



Leadership Assessment Tool

The following questions are intended to be answered by those in the congregation who work in the area of adult education. This could include pastors, DCEs, deaconesses, and other parish professionals as well as lay leadership such as members of an education committee or board of elders if responsibilities for adult education rest with those groups. The questions are meant to initiate discussion and further the review of adult education practices within the congregation.

Please review the questions on this page and have participating individuals answer the questions individually and in writing before reviewing the discussion questions on the following page.

1. Think about the qualities that someone needs to have to be an effective teacher of adults. Write out the top three qualities needed by an effective adult educator.
2. List the top three reasons adults don't attend the learning opportunities offered by the congregation.
3. On a scale of 1-10 (1=very poor, 10=exceptional), rate the current level of effectiveness of your church's adult educational ministries.
4. In what ways would you expect a member who is active in worship and actively participates in your adult learning experiences to differ from another member who is active in worship but doesn't attend the church's adult educational opportunities?
5. How have the last 2-3 topics of study been chosen for your congregation's largest adult learning experience?

After you have written brief answers to these questions, look on the back of this page for follow-up questions to facilitate thoughts/discussions about your adult education ministry.

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Discussion/reflection follow-up

Question #1 – What were the characteristics that you identified? You likely had, “knowledge of the content”, “sense of humor”, “good people skills”...but did you list “knowledge of the characteristics of the learner”? Effective adult education is predicated on a deep understanding of the needs and wants of the learner. Since adults are self-directed learners, adult educators need to have clarity about what learners feel they need and whether those needs are being met. At the same time, the educator should only focus on class content that is relevant to the goals of the congregation.

Question #2 – When you developed your list of reasons adults don't attend, were your reasons primarily learner-specific (adults don't have time, they don't prioritize going to class, they don't seem interested, they would rather go to breakfast...) or did you focus on what the church is or isn't doing to enhance attendance? If your list was focused on the learner, change rests with the learner and the church leadership is “off the hook.” Those who lead adult educational experiences must take responsibility to do what they can to enhance participation. Participation in formal learning experiences has increased over the past decade at secular learning opportunities but declined in the church. Church leaders need to control what they can control and make purposeful efforts to enhance participation.

Question #3 – Regardless of the rating you gave your church's educational effectiveness, discuss what criteria you used to reach the rating you gave. Were your criteria related to attendance, frequency of offerings, perceived satisfaction of attendees, a general sense that the learners benefited? Ideally, all effectiveness of learning must be predicated on...whether the learners learned. To do that, leaders must have a hoped-for outcome for the learner – how they will be different because of the learning experience...which brings us to #4.

Question #4 – This is THE question that those leading a congregation's adult educational ministry must ask. If this can't be answered by leaders, it is likely that you won't be able to influence a large percentage of members to attend educational offerings. We all know that a believer should want to be involved in further study of God's Word, but it is incumbent on leadership to clarify the benefits of such involvement, AND to determine if the learning opportunities that are being delivered actually fulfill those benefits. Can you identify the changes a learner will experience? Can you articulate those benefits to congregational members? Do you have a method to determine if those benefits are being experienced by the learners?

Question #5 – Did you choose your next study by asking the participants, “what would you like to study next?” Does your content seldom change – just going through the Bible chapter by chapter, or by focusing on the pericopes? Did you choose the topic because you found it personally interesting or because you happened to see a new study that seemed interesting? If you had any of those as your answer to this question, you need to revisit the outcomes that you have for your participants (see question #4) and try to identify materials that will help you to achieve those specific outcomes.