

A close-up photograph of a pair of weathered, brown hands cupping a small, vibrant green seedling with four leaves. The seedling is growing out of a mound of dark, rich soil. The background is a blurred expanse of more soil. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the texture of the hands and the freshness of the plant.

**the ALFI strategy:
enabling growth**



Adult Learner Friendly Institution



Presentation outline



- Definition of “adult learner”
- Introducing ALFI
- Principles and process
- Examples of best practices
- One approach
- Group exercise
- Questions



Various definitions/terms

- Adult Learner
 - traditional term
 - project definition
- Mature Student
- Other terms:
 - Non-sequential learner
 - Non-direct entrants
 - Non-traditional learner
 - “those who don’t enter directly from secondary school”



Working definition



- Based on traits/barriers, not age
- Traits shared by many adult learners:
 - delayed enrolment into postsecondary education
 - often cannot attend full-time
 - has experiential learning
 - may require financial assistance
 - is working full-time while enrolled
 - has dependents other than a spouse
 - does not have a standard high school diploma
 - is motivated to study for career reasons
- *"From my point of view" chart*



Introducing ALFI



- In 1999 CAEL benchmarked the best practices in adult learning and shared them in two publications:
 - *Findings of Original Benchmarking Study* (1999)
 - *Self-Evaluation Work book for Colleges/Universities* (2003)



ALFICan pilot project

- conducted in 2005-06
- 15 participants from across Canada
- self-assessment comparing institution against a set of 8 principles and performance indicators
- required 3 pieces of evidence for each performance indicator
- results compiled mid-2006



What it's all about



- Guiding Principles
 - Outreach (5)
 - Life & Career Planning (8)
 - Financing (8)
 - Assessment Of Learning Outcomes (8)
 - Teaching-learning Process (11)
 - Student Support Systems (10)
 - Technology (6)
 - Strategic Partnerships (8)
- Performance Indicators



What it's all about



- Benchmark = "yes"
- Evidence
 - At least 3
 - Non-anecdotal
- Optional
 - Challenges/opportunities
 - Targets/tactics



Sample sheet



Template for ALFI SELF-ASSESSMENT - Microsoft Word

File Edit View Insert Format Tools Table Window Help Adobe PDF

Cambrian College

STUDENT SUPPORT SYSTEMS PRINCIPLE
The institution assists adult learners using comprehensive academic and student support systems in order to enhance students' capacities to become self-directed, lifelong learners.]

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	Y	N	UD	UNIT/PERSON RESPONSIBLE	EVIDENCE
Exemplary Practice supporting this Principle occurs when an institution:					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offers a support system activated by a potential student's initial inquiry about the institution. 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helps adults become college-ready by offering academic support or in collaboration with other organizations. 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Devises flexible time frames for enrollment, registration and program participation. 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has faculty and staff that help adult learners connect with academic and support services. 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides support services that address the life circumstances of the adult (e.g. child care, support networks, financing, adult-centered orientation and advising). 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides or supports financially, professional development activities related to adult learning theory and application for faculty and staff. 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires that faculty/staff work with the community, employers and/or unions to develop mentoring and advising programs. 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Works collaboratively with stakeholders to encourage their employees/members to pursue their education and learning needs. 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides support for adult learners at times and places that are congruent with work schedules. 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Works with stakeholders to establish education extension centers at or near work locations. 					

COMMENTS:

Page 10 Sec 1 10/13 | At 1.1" Ln 4 Col 29 | REC | TRK | EXT | SVR | English (U.S.)

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a small green seedling with soil. The hand is positioned at the bottom left, and the seedling is in the center. The background is a blurred brown color, suggesting soil or a similar texture. The lighting is soft, highlighting the green leaves and the texture of the soil.

Sample evidence

- Learner feedback (surveys, testimonial letters, KPIs)
- Annual reports/results from departments/schools
- Examples of changes implemented
- Learning outcomes in course outlines
- Support letters from partners
- Faculty and staff PD
- Evaluation methods/flexibility
- Implemented PLAR advising/options
- Targeted customer service training
- Observation of class sessions
- Advocacy papers and initiatives
- Documented/implemented policies and procedures



Examples of best practices (ALFICan partners)

- Use of ALFI principles for ongoing evaluation of services and practice
- Flexible admission/intake services to accommodate a variety of circumstances
- Easy-to-access online transfer credit process
- Extensive teacher training program which includes adult learning theory and practice
- Online teacher resources covering classroom support, teaching strategies, pedagogical approaches, learning styles, evaluation methods, PLAR processes, chat forums and more



Examples of best practices (continued)



- Innovative outreach initiatives (e.g., flyers in laundromats, speaking at service clubs, brochures in a mass mailing, cable TV and radio spots, etc.)
- Career counsellor on-site at each campus
- Partnerships with corporations to include flexible, on-site delivery of courses and dual credentialing when appropriate
- Mechanism to ensure the incorporation of ALFI principles in all program development and delivery
- Individualized plans of study for learners
- Use of ALFI principles as criteria when tendering for services and RFP development



Examples of best practices (continued)

- A School of Access for mature learners with broad range of supports and services
- Incorporation of ALFI principles in staff recruiting process
- Inventory of articulation agreements and pathways, including formal and recognized non-formal learning
- Comprehensive online student records system accessible to learners 24/7 (e.g., grades, timetable, class cancellations, notices, income tax receipts, reminders, academic policies, etc.)
- Adult learner profiled in customer service workshops for all staff



Key conclusions



- useful way to identify strengths, gaps, and inconsistencies in services to adults.
- general consensus that process held the most value.
- some language may require tweaking to suit each institution/organization's culture/environment.
- missing learner feedback tool



ALFI at Cambrian



- ALFI is not a new topic
- Showed some gaps, but many more strengths
- Assigned as College-wide responsibility
- Does not replace academic and operational policies
- Is constantly in motion
- Is evidence-based



Group work instructions

- Review sample principle statements and choose one
- Discuss performance indicators to ensure common interpretation
- Identify whether benchmark is met
- Identify 3 pieces of evidence
- Optional: identify challenges and/or targets

Questions or comments?

A vibrant green leaf with detailed vein structure is shown floating on a blue gradient background. The leaf is positioned on the left side of the frame, with its reflection visible below it. The background transitions from a light blue at the top to a darker blue at the bottom, creating a serene, aquatic atmosphere.

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