CAEL

Fundamentals of PLA

The Role and Features of Prior Learning Assessment in Higher Education

A CAEL Professional Development Workshop

Participant Workbook

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Linking Learning and Work

Contents

WORKSHOP AGENDA

10:00	Welcome to the Workshop
10:15	Prior Learning Assessment: Past and Present
10:45	Assumptions about Knowledge and Higher Education

- Individual Reflection and Group Discussion

11:15	PLA and Adult Learning Theory
11:45	Break
12:00	Overview: Critical Success Factors for Prior Learning Assessment Quality Standards
12:15	Methods of Assessing Prior Learning

- Features, Benefits and Uses of Various Methods
- Linking Methods to Student Scenarios

1:00   Participants grab lunch (continue eating through
next part)

1:30   The Learner's Path: Maria

- Implications for Advising
- Options for Assessment

2:15   The Learner's Path: Roger

- The Effective Use of Portfolio Assessment

3:00	Break
3:15	Case Study: Gaining Buy-In for PLA
4:15	Positioning PLA at Your Institution
4:45	Ongoing Learning

- A Community of Practitioners

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WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

Overall Goal

This workshop is designed to provide you - faculty, advisors, instructors and program managers who are new to PLA programs - with a broad-based foundation to begin to build, develop and expand PLA programs that will best serve adult learners in your institution. You will also be better prepared to be an internal advocate within your college or university for establishing principles of good practice.

Learning Goals

Upon completion of this workshop, you will be able to:

- Identify and explain the principles and value of experiential learning
- Apply the CAEL principles of best practice in prior learning assessment
- Recognize the steps, tools and procedures in the PLA process and implications for institutional planning
- Articulate the roles and responsibilities of those involved in the PLA process
- Advocate to various audiences the value of prior learning assessment
- Identify next steps in program planning and implementation
- Bypass Workshop 1 in the CAEL Online PLA Certification program and, with successful completion of an assessment exercise, begin with Workshop 2 (see Appendix C for details)

Prior Learning Assessment as a Critical Tool for Transitions in Postsecondary Education

Colleges, technical schools and universities have never been static institutions. They have always needed to respond to changes in society and produce new ways to prepare students for the world of work. The last decade has brought multiple pressure points to bear on postsecondary education (PSE) and the shifts have been dramatic. The following are some of the major impacts seen today:

- The population changes that demographers have been predicting for some time have happened. Over 40% of learners enrolled in colleges and universities are adult learners over the age of 25. A large percentage of minority students enrolling are first generation college students. A sizable number of immigrant youth are enrolling. More women than men are enrolled in college.
- Technology has created permeable institutions. Blended programs, Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCS), Military Programs, on-the-job training (OJT), professional workshops and online degree programs are just some of the ways that learners have pieced together degree and certification programs with limited time spent on campus in a classroom. There has also been a massive shift in how libraries and other information resources are accessed by learners.
- Private, for-profit institutions have competed with public institutions for students by employing creative and innovative ways of flexibly serving the working adult.
- A global economy has created a push for educating the American workforce faster. In 35 states, more than 60% of the population does not have an associate degree or higher; over 26 million adults in the U.S. currently do not have a high school diploma; more than 32 million have not attended college and are earning less than a living wage; and, 32 states cannot catch up to the educational attainment levels of the best performing countries internationally by relying solely on strategies related to traditional students. By 2018, our economy will have jobs for 22 million with college degrees, but our workforce will have a shortage of only 8 million people with degrees. The Lumina Foundation has championed a goal to "increase the proportions of Americans with high-quality degrees, certificates and other credential to 60% by 2025" (2013, p. 1).
- More and more, state legislatures are asking state schools for less time to graduation and better rates of completion as one approach to the workforce crisis.
- Costs are escalating. The cost of completing a degree has soared. Student loans are staggering. Again, elected officials are asking for changes.

Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) has received attention at the state and federal levels as a useful tool to support the changes that educational institutions need to make in order to meet the growing demands highlighted above. PLA has been shown to improve persistence and retention for adult students, shorten time to graduation and even improve the quality of students' analytic thinking when done well. CAEL has always made the claim that college-level learning can occur outside of an institution and can be evaluated for college credit with quality assurance standards. Additionally, it is possible, with PLA policies for colleges and universities, to honor the enormous investment in our workforce that employers and the military have already made through training and education.

Existing PLA programs at universities and colleges have also responded to changes in how learning is organized and adults are served. Many colleges and universities now offer online portfolio courses or PLA workshops in Moodle or a blended program mixing online and on-campus sessions. CAEL has responded to the challenge of many schools not having the resources to build out a portfolio program by developing *LearningCounts,* a national evaluation service making it possible for a learner to earn credit through assessment and transfer that credit to participating schools. For over three decades, the Vermont State Colleges have utilized a centralized portfolio program in one location, serving all Vermont schools. In addition, the American Council on Education (ACE) has designed several new online evaluation services, including a transcription service to help veterans enroll faster.

There is also a growing interest in Competency-Based Education (CBE) programs in American higher education as institutions focus more on the knowledge and skills they expect of their graduates. This trend moves higher education away from credit-based, seat-time measures and requires a radical rethinking of curricula. Transitions, collaborations and experiments are emerging on the horizon, but the basic principles of quality assurance in prior learning assessment remain the same.

Introduction

In this first unit of the workshop, you will have the opportunity to think about an issue that is fundamental to prior learning assessment – namely, the relationship between students' **prior experiential learning** and the kind of knowledge that is taught in **colleges and universities**.

Some Basic Definitions

Prior Learning is a term used by educators to describe learning that an individual acquires outside a traditional academic environment. Sources of prior learning may include work experience, employer training programs, military service training, independent study, noncredit courses, MOOCs, volunteer and community service, and other life experiences leading to further self-directed learning.

Prior Learning Assessment is the process whereby an individual's prior learning claim is assessed by a content expert for the purposes of granting credit, certification or advanced standing in an educational program.

Assessment is the measurement of learning based on criteria and indicators. Faculty use assessment skills and principles in the classroom. Assessing prior learning may expand the context and content of assessment, but the theory remains the same.

A **Portfolio** is a formal communication presented by the student to the college as a petition requesting credit or recognition for self-directed learning that has taken place outside the classroom. The typical portfolio is a written document identifying learning achievements and providing sufficient evidence and documentation that an assessor can use it as a basis for evaluation.

CAEL's Ten Standards for Assessing Learning are the recognized principles of good practice in prior learning assessment. CAEL's ten standards were first published in *Assessing Learning, Standards, Principles & Procedures* by Urban Whitaker in 1989 and were revised and updated in 2006 by Morry Fiddler, Catherine Marienau and Urban Whitaker. The third edition of *Assessing Learning: Quality Standards and Institutional Commitments* (Donna Younger and Catherine Marienau) presents a revised set of standards that reflect the contemporary priorities of higher education and the nation. The ten standards are internationally acknowledged as the best guidelines to ensure quality and reliability in prior learning assessment.

CAEL Linking Learning and Work

Exercise 1: A Self-Reflection on Knowledge and Learning

Prior learning assessment challenges many of the assumptions that faculty and administrators typically make about:

- learning and teaching
- the value of a student's own knowledge
- the role of academic institutions in determining what kinds of knowledge count

Let's take a moment for you to examine your own assumptions and beliefs about knowledge.

Look at the following table and read each pair of contrasting statements reflecting beliefs about knowledge. For each pair of statements, indicate which one you agree with most strongly, A or B.

When you have finished marking your answers, discuss these statements about knowledge and learning at your table and note the range of opinions expressed.

- Is there general agreement?
- If so, why?
- If not, what are the issues of contention?
- Finally, is there a compromise statement on which everyone at the table can agree?

Your group should be prepared to report out on your discussion. Following the debriefing from this exercise, you will have a chance to talk generally about **theories of experiential learning**.

A	B

1. Knowledge in higher education is primarily formal and should be organized according to the rules and procedures of academic disciplines. The boundaries between disciplines and fields of knowledge in higher education should be firm and clear.
 	
   I agree most strongly. _
	1. Knowledge in higher education should be primarily problem oriented, drawing on multiple disciplines that interact in real-world contexts and yielding knowledge that is not easily reducible to any one academic discipline.
	
	   I agree most strongly. _

2. Knowledge that can be recognized in higher education is primarily produced in educational institutions.
 	
   I agree most strongly. _
	2. Knowledge that can be recognized in higher education is produced in multiple sites by many kinds of people in the course of their work, other activities and daily lives.
	
	   I agree most strongly. _

3. What counts as knowledge in an academic curriculum should be consistent and pre-determined.
 	
   I agree most strongly. __
	3. What counts as knowledge in an academic curriculum should not be predetermined but should recognize the knowledge, interests and intentions of individual learners.
	
	   I agree most strongly. __

4. What counts as knowledge in an academic curriculum should be determined by academic experts in the field.
 	
   I agree most strongly. ___
	4. What counts as knowledge in an academic curriculum should be driven by society's needs and determined by a wide range of social actors including the private sector, the professions and government.
	
	   I agree most strongly. __

5. Traditions of knowledge outside the mainstream can only play a minor role in higher education. Marginalized groups need access to mainstream knowledge in order to achieve social mobility and a piece of the pie.
 	
   I agree most strongly. __
	5. Traditions of knowledge outside the mainstream can play a significant role in higher education because they help to expand the boundaries of knowledge and give alternative ways of understanding the world.
	
	   I agree most strongly. __

Experiential Learning and Prior Learning Assessment

What Is College-Level Learning?

College-level learning typically refers to learning that:

- moves beyond general knowledge
- combines practical and theoretical knowledge in ways appropriate to a given field
- encompasses a certain level of breadth and/or depth and complexity
- prevails in existing college curricula

