes suffered from too much education. (Pgs 101-102) In order to share ideas - rather than give instructions - with villagers, the fieldworkers needed to learn how to listen and restate. Have you ever felt that your professional training and experience put you on a pedestal, created either by yourself or by others, that made working with peers difficult? What did you do to climb off the pedestal? Were you pushed off by someone else? At the other extreme, are you embarrassed by your lack of professional training? Do you feel that you are not as good a teacher as someone else because she has a degree and you don't?
5. Do you use open questions in your classroom and small groups? (Pg 106 and pg 109) Give some examples of open questions that have stimulated effective discussion.
6. In Swahili, the word "perspective" is translated as "the place where one stands" and that a " person's perspective is a holy place to be honored and respected, even if it is different from another's." (Pgs 106-107) How does that definition of perspective affect the way you view a list compiled by your students of things they want to learn in the next month? Six months? One year?
7. "A major fact in motivation is that advice or praise from a peer carries more weight than advice, correction, or praise from an outsider or a manager." (Pg 108) When have you received praise from someone whose opinion you really valued? How did that make you feel? Human beings thrive on praise. What do you do in your classroom to encourage students to praise other students? How often do you praise your students as a class? How often do you praise individual students privately? Do you ever praise individual students publicly in the classroom?
8. One of the observations that Ms. Vella made about the Nepalese training program was that her students learned to become subjects - not objects - of their learning. (Pg 112) As subjects, the fieldworkers had enough confidence in themselves to train others to run the programs they had previously been in charge of. As subjects (decision makers), the fieldworkers were giving away power to empower others; if they still had been objects (victims), power would have been taken away from them by putting someone else in charge. Do you think of your students as subjects or objects? Do you treat your students as subjects or objects? Do your students think of themselves as subjects or objects?
9. What does this statement mean? "We have discovered that those who say they know have the least ability to learn." (Pg 113)

Chapter 9 - Learning with Ideas, Feelings, and Actions

1. According to the author, every adult learning task should include three things: ideas, feelings, and actions. (Pg 114) Are all of these parts of your normal lesson planning? If not, which one or two do you include most often?
2. This chapter describes a learning situation in a former colonial colony, still deeply entrenched in historical roles: White Europeans instruct black Africans; black Africans do not question what they are told to do and think, even when those instructions violate cultural traditions and norms. Have you ever encountered this, or another, deeply held belief (conscious or unconscious) in the natural superiority of one group of learners over another group? If so, were you able to create a safe learning environment for the underdogs and an eye-opening opportunity for the top dogs? How did you do it?
3. Mikaeli, a young Zambian priest, began to report on his group's discussion but was interrupted by an older Irish priest who criticized Mikaeli's English, suggesting that another person, who was also white and Irish, give the report. "Tom took the paper from the hands of the startled Zambian, who sat down in shock and shame. No one in the room commented on the incident; nor did anyone oppose what had occurred." (Pgs 116-117) Has this happened in your classroom? In another location? What did you do?
4. Ms. Vella suggests that we examine the printed curriculum materials we use in our classrooms prior to using them. Are they culturally respectful of and responsive to the participants in the class? (Pgs 122-123) Are only printed materials (textbooks, posters and resource books) guilty of being inappropriate? How could video and audio tapes be offensive? What are five specific things you could do if you are in a position where the only materials available are ones that are culturally insensitive to your students?
5. "When teaching a concept, it is vital to include affective and psychomotor aspects. When teaching a skill, it is important to include the affective and cognitive. When teaching an attitude, we need the cognitive and the psychomotor. They naturally complete one another." (Pg 123) Give two examples that apply to the ability level of your students that demonstrate this principle.

