



# VCU What? We're There for the Grown-Ups?

## Using Adult Learning Principles in Early Childhood Intervention

# “Yes”

**Early childhood intervention is most effective when providers collaborate with the important grown-ups in the child's life.**

You probably know lots about how children learn... but how much do you know about how their parents and caregivers learn?

All children learn best in the context of activities and interactions with their families. Since a child's best teacher is his/her *parent*, make sure that you know how to help that parent learn intervention strategies to use with the child when you are not in the home!

## What Do We Know?



It is often erroneously assumed that parents learn what they need to know to help their children by watching what the service provider does with the child and discussing strategies with the service provider. Evidence-based practices in our field support more active learning experiences for parents to ensure that they know what to do with their children to promote development throughout their daily routines (Trivette, Dunst, Hamby, & O'Herin, 2009).

Supporting adult learning is aligned with the strong research consensus in the early childhood and early intervention fields that parents can be skilled implementers of intervention strategies with their children (Kashinath, Woods, & Goldstein, 2006; Matson, Mahan, & LoVullo, 2009; Reese, Sparks, & Leyva, 2010; Woods & Kashinath, 2007).

With knowledge of adult learning principles, early interventionists and others who work with children and families can facilitate the parent's learning in ways that expand capacity and increase the parent's confidence and competence with enhancing the child's development (Raab, Dunst, & Trivette, 2010).

## Adult Learning Principles

Remember these five key adult learning principles when you're partnering with parents and other caregivers!



### Adult Learning Principle

Adults learn best when what is being learned is immediately relevant and useful to them.

### Example

Lisa asks for ideas for how to entertain Ben while she makes dinner. She and Dana, the OT, practice activities with Ben in the kitchen that encourage his development and keep him busy.



### Adult Learning Principle

Adults learn best when new knowledge is built on prior knowledge.

### Example

Rather than putting Dylan in her own lap, Kayla, the educator, watches as Matt shows her what he knows about how to hold his son to provide trunk support while they play. Matt wants Dylan to activate the toy, so Kayla helps Matt support Dylan around his elbows so he can reach the buttons on the toy.



### Adult Learning Principle

Adults learn best through active participation and practice.

### Example

Crystal's mother, Gina helps her daughter play on the family's iPad to practice eye-hand coordination with support from the speech-language pathologist.



### Adult Learning Principle

Adults learn and remember when what they are learning is practiced in context and in real time.

### Example

The PT joins Denaye and her daughter, Katie, in the backyard to practice strategies that challenge Katie's balance and coordination during the family's favorite ball game.



### Adult Learning Principle

Adult learners want feedback on their learning and their performance.

### Example

Justin, the OT, coaches Lisa in how to hold the shoe so that Ben can help with getting ready to go outside to play.