SOCIAL | CONTEXT

Focus,
Practice,
Applications

Subspecialities, Topics, Methods

Introduction to Theory,
General Exposure

The Logic of Curriculum

The Logic of Adult Learning

Exposure to Theory,
Broad View, Research Methods

Applied Knowledge,

Deep Expertise,
Focus

OF | PRACTICE
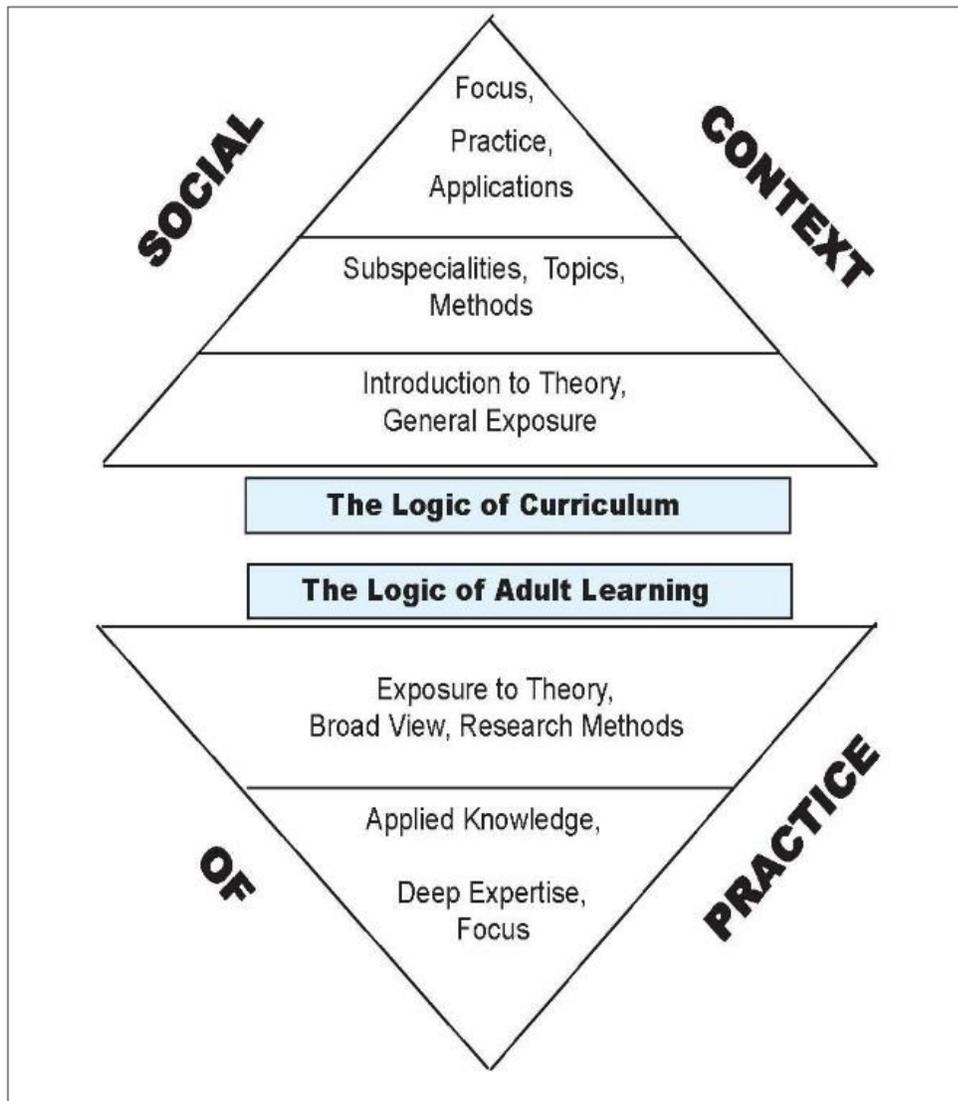
A Theoretical Perspective

There are a few basic ideas that link theories of experiential learning to the assessment of students' prior learning for college credit:

- Adults are actively engaged in learning in many venues in their lives.
- Adults bring that learning with them when they enter an institution of higher education.
- Some learning that takes place outside of educational institutions can be recognized as college level.
- Students have a right to get credit for college-level learning no matter where that learning was acquired.
- All of that knowledge brings value to the institution by broadening the base of human knowledge and bringing more voices and perspectives into dialogue.

For further information about theories of experiential learning, see Appendix G.

Theories of Adult Learning

As colleges and universities consider how to respond to the demand for adult learner services, they often turn to CAEL for support. CAEL is known for its independent research into best practices for serving adult learners. Faculty and program administrators also pay attention to other scholarship and research that attempts to explain some of the differences in how adults learn.

In what ways are adults different from traditionally aged (18–25 years) students? A number of educational researchers have posited theories and assumptions. One of the earliest ideas is the concept of *dictio* developed by Malcom Knowles.

The major principles at the center of Knowles's theory of *andragogy* are:

- **Need to Know:** Adults need to know the reason for learning something.
- **Foundation:** Experience provides the basis for learning activities.
- **Self-Concept:** Adults need to be responsible for their decisions on education and have involvement in the planning and evaluation of their instruction.
- **Readiness:** Adults are most interested in learning subjects having immediate application to their work and/or personal lives.
- **Orientation:** Adult learning is problem centered rather than content oriented.
- **Motivation:** Adults respond better to internal versus external motivators.

Interest in adult learning continues to grow, and scholars closely linked to CAEL contribute to deepening the understanding of theory and practice in adult learning. Some of the key references are:

Brookfield, Stephan D. *Understanding and Facilitating Adult Learning: A Comprehensive Analysis of Principles and Effective Practices.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1986. Brookfield's six principles of effective practice are listed here: http://www.resources.scalingtheheights.com/stephen_brookfield.htm

Cross, Patricia K. *Adults as Learners: Increasing Participation and Facilitating Learning.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1981, and *Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Teachers* with Thomas A. Angelo. San Francisco: Jossey-

Bass, 1993. The educational research of Dr. Cross is the Gold Standard in the field of assessment at the college level.

Kolb, David A. *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1984. Dr. David Kolb has defined one of the most commonly used models of learning to explain individual learning styles and the way individuals learn in everyday life. His model is frequently utilized in portfolio development courses like those offered by LearningCounts.

Briefly, Kolb's learning model describes learning as a path from experience to reflection to concept development and then to active experimentation. Kolb goes on to create a matrix with this learning cycle by overlaying different learning styles – simply, feeling, watching, thinking, doing. This model is a very popular one in portfolio development classes because it supports learners in developing an understanding of their own learning from experience and helps them articulate the elements of their learning. You can read more about Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) and Learning Styles Inventory (LSI) here: http://www.simplypsychology.org/learning-kolb.html

Recent research continues to affirm and expand upon these widely accepted principles of adult learning.

Critical Success Factors for PLA

PLA can have significant impact on the success of adult students and the strength of the workforce if key elements are in place within academic institutions. Many institutions are engaging in PLA in an *ad hoc* manner and aim to develop a more systematic program to assure quality and equitable PLA practice. To maximize the potential of PLA, institutions must prepare a solid foundation for practice by ensuring:

Institutional Purpose and Approach for a PLA program

Institutions vary widely in terms of mission, relationships with external entities, and populations they serve and PLA programs should be developed with the nature of the institution in mind. Clarifying the institution's commitment to adult students and determining expectations for the PLA effort will help shape the scope and components of a systematic PLA program.

General Awareness and Understanding of PLA

Those leading the effort to advance PLA should ensure that the institution has a sound and accurate understanding of the theory and practice of PLA. Providing training and other learning resources will help dispel misunderstanding and generate a shared knowledge base to support the PLA program.

Buy-in from Faculty and Leadership

A systematic and equitable PLA program depends on the commitment and involvement of faculty and leadership. The effort to develop a program should include opportunities for discussion and collaborative decision-making about PLA policies and practices.

PLA Program Planning

With the other critical success factors as a basis, a PLA leadership group can develop a healthy PLA program that fits the institution. Components of a healthy PLA program include:
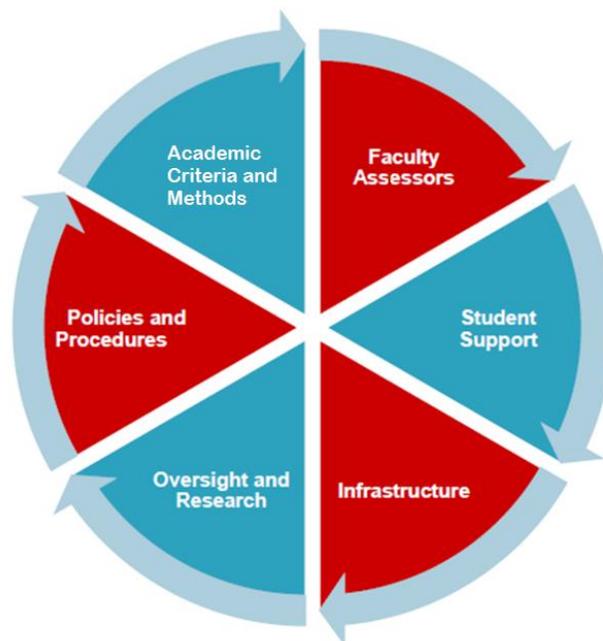
CAEL's Academic Standards for Assessing Learning

An important part of gaining the buy-in of faculty and staff resides in understanding the basis for ensuring academic quality. Since 1986, CAEL's Standards for Assessing Learning have been used to guide those new to using innovative assessment strategies, such as PLA, and to serve as an ongoing reference point against which to evaluate new assessment strategies and opportunities. The standards address both academic and administrative concerns and are useful in guiding thoughtful deliberation and decision-making about assessment policy and practice.

I.   Credit or competencies are awarded only for evidence of learning, not for experience or time spent.

II.   Assessment is integral to learning because it leads to and enables future learning.

III.   Assessment is based on criteria for outcomes that are clearly articulated and shared among constituencies.

IV.   The determination of credit awards and competency levels are made by appropriate subject matter and credentialing experts.

V.   Assessment advances the broader purpose of access and equity for diverse individuals and groups to support their success.

VI.   Institutions proactively provide guidance and support for learners' full engagement in the assessment process.

VII.   Assessment policies and procedures are the result of inclusive deliberation and are shared with all constituencies.

VIII.   Fees charged for assessment are based on the services performed in the process rather than the credit awarded.

IX.   All practitioners involved in the assessment process pursue and receive adequate training and continuing professional development for the functions they perform.

X.   Assessment programs are regularly monitored, evaluated and revised to respond to institutional and learner needs.

Evaluating College-Level Learning: PLA Methods

Evaluating and measuring learning are critical steps in the PLA process. In the classroom, faculty use a variety of tools and procedures to assess students' learning. Measuring learning that takes place outside of the classroom also uses multiple types of assessment, which most often fall into these four categories:

- evaluations of non-collegiate programs
- nationally standardized exams in specified disciplines
- faculty-developed challenge exams for the institution's own courses
- individualized assessments like learning portfolios

When properly conducted, all of these methods ensure academic quality.

A Variety of Assessment Methods

Sources of College-Level Learning

On-the-job training · Independent Study · Military and Volunteer Service · Training Courses and/or Certifications · Work Experience
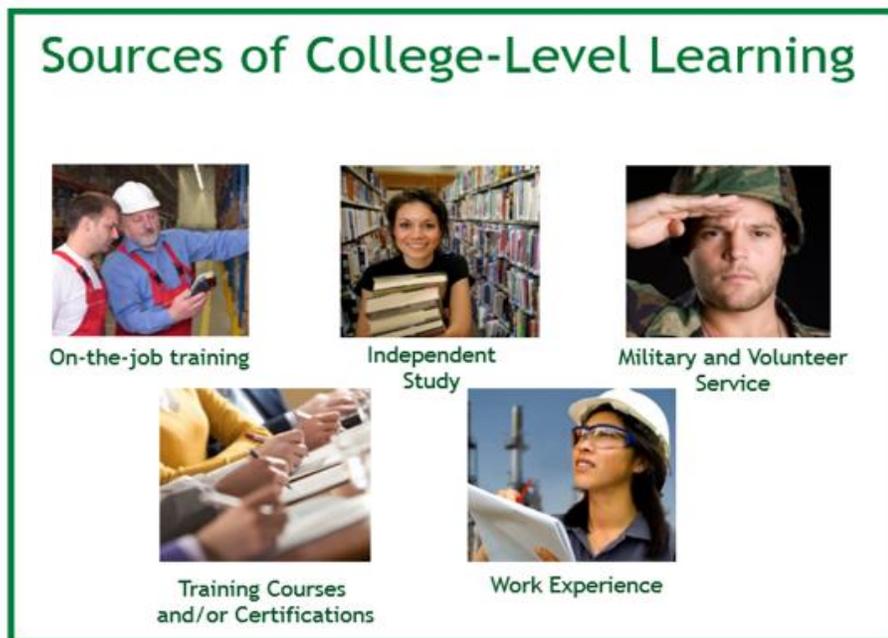
- ACE credit
  - National testing
    - Challenge exams
      - Portfolio method workshop and assessor training
        - Portfolio course (1–3 credits) → Online portfolio course
          - Full service assessment center
            - Coordinated PLA efforts with other institutions

Standardized Tests
- Instruction-based: These include AP and IB exams. Students receive instruction prior to taking the exam
- Non-instruction-based: These include CLEP, DSST and UExcel (Excelsior College) Exams. Students prepare independently and then take the exam in a proctored setting.
- CLEP: 33 exams, primarily in general education areas
  https://clep.collegeboard.org/exam
- DSST: 38 exams, a variety of general education and career-focused areas
  http://www.dantes.doded.mil/examinations/index.html
- UExcel: 55 exams, nursing/health sciences as well as general education areas
  http://www.excelsior.edu/exams

These exams are nationally normed and validated. They are developed with content experts and psychometricians.