Chapter 10 - Immediacy: Teaching What Is Really Useful

1. Why does the author say that being stopped by soldiers in El Salvador who demanded that she surrender her passport was a "large part of the educational needs assessment?" (Pg 125) How did this experience enable her to develop a training program that had "immediacy" for the learners?
2. Ms. Vella divided her planning into two parts: the *plan for the planning*, and the *plan* based on the Seven Steps of Planning. (Pgs 125-126) What did this approach allow her and her co-planners to do?
3. 'There is a strange paradox I have observed: "The more structure, the greater chance of spontaneity." (Pg 126) When are students more participative in your classroom: when your lesson is organized, logical, supported by visual and audio aids, and by student-to-student interaction OR when your lesson is unprepared or unclear even to you, when students are unable to see or talk with other students due to the configuration of desks or tables, or when the ideas come only from the teacher?
4. Are you a "backseat driver" (pgs 127-128) in your classroom? Have you ever taught someone else to drive a car—a child, friend, non-English-speaking student? What emotions went through your head . . . and mouth . . . during that time? Is it fair to compare teaching an individual person to drive a car with teaching a classroom full of students to speak English or understand fractions?
5. "It was vital for me, not to understand everything, but to have the right questions ... I have always held that my motto, as teacher, must be: Question the answers!" (Pg 128) What does this statement mean to you? Do you "question the answers?" What kind of answers do you question?
6. Ms. Vella recommends dancing as one other favorite educational practice for adult education. (Pg 130) Do you include playtime - time for the brain to rest - as part of your lesson planning? What movement activities have you done with students in your classroom? Have you ever set grammar or spelling rules to music? Do you and your students clap the rhythm of a sentence with hands ...knees ... feet?
7. "Comprehensive participation" (pg 130) means that learners and leaders must be willing to commit themselves in advance to participation in the entire length of the program, not just part of it. When a student drops out of your adult education class does it affect the way remaining students interact with each other? If all adult education students paid a fee for attending classes now offered free of charge do you think more students would complete a semester or year, enabling them to reach their long-term goals more quickly?
8. Ms. Vella believes that nearness to the work site is advantageous in adult education because it ensures that the "locus of control is shared by learners." (Pg 132) Many adult education classes are held on-site at business and industry locations. Is this what she means by work site? What is the "locus of control" and how can learners share it?
9. Armed soldiers held Ms. Vella and her students at gunpoint for 30 minutes, then forced them to leave the farm immediately. More than 10 years passed before she was able to talk or write about that event because her fear and pain was still so vivid. She concludes that story with the comment: "the materials you use must be close enough to be immediate, distant enough to be safe!" (Pg 138) What does she mean?

Chapter 11 - Assuming New Roles for Dialogue: The Death of the "Professor"

1. "Modeling an approach to learning means being true to it in all circumstances." (Pg 141) What does Ms. Vella mean when she talks about modeling an approach to learning?
2. Chapter 11 describes a workshop the author provided to American graduate school teachers. The challenge was to get the professors to provide classroom role models of popular education that was more applicable for their students than the traditional teacher-as-provider-of-information model (banking) that most of the professors used. Do you feel that a similar workshop would be beneficial for the teachers in your adult education program? Why or why not?
3. The unanimous decision of all the teachers involved in the workshop was that they needed considerably more preparation time for this more student-friendly approach. (Pg 145) In your own lesson preparation, have you discovered that problem-based, student-centered learning requires more or less of your preparation time? Do your students "get" the lesson more quickly and more effectively when the lesson is geared to their desires and needs for learning rather than your perception of their needs?
4. The teachers involved in this workshop felt that their graduate students expected the "banking" approach from their professors - that, in fact, they would feel cheated by their professors if large amounts of information were not handed to them regularly. (Pg 147) Do your students expect you to educate them, i.e. to pour in the information so they can repeat it to you exactly as presented? How do you feel about the disparity between the expectations of students and education research that indicates that learning must be active on the part of the students?

Chapter 12 - Teamwork: How People Learn Together

1. "Teamwork is a principle of adult learning as well as an effective practice." (Pg 149) Is teamwork a regular part of your adult education classroom?
2. The author says that a "consultant has a consultative voice ... the members of the ministry team have a deliberative voice...." (Pg 150) In your classroom, is your voice consultative (a suggestion maker) or is it deliberative (a decision maker)?
3. Oliver and Gershman (1989) explain that "reality always includes the observer." (Pg 151) In other words, just by being present with students, the teacher alters the decisions of the students. Can you recall an example from your classroom where your presence changed the decision made ... or not made ... by your students?
4. In the literacy program in Zimbabwe materials development was separated from training in how to use the materials by deliberate government planning. Ms. Vella says, "It seemed to violate every principle of integrated program development." (Pg 152) Although this was definitely not the way Ms. Vella believed training should occur it is a normal process in many adult education programs where curriculum and materials are specified by administrators who are not in close contact with students and the students' expressed and unexpressed needs. In your program, who decides what should be taught and who actually uses the specified materials? Are classroom teachers allowed, even encouraged, to select appropriate materials from an approved collection? How do you personally select, acquire, produce, distribute or create materials for your individual classroom?
5. Failure to prepare adequately for implementation of team learning in your classroom will lead to an inability for the teams to develop an integrated focus. (Pg 53) Do you allow teams in your classroom to work together long enough that they become a functioning unit, that they form a single group consensus? How much time do you feel is appropriate for allowing a group to form a single identity before you as the teacher should rearrange the groups in hopes of creating a better functioning group?
6. "When setting team tasks using open questions, it is important to realize that the trainer does not know the answer to the question. The facilitator has no control over what the team will say or how it will respond." (Pg 156) Is this a frightening statement to you as a teacher/facilitator? Describe your reaction.
7. In Zimbabwe, the workshop members created proverbs at the end of each day to summarize or question what they had learned that day. (Pg 156) Do you have some ritual or format that you use regularly to allow your students, both individually and in teams or groups, to summarize what they have learned? Share both your successful and non-successful ideas with the study group members.
8. "What happens in the small groups is not vicarious: it is real life! There is no "getting back to reality" but, rather, a getting down to reality in doing a learning task as a team. This puts the burden on us to compose teams wisely and well. Teams may be composed by the adult learners themselves; they may be composed of homogeneous or heterogeneous folks by the teacher; they may be composed by chance. In any case, the composition is intentional." (Pg 158) How are groups formed in your classroom? Have you tried some silly ideas like common height, shoe size, birthdate, etc? If so, do students react differently to silly ideas than they do to ones like sitting at the same table, similar/different ability levels etc?
9. How do you react to this statement: "The team is a group of adults, and the responsibility to learn is theirs. Your responsibility is to compose teams and prepare a well-formed educational design. You cannot learn for others." (Pg 158)

