# LINCS Training: Motivating Adult Learners: Research-Based Strategies

## Program/Classroom Self-Assessment

This summary of research findings and corresponding practices is based on the National Academy of Sciences publication, *Improving Learner Instruction: Implications for Practice and Research.* This self-assessment summarizes the factors that support adult learner motivation in three broad categories: self-efficacy, goal setting, and the learning environment.

##### Self-Assessment Scale:

1. Needs Improvement
2. Good
3. Excellent

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| **SELF-EFFICACY** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **Notes/Follow-Up** |
| **Research Finding:** Motivation, persistence, engagement, and goal attainment are influenced by individual characteristics such as self-efficacy and environmental factors.**Implications for Practice:** Make learning environments (classrooms, programs, individual tutoring) support individual growth in self-efficacy, self-regulation, and other positive individual characteristics. |  |  |  |  |
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| **Research Finding:** Self-efficacy related to literacy correlates to positive outcomes in literacy, while general self-esteem does not seem related to particular outcomes.**Implications for Practice:** Seek ways to enhance individual learners’ self-efficacy in literacy rather than trying to increase their general self-esteem. |  |  |  |  |
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| **Research Finding:** Self-efficacy can be adaptive or malleable.**Implications for Practice:** Help students see that they can change the way they think about their own ability to be successful at a task. Foster growth mindset with process-focused feedback. |  |  |  |  |
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| GOAL SETTING | 1 | 2 | 3 | Notes/Follow-Up |
| **Research Finding:** Students with proximal goals as well as long-term goals are more likely to experience success, which enhances self-efficacy (the belief that one can be successful when understanding a specific task).**Implications for Practice:** Help individual learners set proximal (short-term) goals that are reachable but challenging and provide scaffolding (concept and skill support) to help them reach these goals. |  |  |  |  |
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| **Research Finding:** The way goals are emphasized in the classroom influences the types of goals students adopt.**Implications for Practice:** Emphasize mastery goals over performance goals. |  |  |  |  |
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| THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT | 1 | 2 | 3 | Notes/Follow-Up |
| **Research Finding:** People regulate their learning and allocate energy to tasks that are neither too easy nor too hard.**Implications for Practice:** Based on students’ goals, choose learning tasks that optimally interesting and challenging but realistic, then provide “scaffolding” for them to be successful. |  |  |  |  |
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| **Research Finding:** Students’ motivation is increased when they have some autonomy and self-direction about the learning tasks they need to do. Students are de-motivated when they feel that structures are pre-determined and too controlling of them.**Implications for Practice:** Give students choices in learning activities about what to work on (e.g., choice of reading texts), how to work on (e.g., in pairs, small or large groups), thereby increasing their interest and sense of value in the task. Create classroom environments that reduce pressure and control, and increase safety and student self-directedness (i.e., giving students choices of activities, based on their short-term and long-term goals). |  |  |  |  |
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| **Research Finding:** Students need feedback in order to assess their progress on tasks, a part of self-regulation of learning.**Implications for Practice:** Provide “fine-grained” feedback, privately, within a short-time after students complete a task. |  |  |  |  |
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| **Research Finding:** Students’ motivation is increased when they value a task because it is part of the process of accomplishing their goals. (Intrinsic)**Implications for Practice:** Use “deep questions” before and after reading, to help increase student interest and increase their strategies for constructing arguments and explanations. |  |  |  |  |
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| **Research Finding:** Students’ motivation is increased when they use error management and attribute success “positively”—to effort and strategies rather than to negative internal factors (e.g., “I’m not smart”).**Implication for Practice:** Help students be conscious of the way they attribute success or failure (positive or negative) and move them towards positive attributions related to effort, strategies, and learning as a process where errors are natural. Be aware of negative stereotypes that may encourage a student to attribute failure negatively. |  |  |  |  |

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