Credit Recommendations for Military, Employers, Business & Industry
These recommendations are based upon the American Council on Education (ACE) and/or the National College Credit Recommendation Service (NCCRS) evaluations of training and education programs. Credit recommendations are published for programs that have been evaluated as college-level.
http://www2.acenet.edu/credit/?fuseaction=browse.main
For the U.S. Military – ACE provides credit recommendations for standardized military training and education programs that they have deemed equivalent and worthy of college credit. http://www.acenet.edu/higher-education/topics/Pages/College-Credit-for-Military

Challenge Exams
Challenge exams are faculty-developed for students who wish to "test out" of a course. Unlike most final exams, they are designed specifically to serve as the only assessment of the course's learning outcomes. Faculty may systematically evaluate existing final exams or course tests as the basis for developing exams that are appropriate for PLA use.

Faculty-Evaluated Training/Education Programs in Local Community
Occasionally, faculty at local colleges and universities will evaluate a local employer's training program for course equivalencies or as elective credit. Mirroring the process that faculty teams use when conducting evaluations for ACE or NCCRS, teams of faculty examine training materials, assessment tools and instructor credentials to determine if a training program warrants academic credit.

Portfolio Assessment
A student's formal written request for recognition of learning, the portfolio requires the student to make the case for having acquired learning that is equivalent and comparable to a course or set of competencies. The student must also provide

evidence (documentation, work products, videos, letters of verification from employers/experts, certificates and CEU transcripts, for example). The portfolio is assessed by a faculty subject matter expert to determine if the portfolio is worthy of college credit. A closer look at portfolio assessment follows.

Portfolio Assessment by *LearningCounts.org*

LearningCounts.org is a nonprofit national online portfolio assessment service provided by CAEL. Its services (portfolio development courses and portfolio evaluations provided by faculty subject matter experts) have been reviewed by NCCRS. *LearningCounts.org* credit recommendations appear on a joint CAEL/NCCRS secure transcript.

Performance Assessment

Sometimes, particularly for technical courses or courses that require certain skills, a performance assessment is most useful. The student will demonstrate the skill for the faculty assessor either by video or in a face-to-face assessment. Skills such as welding, fine art, dance, nursing clinical skills, music or advanced manufacturing may be better assessed via a performance assessment. A performance assessment may also be an interview of the student by the faculty expert.

A Closer Look at Portfolio and Performance Assessment

The chart below describes some of the options utilized by institutions within a portfolio process for credit awards or as stand-alone assessments for advanced standing or waiver for a course prerequisite. When offering individualized assessments, institutions and faculty assessors need to pay close attention to the CAEL standards of good practice and quality assurance components, including published policies and clear evaluation guidelines and reporting practices. An idiosyncratic practice by one faculty member or department that is not protected in this way creates risk for both the learner and the institution.

Method	Description	Notes
Written Essay	The learner presents what he or she knows in an essay form.	*A written essay, or learning narrative, is often used in a portfolio as an expanded autobiography of the student to provide context for the learning.*
Presentation / Speech	The learner presents a well-prepared oral report explaining his or her knowledge, how that knowledge was gained and the relevant evidentiary support – usually in conjunction with visual aids.	*In this example, as in many individualized assessments, it is important to have the criteria defined for the student. It is also important for quality assurance that there is a record of those criteria and the resulting evaluation, which can be a rubric, a checklist or a written evaluation kept on file.*
Document Assessment	This assessment is based on document products that the learner has created in his or her work. For example, a student could turn in a company training manual he or she was instrumental in creating.	*Documents are frequently presented as evidence in a portfolio to support learning statements.*
Simulation or Demonstration	The assessor watches the learner as he or she performs a task illustrating learning.	*Here again, it is important to have the learning criteria defined for the student and to keep a record of those criteria along with the resulting evaluation.*
Interview	The assessor interviews the learner orally and the leaner provides answers to a defined set of questions.	*This method is most effective as a supplement to written materials. More than one assessor may be used to avoid bias.*

Witness Testimony	The learner is assessed based on written reports by those who know of the learner's prior achievements.	*This type of evidence is often placed in a portfolio as documentation for learning claimed.*
Product Assessment or Performance Assessment	The assessment is based on actual products created or performance given by the learner.	*This approach can be important for artists, musicians and numerous technical careers. Again, criteria used and record keeping are the critical factors.*
Formal Transcript Documents	Documents recording formal learning achievements, such as apprenticeships, military service or non-collegiate professional qualifications.	*These formal documents are often presented as part of the documentation included in a portfolio.*

Exercise 2: Linking Learning to Assessment Methods

Each of the scenarios below briefly describes an adult student and the learning they believe is worthy of college credit. What method(s) would you recommend for each of them?

Rob is 29 years old and has just returned to college after a 4 year hiatus. He is currently working as a team lead (with supervisory responsibility) at Sam's Club where he has worked for 2 ½ years. He has served as team lead in 3 different departments and has recently completed the Manager-in-Training program. Prior to his work at Sam's Club, he worked at Sports Authority for 4 years, first as a sales associate and then as a department manager. During his time away from school, he completed a certificate in heating and air conditioning at a local proprietary school but was unable to pursue work in that career due to health issues. His educational goal at this point is a BA degree in business, perhaps with a focus on small business management or marketing.

What assessment method(s) would you recommend?

Jen is 36 years old and working as a kindergarten teacher at the YMCA for the past 3 years. She started at the YMCA 7 years ago working as a teacher's aide, then as a pre-school teacher before teaching kindergarten. Jen completed 2 years of college right after graduating from high school and earned 30 hours of transferable credit, mostly in general education areas. While teaching at the Y, Jen has earned several certificates of completion in areas such as First Aid; Safety and Evaluation; Integrating the Special Needs Child; and Assessing Language Development. She has returned to college to earn a B.A. in Early Childhood Education with a Birth-3rd grade certification to teach. She has two children of her own, a 15 year old boy and a 1 ½ year old girl. Her work as teacher and parent have led her to read extensively over the past several years about child development and parenting.

What assessment (s) would you recommend?

Pat is 42 years old and owns his own landscaping business. He dropped out of high school when he was 16, started working for his father and completed his GED when he was 22. While working for his father, Pat handled advertising and scheduling the teams, as well as doing some of the service himself. Clients were mostly residential, though the company did have business clients for snow blowing in the winter. When his dad retired 10 years ago, Pat took over the business and expanded it to double the annual revenue, serving more business clients year round. Pat has done some reading on landscaping design to be competitive in getting the business clients. During the times when business has been slow, Pat has done some noncredit courses in small business accounting and computer skills. He wants to earn an Associate degree in Small Business Management, thinking it would help him obtain a loan to further expand the business.

What assessment methods would you recommend?

PLA PATHWAYS

The students portrayed in the following cases characterize the challenges for adults in higher education. Consider: how can PLA be planned and delivered to support these students?

Who Is the Adult Learner? What Does It Really Mean? Beyond Age…

The learner is likely to be:
- Fulfilling multiple roles: worker, parent, partner, caretaker, community member…and student
- Uncertain about their place in college – may have failed or interrupted their education at least once
- Feeling urgency to earn a credential to keep or improve employment
- Committed to success to improve their lives and those of their families

Maria's Path through PLA

Maria is 27 years old. She grew up speaking Spanish and lived most of her life in Latino neighborhoods in Los Angles. Maria dropped out of high school when she became pregnant at 17. She entered a GED program and finished her GED during her pregnancy. She then volunteered, and was later employed, with a local community nonprofit that delivered services to homeless families. During her two years with the organization, Maria was very touched by the needs of the children in these families and spent extra hours mentoring and tutoring the children with their homework.

After she married, Maria had a second child and decided to start a home-based day care center so she could be at home with her children and still earn money for the family. Maria took advantage of a program provided by a local community action agency to become a certified home-based day care provider, providing childcare for families who are employed through welfare-to-work programs. Again, she found herself caring for children with special needs. She read a great deal about early childhood development and about Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD).

When her children grew older, Maria closed her business of four years and decided that she would go back to school. She wants an associate degree that will allow her to move into a baccalaureate program in early childhood education.

How Does Maria Find Out about PLA at Your School?

After Maria decides she will begin a degree program, she goes online to learn about the nearest community college. She learns about the possibility of PLA from three sources:

- Information on the Web page;
- Stories from her friends; and
- A special brochure she picks up during a visit to the Admission's Office.

Maria's Story Entering the College

Maria remains uncertain about whether or not she would qualify for PLA credits. After all, she did not even graduate from high school. She feels nervous that she will not keep up with younger students. She makes an appointment with an academic advisor and prepares her questions.

On Wednesday morning at 9:00 a.m., Maria arrives promptly for her meeting with Marcia Pribbenow, a student services advisor a friend recommended. Although the outer office is empty, she spots nameplates next to offices that line the innermost corridor of the office suite and knocks on Ms. Pribbenow's door.

Having barely looked at her calendar, Ms. Pribbenow has just learned that her supervisor needs immediate support for an upcoming presentation to the 250 incoming freshmen Ms. Pribbenow will advise next fall. Startled and apologetic for the need to keep their meeting short, she asks Maria to briefly talk about her goals.

Maria explains that she is passionate about becoming a pre-school or kindergarten teacher. She talks a bit about her home-based business. She explains that she was raised by a mother and grandmother who always spoke Spanish at home. Given her family obligations, she wonders if she attending school full time is her only option.

Checking her watch while escorting Maria to the outer office, Ms. Pribbenow pulls a brochure on prior learning assessments from a colorful display of pamphlets for new and returning students in the outer office. This is the same brochure that Maria already has at home. Ms. Pribbenow suggests that Maria read about the PLA options and return in a week with any documentation she might have for the work she has done in her career. Ms. Pribbenow explains that with adequate documentation for what Maria has learned, she may be able to convince faculty to award Maria credit for at least two courses. Somewhat confused, Maria returns home to begin compiling evidence of her work.

When Maria returns to Ms. Pribbenow's office the following week, she has a briefcase full of information; among which is a Spanish-English language certificate, several certificates from the Community Action trainings she completed to run her business and photographs of the disabled children she cared for in day care. Ms. Pribbenow explains that while these documents may be helpful, she will need to convince faculty – probably a Spanish instructor and the Dean of Education – that her learning is comparable to outcomes from introductory Spanish and a relevant early childhood education course. She provides Maria with contact information for Dr. Duncan who teaches Spanish 101 and Dean Kildare, the new Dean of Education. Expressing gratitude for her time, Maria returns home to schedule these appointments.

