

4

ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES WITH ADULT ENGLISH LEARNERS

Questions for Discussion and Application

- 4.1.** The most significant challenge with adult learners by far is non-participation in English language classes. Table 4.1 lists many solutions to improve participation. Which of these solutions has your program tried already? What are the outcomes? Do you see suggestions on the list that would be worth implementing?
- 4.2.** Think of learners you have known who experienced serious cultural adaptation struggles. How did these struggles manifest in their lives? What specifically contributed to their difficulties? In hindsight, what could you have done as their teacher to support them?
- 4.3.** What is your approach to creating a culturally responsive classroom?
- 4.4.** Describe an adult student you have worked with who had limited formal schooling and low literacy. What were the personal strengths of this student? What were the student's academic abilities like? How did low literacy impact the student's life? How did you find suitable learning materials? How were you able to accommodate the learner in the program? What were the eventual outcomes for this student? In retrospect, do you have new ideas that you could have tried?
- 4.5.** Have you ever tried any of the following with students who had low literacy: Total Physical Response approach, Language Experience Approach, phonemic awareness instruction, phonics instruction, learning stations/centers, and task-based language teaching? Share your experience or research the approaches that are unfamiliar but potentially useful to you.
- 4.6.** How does your program serve students with known disabilities?
- 4.7.** How do you accommodate students who may have an undocumented disability?

- 4.8.** What is your familiarity with Universal Design (UD) for learning? Give examples of UD features in your instruction and teaching materials? Explore new UD features you could add easily.
- 4.9.** What is your experience with students who had/may have had mental health issues that impacted their learning or your classroom? Were you able to address the students' needs proactively? What support and resources are available to you to work with students who show signs of trauma?
- 4.10.** What is your program's approach to enrolling youth who would be better served in high school? If your program enrolls school-age youth, what special supports can they receive? Are you aware of advocacy needs related to these youth? What is best for these students?
- 4.11.** What position and policies does your program have about serving students with undocumented and precarious immigration status? What are some issues to be mindful of regarding immigration status?
- 4.12.** How do you recognize in yourself and in your colleagues signs of burnout, compassion fatigue, and vicarious trauma? How can you take care of yourself and each other? How do you create a caring workplace? What's missing that could make a difference for retaining and supporting teachers?
- 4.13.** How can we reach beyond our traditional or usual services to collaboratively serve students with their challenges and to build stronger communities of practice? Think of services available in your area for newcomers, for job seekers, for migrant workers, for youth, for individuals living with disabilities, or for those with mental health issues.
- 4.14.** Of the many challenges that Chapter 4 addressed, which are the most important to you and how? Are you dealing with other challenges that you wish the chapter had included and you would like your group to research and discuss?