Chapter 13 - Engagement: Learning as an Active Process

1. Ms. Vella describes "power of engagement" as a principle of adult learning - a principle that " enables learners not only to take part in learning but also to practice learning as subjects of their own lives." (Pg 159) In your own words, explain what "power of engagement" means to you.
2. In the story of the hospice program in North Carolina, the executive director had the single deliberative voice; in other words, she made the final decision about what would and would not become hospice policy. The hospice management team (directors of all departments) served as a combined consultative voice. The unique part of that program was that employees at every level were involved in making suggestions via a community survey form and members of the local community were also included in the information gathering stage. (Pgs 160-161) How could a similar process be applied to the school in which you teach? Who would be involved? At what stage in the process do you see yourself becoming involved?
3. The comment, "... the shorter the time frame for a task, the higher the energy," (Pg 162) is used to describe the excitement and high energy of the workshop members. Have you ever realized - after the fact, perhaps - that you allowed an activity project, or even instructional unit to continue after your students had lost interest? Make some estimates about how long different types of activities should last and how to complete your instruction if the length of time, with interest, is less than the amount of information you need to communicate or less than the amount of time needed to bring students to the point where "they know that they know."

Chapter 14 - Accountability: Success Is in the Eyes of the Learner

1. The workshop in Bangladesh was surrounded by highly political factors, in which the educational decisions about training the participating doctors were made by politicians, rather than by educators or medical personnel. (Pgs 167-169) Do you feel decisions about how and what you teach in your program are made by legislators who are far more interested in money-holding voters than in the educational needs of your students? What emotional response do you have to the word "accountability?" Is that the buzzword for funding in your state or community?
2. The author states, "I realized there and then how vital it is to be in a position to select the participants in such a course for optimal replication of skills and knowledge?" (Pg 168) Does your adult education program accept any student that enrolls? If not, what are the criteria for admittance? Do you think changing the requirements for admission would enable you to produce better prepared and better educated students? Would limiting enrollment to only those students who are likely to graduate violate the students' right to a quality education?
3. "Our task as educators is to make the learning so accountable, the engagement so meaningful, the immediacy so useful, that this unhealthy attitude [that education is not a priority] will change in time. As long as education ... is not accountable and engaging and immediate, as long as it continues to be ... 'miseducation' such a lack of respect will continue." (Pgs 169-170) How is your program... and your classroom ... viewed by the participants of the program? Does your program have a community-wide reputation for effective education ... or is it looked down upon as an example of miseducation?"
4. One of many weaknesses that Ms. Vella had to contend with in her preparation for the workshop was that the doctors "were comfortable talking about the situation as an abstract problem. They stayed, during an educational session with desperately sick patients and then-families, in their heads." (Pg 170) Where are you now on this scale with head teacher at one end and heart teacher at the other? Where would you like to be on the scale?
5. Ms. Vella struggled within herself before she finally decided that speeding up the teaching process by lecturing - by banking - was defeating the entire purpose of teaching doctors how to use popular education with their patients. Students - in this chapter, doctors - learn by what they observe and experience. If information is banked in their minds the doctors will attempt to bank it in the minds of their patients. If information is experienced by them they will also help their patients experience it. (Pg 172) We teach the way we were taught, Ms. Vella reminds us again and again. Select one method you currently use in your classroom instruction that you feel is very effective: describe how and when you first observed and/or learned about that method. In contrast, select one method you currently use in your classroom instruction that you feel is not effective: how did you learn this method and what have you done in your teaching to try to change this ineffective practice?
6. Have you ever been videotaped teaching a class? Discuss with your supervisor the possibility of videotaping, not just of you as the teacher but showing how you and your students interact with each other. (Pg 174)
7. "Today I am convinced that single events such as this course in Bangladesh are somewhat futile. They might make a difference in the approach of one or more doctors. But without organized follow-up and systems for rewarding new learning and revised efforts, the burden on the individual is too great to be sustained. I often say there are three things that make accountable learning happen, and they are important in this order: time, time, and time. Without reinforcement, without a sequence of continued learning activities and a research agenda, without the stimulation of appropriate rewards and motivation, professionals will go back to teaching the way they were taught." (Pgs 174-175) Does this statement express your own feelings of frustration about professional development - that professional development is not rewarded by administrators, not noticed by students, and not worth the extra hours you invest in it?