For Maria, scheduling appointments with busy professors feels like a part-time job. She has left two messages for Dr. Duncan and three for Dr. Kildare. While both have attempted to return her calls, it has been difficult to connect. When she finally makes contact, both professors are cautious about whether or not this option is worth the time it will take for her to demonstrate her learning. Nonetheless, Maria is able to schedule a meeting with Dr. Duncan on the first Thursday of the following month and a meeting with Dr. Kildare next week during her evening office hours. In addition, Maria and her husband begin to investigate how

their budget can accommodate postsecondary tuition, purchase of a reliable computer and monthly fees for Internet access.

Exercise 3: An Introduction to the PLA Process

Based on Maria's case study, work with a partner to identify at least two entries for each column.

Issues That Maria Faces	Researchable Questions	PLA Workshop Topics to Address
e.g., Maria's family obligations	What can colleges do to help busy adult learners manage their time?	How might colleges incentivize advisors and faculty who interact with PLA candidates?

Maria's PLA Possibilities

Based on what we have learned of Maria's prior learning, what are the likely sources, subject matter and possible assessment methods available at the typical college? At your table, identify possible courses to match Maria's learning and suggest possible assessments.

Source	Subject Areas	Possible Methods of Assessment
Spanish Language		
Formal Training for Her Work		
Working with Special Needs Children		
Managing a Home-Based Business		
Experiential Learning on the Job		

Exercise 4: Maria's Learning Portfolio

The college offers a two-credit portfolio development course that meets three times during the semester and provides online instruction for creating the portfolio (refer to Appendix A for a summary of portfolio development course models).

During the three campus-based class meetings, Maria meets other adult students whose paths are similar to hers. The instructor introduces theories of experiential learning and helps the students separate their life experiences from college-level learning. The class also looks at the entire college catalog and reviews examples of successful portfolios. The course offers Maria and her classmates these benefits:

- They become familiar with the terms and jargon of the institution and how things are organized into departments and programs;
- They discover how to identify learning beyond experiences;
- They begin to feel empowered by seeing themselves as learners; and
- They feel supported in their ultimate goal of finishing a degree.

In the following weeks, Maria makes a list of the knowledge and skills she has acquired in her work. In this way, she begins to take responsibility for the PLA process.

There is always some variation in format, but the following table is a very typical portfolio guide.

Contents	Description
Title Page	Name, identification number, contact information and date.
Table of Contents	Lists the contents of the portfolio and corresponding page numbers.
Goals Statements/ Forms Completed Signature of Authenticity	Options: Statement of student's educational goal. Statement on how prior learning assessment relates to educational goal. Statement on courses or outcomes being petitioned for credit. Statement of authenticity and signature.
Learning Chronology	Resume, learning chart or learning autobiography demonstrating learning from experience chronologically.

Prior Learning Narrative	Learning essay or competency statements demonstrating the match between the student's learning to that of the college-level outcomes being petitioned. Repeated for each course being petitioned.
Index of Documentation	List of documents that verify the learning.
Documentation*	Documents with captions (if needed to explain document) or artifacts (sample products, such as artwork).
Evaluation Forms	Form used by faculty assessor to write the credit recommendation.

* Expectations for Documentation

- Used to verify and support the PLA portfolio essay or narrative statements.
- Includes anything that was produced as a part of the learning described in the PLA portfolio essay.
- Uses multiple types and items of evidence.
- Has a combination of direct (produced by student) and indirect (produced by others about the student) documents.
- If the student includes items that she/he has authored or created, may need to provide additional documentation that the product was actually created or authored **by the student.**

The flexibility of the portfolio course allowed Maria to finish the portfolio during the summer months. Maria proudly turned in her finished portfolio for assessment and was awarded credit in Early Childhood Education (2), CPR/First Aid (3), Community Health/Safety & Nutrition and Communicable Disease (2), and Early Childhood Practicum I (2). She also took two CLEP Spanish exams earning her 6 credits to apply toward her elective credits. In all, Maria earned 15 PLA credits.

As far as all of the credits she received from her portfolio submission, what would you expect to be adequate documentation for these credit awards?

After her experience, Maria believed that creating the portfolio was like an expanded resume because it documented her accomplishments with certificates of training and sample lesson plans. She felt especially proud when she collected her letters from former clients and colleagues affirming her skills and knowledge. She plans to add to her portfolio as she works on her degree. She also feels that the course introduced her to ideas of learning theory that will be very important to her as she prepares to be a teacher.

The Learner's Path – Roger

Roger is 43 years old and has decided that he wants to complete a life goal of a bachelor's degree from the nearby state university.

Out of high school, Roger attended Red River Community College and completed an Associate of Applied Science degree in Business Administration and Management. While in the Army Reserves he trained as an EMT, training that he used when he returned from active duty in Iraq. He returned to live in his hometown of about 12,000 residents in North Dakota. He joined the local fire department as an emergency medical technician and, over a period of eight years, held many positions of rank in that small department, including Deputy Fire Chief.

Roger is well known and respected in his hometown, active in civic organizations and his church. When an opening appeared in local government, he was very interested; and in 2003 he was appointed Assistant Town Manager. Roger discovered that this work in municipal government was very satisfying for him. He attended trainings and conferences for professional managers and was trusted to draft policies and make executive decisions. Three years later, he was appointed Interim Town Manager when the Town Manager left the position. Based on his prior work, Roger was appointed Town Manager six months later. To strengthen his skills in public service, Roger completed training certifications in Government Accounting and Tax Law. He also enrolled in the noncredit, college sponsored Certified Public Manager program. Some of this program was completed online due to the harsh winters of North Dakota. He has been the Town Manager for over eight years, and his tenure included the development of a Comprehensive Plan for the town.

Roger enjoys his current work but is considering the possibility of advancing in state or regional government. He may even want to continue on with an MBA from NDS.

Exercise 5: Roger's PLA Hurdles and Possibilities

Based on Roger's story, work with a partner to identify at least two entries for each column.

Issues That Roger Faces	Researchable Questions	PLA Workshop Topics to Address
e.g., Roger's work pressures	What can colleges do to help busy adult learners navigate their system to attain credit for prior learning?	How might colleges assist adult learners with the need for flexible scheduling?

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Based on what we have learned of Roger's prior learning, what are the likely sources, subject matter, and possible assessment methods available at the typical college? At your table, identify possible courses to match Roger's learning and suggest possible assessments.

Source	Subject Areas	Possible Methods of Assessment

Roger's Learning Portfolio

Roger finds that the university appears to have prior learning opportunities through CLEP exams and ACE evaluations but no real portfolio program. Talking with an advisor at the university he discovers an option called LearningCounts (LC) offered though CAEL. Although the university is not yet part of the featured network, it is willing to accept the credit earned as transfer credit. Roger is excited because he appreciates the flexibility of an online option. He has several guidance options for preparing a portfolio for assessment. He decides to take the noncredit, self-paced, online course that is organized into eight modules. He briefly considers the credit workshop option through LC, but he feels self-disciplined enough to complete a portfolio without instructor aid.

Working with an advisor in his own degree program to select courses from the network to have evaluated, he discovers one course offered through Southern New Hampshire University titled Municipal Government Operations (5 credits). He and his advisor both agree that this is one course that seems to match his learning. Roger's considerable work history in local government ensures that his documentation is very strong. Here is what he can bring to the table:

- Shared Services Contract – Emergency Medical Services
- Shared Services Contract – Public Works
- Committee Participation – School Law Training 2007, School Consolidation 2007, Regional Planning Committee 2008
- Certification of Sworn Appointment – Treasurer
- Training Certification – Government Accounting 1 & 2
- Training Certification – Tax Law, 2005–08
- State Letter – Comprehensive Plan Approval
- Certified Public Manager Certificate

Exercise 6: Reviewing Roger's Portfolio

With this information in mind and using the Portfolio Basics for Assessors on pages 44–47, examine Roger's Portfolio Narrative in Appendix B. In your small group, answer the questions put forward in the guide to the learning essay:

- Is the student doing more than listing experiences?
- Can the student fully articulate the learning that occurred, using the appropriate jargon and competency statements?
- Does the student make the case by closely linking the course outcomes with learning/competency statements and appropriate documentation?
- Is there a balance of theory and practice that is appropriate for the course?
- Is there evidence that the learning can be applied to new situations?
- Is the learning at a "C" level or higher?
- As you examine the Course Objectives listed in the Portfolio by Roger, is there a sense of match for this learning?
- Is there an indication of using reflection to understand learning concepts as well as applying them?
- How much credit would you consider a fair award for this course?

The Advisor's Role

We can see that both Maria and Roger first encounter an advisor or admission staff professional as they enter a college. This person can make a huge difference for the student if they are well informed about their own institution and the options available for PLA. CAEL research on positive outcomes for PLA students show increased enrollment and retention, graduation and completion (persistence), and overall academic strength in core critical thinking skills (Klein-Collins, 2010,). When advisors understand the importance of PLA in these dimensions, they are willing to offer the necessary support.

In an ideal scenario, there is a single point of contact for adult students. It is more likely, however, that several individuals at a college offer information and advising to students. Hopefully, the advisors assigned to talk with adults have an understanding of the wide range of credentials an adult learner may bring into the institution. An advisor or admissions counselor will best serve adult students if they are knowledgeable of the institution's policies on accepting prior learning credits. A few main points to consider are:

- What restrictions, if any, will be put on the amount and type of PLA credit earned?
- Will test scores from national programs (CLEP, etc.) be accepted?
- When is a student eligible for PLA credits (e.g., upon applying, upon matriculating, before/after completing a specific number of credit hours or a required course)?
- What are options for veterans with a military transcript?
- Where are PLA options located in the institution? Where should the student go next for additional information?

Although the advisor will not be carrying out any assessments, he or she needs to be fully informed on all PLA methods. Advisors typically offer guidance on degree mapping and planning, and this information is critical to a learner's success. An educational map should include how PLA credit, if utilized, would fit into a degree plan.

CAEL Resources and Support for Advisors

In addition to information and support on PLA, advisors assist adult learners with the many challenges they bring with them, including varying levels of academic preparedness, complex life circumstances with work and family responsibilities, financial concerns, goals, dreams and motivations. CAEL has recognized the critical importance of advisors in the PLA process and offers resources to support them.

CAEL offers resources for the professional development of advisors who work with adult learners. Webinars, online and on-site workshops, and research is available to support advisors whose role is central to ensuring success for adults entering postsecondary institutions. For more in-depth training, the Career Advisor Certificate offered by CAEL and the Indiana University School of Continuing Studies (SCS) offers complete coverage of adult students' unique attributes and challenges. Connecting career advisement with adult learning theory, faculty from the SCS Master of Science in Adult Education program teach the five online career advising modules. Upon successful completion of the modules, participants are eligible for five continuing education units (CEUs).

An Institution's Path

   We have been following the path of typical learners through the assessment process. Now we will turn our attention to the institutional elements that determine good PLA practice.

   The initial steps in developing a prior learning assessment program for a college or university are to:

1. Articulate the institution's purpose and philosophy regarding PLA.

2. Build awareness of PLA and its standards inside the institution.

3. Establish a planning body of representatives from academic affairs, student affairs and business and information systems (see Appendix A for more information).

4. Use the CAEL Quality Standards as the basis for developing PLA policy.

5. Develop other elements of a Healthy PLA Program to support the policy.

6. Establish a realistic timeframe for implementation. Use implementation phases, if appropriate.

7. Look to the Future!

8. In order for your PLA program to succeed, you must provide clear guidelines for the roles and responsibilities your students, faculty assessors and institution will be taking on. The following table shows the typical institutional roles and responsibilities involved in prior learning assessment processes.

Typical Tasks in PLA	Typical Institutional Roles and Responsibilities
Articulation Support the learner to identify what was learned.	**Faculty/Advisors** Conducts formal or informal pre-screening for candidates who can demonstrate college-level learning. **Institution/Faculty Member/Advisor** Assists learner in the process of determining the learning that has resulted from experience. Assistance may be in the form of handouts and resources, individual coaching, a workshop, a credit-bearing course or a combination.
Planning Assist learner to match prior learning to academic program and personal goals.	**Advisor/Faculty Member** Assists learner with plan to match prior learning with educational goal; provides access to course descriptions and learning outcomes to better determine the fit between prior learning and course requirements.

Demonstration	Institution/Portfolio Development Course
Assist learner to identify an assessment method and prepare demonstration of the learning and evidence.	Assists learner by providing resources (e.g., samples, guides, website URLs, etc.). Assists learner with strategies to demonstrate an appropriate balance of theory and application.
Evaluation

Determine the level of competency achieved and the credit equivalency. | **Faculty Assessor(s)**

Determines level, amount and type of credit achieved. Provides written feedback. *

Assessor(s) are faculty content experts who are trained in the assessment practices of the institution. |
| **Transcription**

Transcribe the credit decision. | **Registrar or Records Office**

Transcribes credit awards. |

Many institutions distinguish between the person who provides input to the student and the faculty assessor who makes the credit determination. Assessors who provide no input or minimal guidance to the student before the evaluation are more likely to produce consistent and less biased credit awards.

Decision Points for an Institution

Below are some of the decisions that an institution must address in developing a PLA program. With your own institution in mind, select 2–4 decisions and use the table below to take notes about the decision makers, resources and possible barriers for each.

- Who should be on the planning committee?
- Who should create the PLA institutional policies?
- Which students can participate in PLA?
- Will we use a centralized system?
- What fees will be assessed?
- How will faculty be trained?
- How will assessment criteria be written?
- What model will be used to support student success with a portfolio process (workshop, credit class, online guide, etc.)?
- How will PLA be reflected on the transcript?
- Does PLA credit meet residency requirements?
- What restrictions, if any, will be put on the amount and type of PLA credit earned (e.g., PLA can't meet residency requirement, 50% of degree credits can be prior learning based, etc.)?

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DECISION	DECISIONMAKER(S)	RESOURCES	BARRIERS

Exercise 7: Case Study

As a chief academic officer at your institution, you return from a state workshop on the Board of Regents initiative to build PLA programs at the postsecondary level. You announce at a faculty meeting that your office will be holding several meetings on campus on the formation and implementation of PLA policies and procedures, including a portfolio assessment program. The meetings were driven in part by the fact that individual instructors made decisions on granting credit for experiential learning independently and without consistent requirements. In fact, one instructor signed class waivers to allow students to be placed in a higher level course only after interviewing the student during the first session. One student protested that the process was discriminatory.

The new registrar attended the last CAEL conference and is backing the need for standards, but she is not well known among the faculty. The Electronics Department faculty are interested in the PLA process, but due in part to the poor writing skills of the students, do not want to use the portfolio method. The science instructors, particularly in biology and chemistry, do not believe that PLA applies to their department. The English Department wants to house the PLA portfolio course in their discipline to help their full-time equivalency (FTE) and ensure rigorous writing standards. The Education Department is concerned about whether the Department of Education would allow students to use PLA to meet requirements for teacher licensure students. There is a small but vocal group from the Computer Science Department who are flatly opposed to PLA because they think it undermines the academic rigor of the program. This group recently posted a message on the faculty intranet to voice their opposition to a method that, according to them, "robs instructors, cheats students and diminishes the institution."

Analyzing Interests

Use a stakeholder analysis to understand the interests of different individuals in the institution. Select one of the parties listed below or identify a party at your own institution under "other". List the primary interests or concerns of that party. Describe ways to address their interests.

Interested Person	Interest Behind Position	Ways to Address Their Interest
Dean		
Registrar		
Student		

Electronics Faculty		
English Faculty		
Education Faculty		
Science Faculty		
Computer Science Faculty		
Other:		

Positioning the PLA Program: The Role of Institutional Context

The 10 CAEL Standards may seem straightforward, but their complexity is more apparent when institutions are diligent in applying them to the development and implementation of a PLA program. There are several institutional factors that can come into play when deciding how to honor the standards.

For example, consider the different perspectives of 2- and 4-year institutions regarding PLA. Concerns about transferability are dominant in many conversations about any curriculum design at 2 year institutions. As the recipient of transfer credits, 4 year institutions may want to build programs that will attract transfer students, but worry less about how their course credits will transfer to another institution. Their focus is on designing degrees that are attractive to students and responsive to demands of the community and workplace.

- How would concerns about transferability of PLA credits apply to a college's choices about their PLA program?
- What other differences between 2 and 4 year institutions would influence the design of PLA programs?

There are additional internal factors at work as well.

Institutional History – An unfortunate or unsuccessful attempt at offering PLA in the past will sometimes make institutions skeptical about trying again. How might these concerns be addressed?

Competing Demands – Many colleges are challenged with a number of special projects occurring at roughly the same time, competing for financial and human resources. Some of these, such as reaccreditation, are not discretionary and are firmly linked to deadlines. It

becomes easy to delay PLA indefinitely, in light of required time sensitive projects. How can you make the case for making PLA a priority?

Specialized accreditation – Academic programs in education, nursing and business, for example, are often concerned about the impact of PLA on their accreditation. Based on their past experiences, faculty sometime resist PLA knowing that alternative forms of achieving college credit have not been recognized by their accrediting bodies. However, with the growing emphasis on PLA and Competency-Based Education, accreditors are beginning to adapt their criteria. How can you address the concerns of faculty in these disciplines? What other institutional factors will influence the approach you use in implementing PLA?

The Institutional Readiness Guide in Appendix F can help you decide which academic programs, assessment methods or timeframe to focus on at the beginning.

CAEL advocates and innovates on behalf of adult learners to increase access to education and economic security. We provide adults with career guidance and help them earn college credit for what they already know. We equip colleges and universities to attract, retain and graduate more adult students. We provide employers with smart strategies for employee development. We build workforce organizations' capacity to connect worker skills to employer demands.

Through our PLA consulting services, CAEL can help decode and discover obstacles in your PLA policies, create a plan for training faculty and advisors, launch outreach and marketing campaigns and simplify process flows and pricing structures for PLA to encourage its use by adult students.

If you are preparing for an accreditation review, ensure that your adult focused programs meet the highest standards. CAEL is the foremost authority on adult learners and prior learning assessment policies and practices. CAEL will work with your faculty to develop a systematic assessment that is consistent with your policies and CAEL's PLA standards.

Portfolio assessment is the most flexible way to translate learning experiences into college credit. For this reason, it is also used in many CBE programs. We train faculty to understand the relationship between assessing learning and classroom assignments as well as uncovering ways to provide clear and supportive feedback to students.

If your institution is new to CBE, it is necessary to ensure that everyone understands how these programs can be established. CAEL can assist with clarifying CBE and competency-based assessment and explain new and long-standing models. CAEL can help you discover whether your institution is ready for CBE as it relates to business modeling, market demand and outreach, faculty and staff preparedness, and academic program design and development.

Your PLA or CBE program cannot succeed if no one can find it. Many colleges and universities are accustomed to marketing to high school students. Their marketing strategies, website and communications tend to be focused on this market. CAEL can help your marketing and enrollment staff examine their marketing strategies through a new lens—the adult student market. We provide practical strategies for embedding your adult-focused programs and offerings into your communications. Building on this foundation, CAEL can also help you create a clear map of the student path so you can make adjustments, creating the optimal adult student experience.

CAEL can help you put it all together. You can decipher which adult offerings suit your institution. We help you examine whether to: offer Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) options; design a Competency-Based Education (CBE) or Accelerated program; improve your career advising to better serve adults; and many other options, all designed to effectively serve adult learners at your institution.

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PLA Policy Template

Prior Learning Assessment Policy
(College/University name)

Purpose of Policy:
NOTE: This section is generic and intended to be used by all institutions

To recognize college level learning that students acquire outside of formal higher education, *college/university* relies on the following policy to ensure practices consistent with academic integrity and responsive to nontraditional learners. Such learning may be derived from various life and work experiences and the term "prior learning assessment" refers to all of the processes the college/university uses to review and evaluate evidence of learning and to award academic credit as indicated by academic and administrative standards. Adherence to this policy is also intended to support transparent transfer of prior learning assessment credit among institutions of higher education.

Policy and Procedures
NOTE: This section provides a structure for institutional policy using the headings provided. Notes following each heading describe the intent of that section. Institutions should insert existing policy that applies or use institutional governance to deliberate and write policy for each heading.

Eligibility. *Policy indicates eligibility based on academic standing and/or enrollment. EXAMPLE: "Students who have earned a minimum of 6 credit hours and are currently in good academic standing are eligible to participate in prior learning assessment."*

Number of Credits. *Policy indicates the maximum number of credits a student may earn through prior learning assessment. A recommended standard calls for policy to limit PLA credits consistent with the residency requirement or degree plan. EXAMPLE: "Students may earn up to 25% of their degree plan through prior learning assessment as long as the residence requirement is satisfied. Credits earned through prior learning assessment are not considered part of the residency requirement."*

Validation Methods. Policy *indicates the basis for evaluating prior learning. Most institutions use course equivalencies or competence equivalencies in competence-based curricula. EXAMPLE: "Prior learning must match existing courses using the course description and course outcomes for guidance."*

This section should also list the various methods for presenting prior learning to the college/university. EXAMPLE: "The following guidelines and methods are acceptable for validating prior learning for awarding credit:"

Suggested Methods: Institutions should list all that currently apply.

Credit recommendations listed in the American Council on Education (ACE) National Guide to College Credit for Workforce Training and the ACE Military Guide.

Credit demonstrated by successfully passing national for-credit examination programs such as DSST Exams; Excelsior College Examinations, the College Board College Level Examination Program (CLEP) and Advanced Placement (AP) exams. The scores that constitute a passing score are available [in the catalog/at the Testing Center/on the website, etc.]

Degree-relevant prior learning credit awarded and transcripted by other accredited institutions.

Individual portfolios using Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) guidelines.

Individual portfolios evaluated by CAEL's national on-line prior learning assessment service, LearningCounts.org.

Institutionally prepared examinations. NOTE: Institutional validation procedures should be objective to the extent that external evaluators would reach the same conclusion given the material reviewed, consistent with CAEL guidelines.

Application. *This section indicates how credits awarded from prior learning assessment will be applied to credential requirements.*

The following are recommended standards for applying such credit:

Prior learning credits shall be applied to meeting degree or program requirements in the same manner as credits earned at the awarding institution.

Institutions may award credit for prior learning only in those courses or program areas for which they have program approval by the state.

Institutions shall award their own course title and number to the credit awarded. Neutral grades of Pass or Fail shall be utilized. Conventional letter grades shall not be used.