Part Three: Becoming an Effective Teacher of Adults

Chapter 15 - Using the Twelve Principles in Your Own Teaching

1. Needs Assessment: The three needs assessment tasks are "ask, study, and observe." (Pg 181) Choose a topic that you currently include in your curriculum and do a needs assessment of that topic.
2. Safety: When "laughter, a certain ease and camaraderie, a flow of questions from the learners, [and] the teacher's invitation for comments on the process" (Pg 181) are present in the classroom students are expressing their sense of safety. Are those things present in your classroom . . . sometimes, most of the time, or always? If not, what can you change to make them part and parcel of your classroom?
3. Sound Relationships: If "mutual respect between teacher and learner" (Pg 182) is one of the most important motivators for adult learners, what have you done in the past six months to build respect between yourself and one specific student?
4. Sequence and Reinforcement: "Participants do this once, review it, and then do it again, and again, and again. After ten times, by George, they've got it!" (Pg 183) What do you do when most of your students have "got it!" after "ten" repetitions ... but one or two still are far from understanding the concept? How do you prevent boredom from setting in?
5. Praxis: Action with Reflection: Praxis reinforces the leaning process by encouraging learners immediately to apply new knowledge to something else they already know or are in the process of learning. (Pg 184) Describe a specific topic you recently taught in which (1) you used praxis effectively, or (2) you did not use praxis but now realize how you could have used it to maximize the learning for your students.
6. Respect for Learners: "Do not tell what you can ask. Do not ask if you know the answer; tell in dialogue." (Pg 185) Is your teaching style a telling one, an asking one, or an interactive one? What one thing could you focus on in the next three months that would move you towards more interactive dialogue?
7. Ideas, Feelings, Actions: Cognitive (ideas), affective (feelings/emotions), and psychomotor (actions/movement) learning are the three aspects of popular education vital to adult learning. (Pgs 185-186) Do your lessons include all three aspects of a person's learning spectrum ... sometimes, most of the time, or always? In which area are you strongest? Weakest?
8. Immediacy: "Immediate success encourages the learners to begin to believe they can learn." (Pg 187) What do you do in your classroom on a regular basis - semester, monthly, weekly, daily, other - to promote immediate success for your students? What new success-generating idea would you like to implement in the near future?
9. Clear Roles: Misunderstood roles can cause great confusion and disappointment in adult learning situations. (Pgs 187-188) When are you a deliberative voice in your classroom and when are you a consultative voice? Can your students recognize the change and understand the difference?
10. Teamwork in Small Groups: "A learning task is an open question put to a small group with the resources they need to respond to it." (Pg 188) How do small group sessions in your classroom compare to the author's definition of teamwork in small groups? Do you use open questions as group starters? Do you use open questions in other ways?
11. Engagement: "Efforts to cover a set curriculum often lead to neglect of this principle of engagement. Our job in adult education is not to cover a set of course materials, but to engage adults in effective and significant learning." (Pg 189) If your adult education program stipulates a set of curriculum materials do you feel that those materials stimulate or stifle your students? If you select and/or create your own curriculum and classroom materials what things (textbook lessons, overheads, audio or video tapes, discussion, etc)

are most engaging to your current students? Do different groups of students respond differently to the same materials?

12. Accountability: Adult education teachers are accountable to their students according to Ms. Vella, (Pg 190) but in the real world of politics and education, adult education programs and their teachers are accountable to legislators and voters. How do you respond to this dichotomy between ideal and reality? Are conflicting standards interfering with your role as an adult education teacher?

Chapter 16 - How Do You Know You Know?

Two scenarios, Supposing and Proposing, are given in this chapter. One scenario describes a teacher who is well prepared, genuinely cares about her students, and wants to teach her students everything she knows. The other describes a teacher who is well prepared, genuinely cares about her students, and wants to learn everything her students will share with her. Which teacher were you when you began reading Learning to Listen, Learning to Teach? Which teacher are you now? Which teacher will you probably be in six months? One year?

Learning to Listen, Learning to Teach						Teacher:	
By Jane Vella							
Twelve Principles for Effective Adult Learning							
		Problem identified in my classroom	Date	Attempted resolution of problem	Date	Final solution of problem	Date
1	Needs Assessment						
2	Safety						
3	Sound Relationships						
4	Sequence and reinforcement						
5	Praxis						
6	Respect for Learners						

7	Ideas, Feeling, Actions						
8	Immediacy						
9	Clear Roles						
10	Teamwork						
11	Engagement						
12	Accountability						