Transferability. *NOTE: In the state policy guidelines, this section is used to indicate transferability among institutions. Given #3 under "Validation" there may be no need for this section in institutional policies until there is a state policy addressing transferability among state institutions.*

Fees. *This section indicates specific fees related to the entire process of prior learning assessment. This may include fees for specific tests, fees for submitting portfolios and requesting credit, fees for portfolio development workshops or courses. CAEL Standards should be used to determine fees and to clarify that fees are for assessment services rather than assessment results. EXAMPLE: "Students will pay an assessment fee of $50 to submit a portfolio for formal assessment. This fee is not dependent on the results of the assessment."*

Portfolio Preparation Support. *This section indicates the institution's requirements or recommendations for a student's participation in workshops, credit courses or tutorials to support their preparation of a portfolio. EXAMPLE: "Students who choose to submit a portfolio must attend a free, one hour orientation session to review basic of portfolio prior to submitting a portfolio for review. An optional portfolio preparation workshop is available for students seeking additional assistance."*

Staff Professional Development. *This section indicates the institution's standard for initial and ongoing professional development for faculty and staff providing prior learning assessment services. EXAMPLE: "All faculty serving as portfolio assessors must complete a training that conforms to CAEL standards prior to their service as assessors. Periodic professional development will be provided to ensure consistent practice among assessors."*

Tracking. *This section indicates the institution's plan for tracking student participation in prior learning assessment and the results of prior learning assessment in terms of credit awarded and fees assessed. EXAMPLE: "College/University will prepare an annual report reflecting the level of student participation in each form of prior learning assessment and the resulting credit awards in each category."*

Review. "*This policy shall be reviewed on a bi-annual basis and revised to reflect conformity with institutional academic and administrative standards."*

Effective Date: Recommended date for policy approval: July 1, 2013

APPENDIX B: PORTFOLIO DEVELOPMENT MODELS

Self-directed, noncredit bearing, online portfolio workshops may offer structured exercises, videos, workbooks, etc., to help guide the student through the portfolio development process. Many online programs, like LearningCounts, often include a counselor/advisor available by e-mail or phone.

Portfolio Development classes are often noncredit facilitated educational activities that are done with a group of students. Sometimes this model is combined with a freshman orientation workshop or may be offered in a workplace setting. Mentoring models provide portfolio development instruction as a one-on-one consultation, generally with a faculty or staff member. Credit-bearing portfolio development courses might be designed as a blended model with weekend or evening classroom sessions followed by online assignments.

Typically, this model is based on a credit-bearing course offering a full range of educational planning and portfolio development activities, such as:

- Educational skill building
- College orientation
- Educational and career goal setting
- Degree planning
- Learning style survey
- Structured portfolio development

APPENDIX C: ROGER'S PORTFOLIO NARRATIVE

PAD 332 – Municipal Government Operations Portfolio Learning Narrative

Introduction

Greetings, my name is Roger. I am 43 years old, grew up and live in a small town in North Dakota. I attended Red River Community College attaining an Associates of Applied Science degree in Business Administration and Management.

By nature, I am a hardworking person with a strong work ethic. I obtained my first job at the age of ten delivering morning newspapers six days a week and continued to do so until I entered high school. I have been working a job, in most cases two or three at the same time, ever since.

Currently I am the town manager of Pembina and an adjunct instructor in the business department at Red River Community College. I am a soft spoken and kind individual who achieves an immense amount of satisfaction by helping others. This has been a lifelong trait that has earned me the respect and admiration of my family, friends and citizens in the community in which I live. I have been working for the town for the past 23 years.

I began my tenure with the town as a firefighter I emergency medical technician in December of 1990. Since then, I have held many positions of rank within the department including fire inspector, instructor, and Deputy Fire Chief. In 2003, I was appointed as the Assistant Town Manager. This afforded me opportunity to meet and correspond with other municipal managers, attend trainings and conferences for professional managers, and begin to make executive decisions and draft policy. In January 2006, the Town Council appointed me as the interim Town Manager. I am happy to say that based on my prior work history with the town and an endorsing recommendation from the outgoing manager, I was appointed full time in June of that year without the Council performing a candidate search.

Objective #1 – Identify the potential constraints and benefits of various types of municipal governance.

I have been employed as the chief executive officer in the town of Pembina for almost eight years. I have firsthand knowledge of the five-forms of governance for the nearly 500 cities and towns in the State of North Dakota, (Haag, 1993). They are identified as Council/Manager, Town Meeting/Council/Manager, Town Meeting/Selectmen/Manager, Town Meeting/Selectman/Administrative Assistant and Mayor/Council/Administrator.

Pembina, by charter, is governed by a Town Meeting/Council/Manager form of government. Our form of government uses the oldest form of democracy in the United States which allows for local citizens to be directly involved with public policy decisions. Citizens are called together annually for a town meeting at which time a proposed municipal budget is presented and voted on, each line item at a time. When the budget is passed, the taxes are committed for the next year and the budget is administered by the town manager with oversight from the Town Council. The manager is the chief executive officer and oversees the day to day operation of all municipal departments. In all of these models, the selectmen or councilors are elected and are the legislative body for their entity.

As a manager, I frequently meet and consult with other municipal leaders and/or elected officials for collaborative efforts, trainings, shared issues and common interests. I belong to several professional management associations that provide an opportunity for such meetings but have also met individually with community leaders, as well. I have experienced both the constraints and benefits of each form of government.

Examining the Selectman/Administrator models, I have witnessed some of the constraints by observing other community's public meetings. One of the major limitations is timely decision making. In a community that does not have a professional manager, business meetings are conducted one to two times each month. It is the responsibility of the elected officials to come together and sign municipal pay warrants, conduct public hearings for new proposed policy, review general assistance cases and discuss daily operations. Decisions are sometimes held up by the time it takes for these officials to meet.

To illustrate an example, while trying to negotiate shared services agreements for our public works and emergency medical, it was necessary for me to meet with our neighboring community's town manager. Their form of governance is the Town Meeting/Selectman/Manager. This requires their manager to bring any negotiations to the Selectmen for their consideration. Their manager does not have the ability to enter into agreements on the municipality's behalf without their authorization. In my community, our governance structure allows for the manager to enter into contractual agreements and then advise the Council of such action. A benefit of having a Council/Manager allows for the municipality to react more quickly and provide for greater efficiency.

To compare these forms of governance further, there are two cities within ten miles of our town that have the Mayor/Council/Administrator form. These are the largest communities in our county and their activity is prevalent in the press offering ongoing comparison with other government styles. In most nationwide models, a Mayor is the chief executive officer who, through appointed department heads, directs municipal operations. In Maine, the day to day operations are usually managed by hired administrators. The Mayors are figureheads and, in some cases, are only a public representation for their community. Recalling conversations with former mayors, they have indicated their lack of decision making power. They do have minimal voting power and are often used to break tie votes when a Council reaches an impasse. The mayors are elected officials and their personal agendas, often the promises made during a campaign, sometimes are the forefront of policy proposals made during their tenure.

The benefit of some of these forms of government is a person who remains constant. An executive officer, such as a manager, administrator or administrative assistant is appointed, not elected. Therefore, they have a longer-term, historical knowledge of the community's operations. Being one of these people, I have had the chance to experience Councilors who have come and gone. I have had to spend significant amounts of time teaching each of these individuals with meetings, reports, other documentation and sometimes casual one on one conversation.

I have functioned with all of the forms of leadership in each of the communities around us. I have served on a regional school consolidation committee, a regional public safety answering point I emergency dispatching committee and currently serve on a legislative policy committee (Association, 2013), regional council of governments and regional rail coalition.

I have learned to respect each community's governance choice by understanding the operational and political differences. They have chosen their form based on population, dynamic needs, local economic factors and popular vote.

Objective #2 – Assess the functions and structure of municipal governments for their impact on local services.

Regardless of the local governance structure, organized municipalities are tasked with servicing the population within their boundaries with a comprehensive range of amenities. However, each of those entities may differ slightly in how those services are administered and delivered.

A community has an authorized person to monitor the daily activity of municipal operations. These officials may be elected or appointed. Organizations follow a chain of command system that differs from town to town, but all have the elected officials at the top of the hierarchy. Below the elected officials are the separate departments that are categorized by function. These departments are largely administrative services, police, fire, public works, assessing, library, planning, health, welfare, solid waste, and parks and recreation.

In our community, department heads are appointed by me and answer directly to me. They all received their guidance and management through a central office. Using the management by objectives theory (Luthra, 2013), I work with my staff and stay in regular, weekly communication. Exchanging information with each department head allows for a team approach to operations and results in cooperation and proficiency. We base our objectives by goal setting and reviewing those goals during an annual review.

Every community has some level of public safety by providing it with employees of the municipality, relying on a county or state agency, agreements with a neighboring town or private contractor. I operate a full-time police department and a fire/rescue department with on call personnel. Towns must provide the archiving of public information, vital records, licensing and permitting and conducting elections. Services that are optional by local choice are library, parks and recreation, planning and development, public works and social services. The demographics of the locality usually drive the structure and level of each service. Communities with low populations will not have a large demand for public safety services. Cities with higher populations are likely to have a greater need for social services. Some services are determined at the choice of the elected officials. I know, for example, that our neighboring community stresses the need for full-time fire and EMS coverage. Having a response volume of slightly more than double what is required in our town, its need may not be warranted. Their annual budget for the same services is almost six times that of our budget, yet their voters have supported and approved it at their town meeting. I am not able to defend such a high cost to our taxpayers and, therefore, I employ a smaller sized, more cost efficient fire/rescue.

Each year, when I am drafting my proposed budget, it is critical that I evaluate the level of need for each department. For example, when considering our emergency medical services, I take a look at response histories for the past several years. Although this is not an accurate method of benchmarking due to the unpredictable nature of medical services, I also look at the dynamics of our population. Communities with older populations will place a higher demand on EMS. Taking into consideration that more and more people are using EMS services for non-emergency calls, the trend causes slight increases to this budget annually. An additional example is the necessity for me to analyze our historical usage of salt and sand deployment during the winter months. Predicting how much my public works department will

need in the coming year can be hit or miss. It is important to ensure there is an adequate supply on hand.

Objective #3 – Examine the relationships between the responsibilities of financial officers and the fiscal challenges facing local governments.

Financial officers in a municipality have a high degree of responsibility that requires flawless accuracy and accountability. In my position, I am ultimately responsible for the financial status of our community as the treasurer. However, I am not the person who does the daily accounting. In previous trainings, I have learned the importance of having multiple sets of eyes on financial records to inspect for errors and to ensure there is no fraudulent activity.

In comparison between the responsibilities, I create, propose, defend and obtain approval of an operational budget. I monitor the administration of the budget throughout the year and authorize purchase orders as requested by each department. The finance director, using the funds allocated by the approved budget, receives and records incoming revenues and creates payment warrants. The payment warrants are reviewed by me, authorized by the Council and payments are executed.

I review the transaction records weekly during meetings with my finance director to reconcile balances of each of our accounts.

Financial challenges that I face each year include the increased demand for public services that carry a caveat of no additional funding and reduced revenue sharing from the State. I am tasked, annually, with having to do more with less. To solve some of these issues, I have consolidated positions as they open up by attrition. I have demonstrated that I can provide the same services without having to increase the overall operational costs. To do this in the past year, I reduced capital expenditure budgets to reallocate funds for more pertinent services. I do recognize the potential negative impact that this practice has on future needs. The capital funds are essentially savings accounts for future projects. A particular example that has occurred recently is our need to replace the Christmas decorations that are displayed in our downtown during the holiday season. Funding limitations did not allow for the replacement of deteriorating and visually unpleasing adornments. I challenged our public works staff to use their collective talents to fabricate decorations, which are similar to those that can be purchased commercially. They were successful. I also boosted morale by giving a task that was out of their daily routine.

Another fiscal challenge that I will continue to face is revenue generation to augment depleting sources. As the demand for lower taxes prompts the reduction of budgets, establishing fees for services has become a necessary evil. I had to defend an argument that over-users of a particular service, should have some level of financial ownership. I have implemented certain fees at our transfer station for people who bring trash items that are costly to dispose of. Oversized furniture, for example, brought in whole has a cost to the municipality that is above and beyond what the general tax base covers. Naturally, we had resistance with the new fee and I was faced with another dilemma. I solved this problem after meeting with my transfer station manager and discussing alternatives. We came to the conclusion that if staff were to breakdown the furniture into individual recyclable components, then the material that costs us money to dispose of was drastically minimized.

Objective #4 - Articulate the effects of active citizen involvement within the government using appropriate evidence.

Citizen involvement is a critical component of public policy. Depending on the form of governance in any given community, the public may or may not play a role in the adoption of budgets or policy. In our community, I have learned that it is advantageous to include the public when formulating regulations. With a small administrative staff, it is often difficult for us to see all sides of an issue. Including others who may have a unique interest in the issue often brings to the table opinions, ideas and opportunity for appealing solutions. I spent the better part of two years working with a group of citizens updating our municipal Comprehensive Plan. We were able to bring continuity to the plan by allowing different perspectives and valued input from those participating in the process. Including the public in projects gives them ownership - a willingness to defend their project - and they are more likely to campaign for support. The culmination of our plan was successfully adopted locally with validation at the state level.

Another instance of citizen involvement was the need to deal with issues created when the State of North Dakota legalized the sale and use of consumer fireworks. This relaxation on the ban of using firework triggered some unruliness, expected with any new release from prohibition. Citizen complaints began to pile up with demands for local regulation. I drafted a proposed local ordinance and invited the public for review. After a couple meetings with rather heated discussion, a compromise was mostly accepted and submitted for a public referendum. This passed by popular vote at our election in November 2012. By including the public in this process, it showed me that my original proposal would not have been accepted without some modification. Incorporating the resident's suggestions, there was greater suitability.

Inviting citizen involvement has become easier with the development of social media. I post and edit both our municipal web page and our Facebook page. Our web page has a feature allowing citizens to sign up to receive direct email notifications of public meeting notices.

Objective #5 – Construct potential solutions for the economic challenges facing municipalities that effectively address all relevant factors.

It is my own personal opinion that the demand for increased public services, with limited funding, is a trend that is not going to culminate anytime soon. This situation will continue to get worse before it gets better and dollars will have to be stretched further.

Small scale, I have had to consider and have implemented minor procedures in energy conservation, such as requiring the use of smart power strips that detect when electronics are not being used and turns off the devices. We have adopted a no idling policy for municipal vehicles in an effort to conserve fuel. Documents are now being created and distributed in electronic format to support the reduced use of paper and duplication expenses.

On an intermediate scale, merging of services is allowing us to provide the same level of service at reduced cost by sharing personnel and resources. In the last year, I have contracted two of our municipal services with our neighboring community. We share an animal control officer with seven other towns. Contracting public services to the private

sector cannot be discounted and is considered periodically. Competitive bidding for services keeps expenses in check with rival providers.

Inter-governmental efforts will have to be contemplated at an even higher level. The joining of communities and sharing administrations will have to be studied. This will be challenging as local control is very near and dear to most voters. (ICMA, 2012) Countywide services will also have to be explored as an option, as well.

Conclusion

Municipal government operations are much broader than the few objectives set out for this course. In my experience, I have had the ability to learn all aspects of municipal government while serving in various positions of civic hierarchy. Each of these positions has contributed to the lifelong learning that has enabled me to be successful in my job as chief executive today.

Until now, I have not received formal education specifically for my position. I would like to think that my continued employment as the town manager speaks as reference towards my qualifications. These qualifications have all been accumulated through on the job training, informal apprenticeship, cooperative educational opportunities with others in my field and instruction.

I have cultured human resource skills by working alongside my employees every day and using established policies to guide them. In some cases, I have modified policies to deal with particular situations. My humanistic side has permitted me to view employee's needs thoughtfully, ensuring a well-rounded view of their requests. My financial skills have sharpened as I have had to create and promote budgets, and scrutinize revenues and expenditures under the watchful public eye. Negotiating pricing for goods and services, and offering bidding opportunities has honed my frugality with other people's money. Ascertaining unconventional funding sources has helped recover dwindling revenues. My never ending interaction with people has trained me to be diplomatic and caring, and improved my hearing, not just listening. I have advanced my political skills by dealing directly with upper level legislators and policy makers when defending local home rule or putting forth proposed bills for the benefit of my community. Most importantly, I have learned what it means to provide services to the public in multiple and various ways.

Although my tenure might suggest that I may be an expert in my line of work, I will be the first to admit that my knowledge is fractional against others. I will continue to absorb information as time passes. Each day brings new situations that are challenging the limits of municipal services. I will continue to find ways to help people with their needs by relying on other manager's ideas and trying alternative concepts that have not been tried. In this profession, the learning will continue to evolve and never end.

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APPENDIX D: CAEL ONLINE PLA CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

Learn to develop a professional portfolio assessment system for your institution or strengthen your institution's existing prior learning assessment programs by completing the CAEL Online PLA Certificate Program. Offered by the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) and DePaul University, this program provides the basic tools to develop skills and procedures for assessing adults' prior learning. The program is delivered over the Internet, allowing you to participate at any time, from any place - all you need is e-mail capability and a web browser.

How Does It Work?

The PLA certificate program consists of four web-based workshops, each with four to seven modules. During each four-week workshop, participants work through a series of structured activities employing online and off-line materials. Each group of participants is assigned an online consultant to facilitate learning and provide feedback. Participants may discuss issues and activities within their learning group.

PLA Workshop 1: This introductory workshop is intended for those with little or no experience with PLA concepts or practices. In this workshop you will become familiar with the language of PLA, a set of standards for the assessment of learning and the procedural steps to run an assessment process.

PLA Workshop 2: This workshop builds on the fundamentals of PLA covered in Workshop 1, including how to apply prior learning assessment principles to the series of decisions that make up assessment activity.

PLA Workshop 3: This workshop focuses on quality assurance and the integration of activities, policies and procedures to ensure that a program's practices are congruent with its goals.

PLA Workshop 4: This workshop focuses on additional quality assurance and the integration of activities, policies and procedures to ensure that a program's practices are congruent with its goals.

Completion of the first two workshops leads to a Certificate of Achievement in Prior Learning Assessment. Participants who successfully complete all four facilitated workshops will be granted a Certificate of Mastery in Prior Learning Assessment. For start dates go to: http://www.cael.org/Professional-Development/Certification.

APPENDIX E: LEARNING COUNTS

LearningCounts is one of CAEL's answers to the growing needs of PLA in higher learning environments. LearningCounts offers institutions a way to incorporate portfolio assessment into PLA programming quickly while maintaining integrity. School affiliates can offer LearningCounts services to their students without the time and cost associated with developing an in-house portfolio development and assessment program. Currently, LearningCounts offers the following services:

- Free PLA advising to students
- Free Prior Learning Credit Predictor to facilitate student engagement
- Online courses in PLA portfolio development;
- Access to an extensive faculty roster trained according to CAEL standards
- Portfolio credit assessments by CAEL's faculty experts
- Archived electronic record of student's history of prior learning

To learn how to create their portfolios, students have a choice between a self-paced, noncredit Do-It-Yourself course or they can take CAEL 100 – a six-week instructor-led course worth three college credits. Students can also submit a portfolio for review without taking a LearningCounts course.

CAEL 100: PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT THEORY AND PRACTICE

CAEL 100 is an instructor-led online course that will help students identify areas of learning they may want to have evaluated for college-level equivalency. The course will also guide students through the preparation and compilation of all components required for the evaluation of a learning portfolio through LearningCounts.

Students will use critical reflection skills to rethink the value of their learning and its implications for future learning. Adult learning theory, models and concepts will be discussed and applied to the first portfolio. Successful completion of CAEL 100 will result in a credit recommendation of three lower-level credits for the course itself.

Upon successful completion of CAEL 100, learners will be able to:

- Identify and reflect on areas of their own learning from both formal and informal setting
- Use critical reflection skills to rethink the nature and value of learning from experience
- Approach learning with an appropriate balance of practical and theoretical understanding
- Discuss and apply experiential learning theory, models and concepts to case studies
- Generate college-level writing that demonstrates learning
- Identify, organize and gather documentation in order to build portfolios of prior learning

Students can register for CAEL 100 at any time. Courses generally start every two weeks. The cost of CAEL 100 is $895 and the price includes the assessment of the first portfolio. There is a textbook for the course, *Earn College Credit for What You Know* by Janet Colvin (2012), which comes electronically with the class at no extra charge.

Additional web-based academic readings on learning theory and practice are assigned in each unit.

DIY: DEVELOPING YOUR PORTFOLIO FOR COLLEGE CREDIT

Developing Your Portfolio for College Credit is a self-paced online course that guides students step-by-step through the preparation and compilation of components required for prior learning assessment portfolio evaluation through LearningCounts.org. After completing the course and their portfolio, students submit their portfolio for assessment by CAEL-trained faculty assessors with the appropriate subject matter expertise.

Students can take this DIY workshop at any time and from any computer or tablet with an Internet connection. Materials for the course are organized in eight modules. It is recommended that students complete the modules in order:

1. Introduction to Prior Learning Assessment
2. The LearningCounts Portfolio
3. Identifying Types of Learning
4. Identifying College-level Learning Outside the Classroom
5. Matching What You Know to Learning Outcomes
6. Writing the Learning Narrative
7. Gathering Supporting Documentation
8. Building and Submitting Your Portfolio

Students can register for LearningCount's DIY course at any time. They have up to six months from the date of registration to complete the eight modules and submit their portfolio for assessment. During the six-month period, students can access the modules as many times as needed. No credit is granted for this course and there are no graded assignments. Each module features a five question quiz at the end to review module topics.

Upon successful completion of this course, learners will be able to:

• Identify and reflect on areas of their own learning from both formal and informal settings
• Use critical reflection skills to rethink the value of learning from their experiences
• Generate college-level writing that demonstrates learning in a format that addresses course learning outcomes/objectives
• Identify, organize and gather documentation to build prior learning portfolios

Students may be able to complete the self-paced course relatively quickly – in four to six hours – however, additional time will be required to find courses that match student knowledge areas and develop materials for the learning portfolio, including one 8–10 page paper per course request.

The cost of Developing Your Portfolio for College Credit is $149 and does not include a portfolio evaluation. There is no textbook for the course. All reading materials are embedded in the course. Students can order an optional textbook for more information about the portfolio development process and prior learning assessment. When students

have completed their portfolio, they will submit it to LearningCounts for an additional fee of $125 per portfolio.

LEARNINGCOUNTS PORTFOLIO REVIEW SERVICE

LearningCounts also offers a stand-alone PLA portfolio review service. Each portfolio review is $125, the equivalence of one college course (3 credits).

BECOMING A LEARNINGCOUNTS AFFILIATE

Want more features and administrative benefits? Become a part of our Featured Network to get full-service PLA solutions that yield revenue with little to no operating cost.

Featured Network institutions receive the benefit of a full-service PLA department. We'll handle the student registration process and train your advisors to identify good PLA candidates. Your institution sets the fee for course tuition and portfolio assessment, and LearningCounts invoices you directly. So beyond giving your students access to innovative and flexible means of earning credit at your college or university, you also have increased revenue opportunity with little to no operating cost. CAEL members qualify for Featured Network benefits with an additional annual service fee.

In addition to the services listed above, Featured Network members receive:

- Option to list both LearningCounts portfolio development courses in their academic catalogs
- Flexibility to set tuition and assessment rates for LearningCounts services to students
- Invoicing for these services by LearningCounts and the ability to earn revenue on these services
- Marketing Toolkits and consulting services to customize marketing materials and strategies
- Ability to transcribe all LearningCounts credits directly on Featured Network transcripts.
- Training of advisors, admissions and other appropriate departments via webinar or in-person for an additional fee.
- Logo, contact information, and a direct link as a Featured College or University on the LearningCounts website.

APPENDIX F: INSTITUTIONAL READINESS GUIDE

Institution _____

Prepared by _____ Date _____

    PLA systems should be designed to work within the context of an institution's mission, population, organizational structure and resources. This Guide provides a structure for examining key elements of your institution to determine its capacity for efficiently implementing PLA. Please gather information and perspectives to examine each of the institutional elements that follow to create a snapshot of your institution's readiness for PLA.

    You can rely on information and resources at your institution that are accessible and seem appropriate to you. Involve various stakeholders (faculty, staff, administrators and students) to arrive at responses. Afterward, please rate your institution's strength with regard to each element and recommend next steps to increase its readiness for PLA.

1. Approach to Serving Adult Students

Factors to consider:
- Are there specific institutional goals or initiatives directed to adult learners?

- Is there currently a portal and/or services designed explicitly for adults (e.g., Orientation)?

- Are there specific outreach strategies and/or enrollment goals for adult students?

- Have resources (human, space or fiscal) been allocated specifically to adult student services and/or curriculum?

Resources to consult:

2. Student Interest or Readiness

Factors to consider:

- Have adult (or traditional) students requested opportunities to submit work/life experience learning for credit?

- Are there partnerships with employers or organizations that consistently refer adults to the institution?

Resources to consult:

3. Curriculum

Factors to consider:

- Are there existing core or generic syllabi for courses that include learning outcomes written and approved by department faculty?

- Have faculty provided ad hoc assessment of life experience learning in order to accommodate requests by specific students?

- Are there assessment practices in place at the program and/or institutional level to examine student learning?

Resources to consult:

4. Target Programs

Factors to consider:
- What academic programs have existing partnerships with employers, labor unions or professional associations?

- What academic programs have existing enrollment and/or completion goals?

Resources to consult:

CAEL

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5. **Culture**

Factors to consider:
- Over the past five years or so, what evidence has there been of the institution's interest in innovation?

- In general, what is the institution's reaction to change - either planned or unplanned?

- What metrics does the institution regularly use to monitor its effectiveness (e.g., enrollments, completion, retention, budget, etc.)?

Resources to consult:

6. Policies

Factors to consider:
- Review the PLA Policy Template on p. 20.

- How well do existing policies, procedures, and structures provide a basis for prior learning assessment?

Institutional Readiness Summary

On the scales below, please indicate your understanding of the readiness of each of the institutional elements with respect to PLA by circling the appropriate **X**. Below each, briefly state next steps that might be taken to move the institution forward in that area.

	Early Stages	Progressing	Ready
Approach to Serving Adults	_____X	_____X	_____X_____
Student Interest/Readiness	_____X	_____X	_____X_____
Curriculum	_____X	_____X	_____X_____
Target Programs	_____X	_____X	_____X_____
Culture	_____X	_____X	_____X_____
Policies	_____X	_____X	_____X_____

APPENDIX G: A BRIEF HISTORY OF CAEL

PLA was stimulated to a large extent by student activism in the '60s, which focused on the individual and the increasing numbers of adults returning to higher education. Academic institutions were troubled by the unethical practice at some schools of granting "credit for experience" as a marketing ploy. In 1974, in order to relieve the ethical concerns about PLA, the Educational Testing Service (ETS), along with 10 other institutions and funding from the Carnegie Corporation, launched the Council for the Advancement of Experiential Learning (CAEL) as a three-year project to formalize PLA standards and procedures.

From 1974 to 1977 CAEL conducted field and operational models research; produced handbooks, guides, annotated bibliographies, working papers, institutional reports and special project reports; hosted seven national conferences; and administered faculty development programs, all of which culminated in the book *Principles of Good Practice in Assessing Experiential Learning* by Warren W. Willingham, published in 1977.

After 1977, CAEL began operating as a charter association of universities and colleges independent of ETS, with Morris T. Keeton at the helm and a membership of 270 strong. CAEL's primary mission remained addressing quality assurance in PLA in addition to deepening the understanding of adult learners and their needs. Later, in 1979, the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO), the American Council on Education (ACE), and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation formally endorsed PLA and CAEL's principles.

1985 brought change for both CAEL and the adult learner. CAEL changed its name to the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning, which was prompted, in part, by the huge economic shifts in society that began to impact adults returning to school. At this time, CAEL expanded its interests to include workforce development by providing services, programs and research on the topic.

Over time, the significance of PLA and the standards needed to guarantee quality assurance have led to recognition of and policy declarations about CAEL's criterion by education accrediting associations, councils and commissions. In 2000 the Higher Learning Commission recommended "assessment of prior learning using principles advocated by such organizations as the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning" (Taylor, p. 7). Further, in a 2001 joint statement made by the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, the American Council on Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation, "institutions are encouraged to explore the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) procedures and processes" for evaluating extra-institutional and experiential learning.

Today, CAEL is a national nonprofit with the mission to lead the evolving national discussion on the unique challenges and opportunities linking adult learners and work. The Council advocates and innovates on behalf of all adult learners, regardless of their socio-economic circumstances, to increase access to education and economic security and to develop and provide effective services and tools. CAEL works at all levels within the higher education, public and private sectors to make it easier for people to get the education and training they need to attain meaningful, secure employment. CAEL continues its leadership in PLA through workshops like this one, online platforms and consulting services.

LearningCounts is CAEL's latest national strategy, developed in partnership with the Lumina Foundation, to ensure that PLA is available to adult learners working to succeed in their educational goals. LearningCounts offers institutions a way to incorporate portfolio assessment into PLA programming quickly while maintaining integrity. School affiliates can offer LearningCounts services to their students without the time and cost associated with developing an in-house portfolio development and assessment program (read more in Appendix D).

In addition to its services and programs, CAEL continues to stay at the forefront of PLA practice through its ongoing dedication to research and related publications. *Earn College Credit for What You Know* is currently in its 5th edition (2012) and continues to be a staple for CAEL's initiatives. It is at the center of the Learning Counts portfolio development courses and is designed to help learners navigate higher education and the PLA process. Another principal book published by CAEL is *Assessing Learning: Standards, Principles & Procedures, 2nd Edition* by Morry Fiddler, Catherine Marienau and Urban Whitaker (2010). This book is sometimes referred to as a CAEL bible since it sets out the standards for PLA quality assurance that were established and adopted by CAEL from its 40+ years of work in the field. You can review the latest news and research on CAEL's Research & Publications webpage.

THE CAEL PHILOSOPHY: MEANINGFUL LEARNING, CREDENTIALS AND WORK FOR EVERY ADULT

The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning links learning and work. CAEL is a nonprofit that works with the public sector, private sector industries and higher education institutions to ensure that adult students receive the most efficient training and education to be employable in the 21st century economy. Effective PLA policies, strategies and implementation not only provide a pathway to college completion – although that's clearly important – ultimately, they provide a pathway to engaged lifelong learning – the kind of learning that adults value for employment, promotion, income *and* the kind of learning that contributes to caring for others, contributing to one's community, thinking creatively, investigating important questions, and living a healthy and rewarding life. Our goal at CAEL is to help state systems and institutions create and support models of PLA where adult learners can maximize PLA opportunities and complete their degrees as competent learners, workforce contributors and engaged community members.

APPENDIX G: FUNDAMENTALS OF PLA GLOSSARY

Glossary

Prior Learning is a term used by educators to describe learning that an individual acquires outside a traditional academic environment. Sources of prior learning may include work experience, employer training programs, military service training, independent study, noncredit courses, volunteer and community service, and other life experiences leading to further self-directed learning.

A **Portfolio**, in the world of PLA, is a formal communication, presented by the student to the college as a petition requesting credit or recognition for self-directed learning that has taken place outside of the classroom. The typical portfolio is a written document identifying learning achievements and providing sufficient evidence and documentation that an assessor can use it as a basis for evaluation.

Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) is the process whereby an individual's prior learning claim is assessed by a content expert for the purposes of granting credit, certification or advanced standing in an educational program. Also known as:

- PLAR and RDA (Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition) – Canada
- APL and APEL (Assessment of Prior Learning/Experiential Learning) – Great Britain and Ireland
- RPL (Recognition of Prior Learning) – South Africa, New Zealand, and Australia

Assessment is the measurement of learning based on criteria and indicators. In the classroom, you used assessment skills and principles. Assessing prior learning may expand the context and content of your assessment, but the theory remains the same.

APPENDIX H: FURTHER READING AND OTHER RESOURCES

In Print

Assessing Learning: Standards, Principles, & Procedures, 2nd Edition
Morry Fiddler, Catherine Marienau, and Urban Whitaker
Chicago, IL: CAEL, 2006

Earn College Credit for What You Know, 5th Edition
Janet L. Colvin
Chicago, IL: CAEL, 2012

Diversity and Motivation: Culturally Responsive Teaching in College
Ginsberg, M. B., & Wlodkowski, R. W. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2009

Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development
David Kolb
Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1984

Fostering Critical Reflection in Adulthood
Jack Mezirow, Editor
San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1990

Portfolio Development and the Assessment of Prior Learning: Perspectives, Models and Practices
Elana Michelson and Alan Mandell
Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, 2004

Reflection: Turning Experience into Learning David Boud, Rosemary Keogh, and David
Walker New York, NY: Nichols Publishing Company, 1985

The Adult Learner: A Neglected Species, 3rd Edition
Malcom Knowles
Houston, TX: Gulf Publishing, 1984

The Inquiring Organization: Tacit Knowledge, Conversation, and Knowledge Creation: Skills for 21st-Century Organizations
Catherine Kano Kikoski and John F. Kikoski
Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004

ONLINE

American Council on Education (ACE): www.acenet.edu

ACE College Credit Recommendation Service (CREDIT): www.acenet.edu/news- room/Pages/College-Credit-Recommendation-Service-CREDIT.aspx

ACE Military Guide Online: http://www.acenet.edu/news-room/Pages/Military-Guide-Online.aspx

ACE National Guide to College Credit for Workforce Training: http://www.acenet.edu/nationalguide

College Board AP Exams: http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/home

College-Level Examination Program (CLEP): http://clep.collegeboard.org/

DANTES Subject Standardized Tests (DSST): http://getcollegecredit.com/

LearningCounts: www.learningcounts.org

Lumina Foundation: www.luminafoundation.org

UExcel® Excelsior College Examination Program: http://www.excelsior.edu/exams

CAEL RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS

The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) conducts research, creates webinars and produces publications on ways to help adult learners access education and connect that learning to work. Whether you're an employer, college administrator, workforce developer or adult student, the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning offers resources to support you. Visit CAEL's Research & Publications webpage for the latest reports and webinars. http://www.cael.org/Research-and-Publications