Preface

When I teach the course by the same name as this book, one of the first activities in which I engage my participants is to have them visualize the best or the worst presentation they have been a part of as an adult learner and then share the experience with a partner. Several participants then volunteer to share their stories with the entire class, enabling me to hear some amazing bad and good examples regarding teaching the adult learner. Here are just a few of the more memorable quotes.

WORST ■

My presenter showed us multiple PowerPoint slides and then read the PowerPoint to us as if we could not read ourselves!

I attended a conference on the brain at a prestigious university where they shared the research about the positive effects of movement on the brain and body. In three days, we never moved once!

My workshop leader read from his prepared notes in a monotone voice, never lifting his eyes from the paper or engaging us in any way.

My presenter became ill during the presentation and, instead of cancelling the workshop, she laid prone on the floor and scrolled through her PowerPoint slides with her clicker while simultaneously explaining each slide to us, from her position on the floor no less!

The teacher became upset because a student disagreed with a statement he made. He began to argue with the student while the remainder of the class just watched!

I am pretty sure there must be PowerPoint in hell!

Our principal asks for the faculty's input and then does precisely what she was going to do anyway. We never feel as if we have a voice.

My graduate professor sat in a chair and read from his notes what he wanted us to know. The pages of the notes were so yellow that I am sure he had been using these same notes for years.

My principal used a faculty meeting to berate the entire faculty because our test scores did not increase this year. We all felt so dejected that we didn't even want to teach the next day!

All we ever did while I was working on my master's degree was read books and write papers, read books and write papers, read books and write papers. I don't remember anything I learned that I could actually use to improve instruction for my second graders.
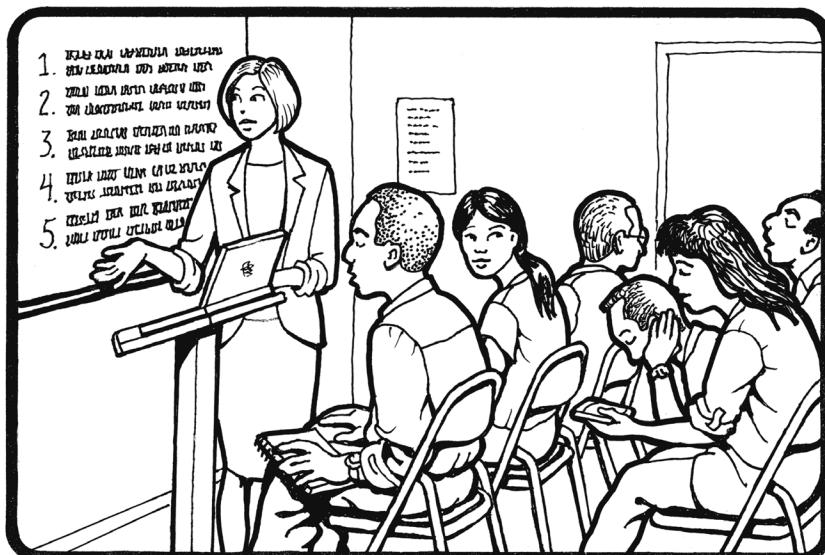
■ BEST

I have attended staff development inservices for all my professional life. I still remember the one time the presenter was at the door to greet me.

The presenter kept my attention the entire time with his personal stories. I still remember some of the emotional ones and the concepts he taught us as he told the stories.

My presenter was hilarious! He had a natural sense of humor that permeated the entire presentation and kept us laughing the entire time.

Following the presentation, I could immediately apply so much of what I learned during the presentation.

Our school is a professional learning community so that every opportunity to meet together as a faculty has an express purpose. It has brought the staff closer together.

My graduate professor assigned projects which I could immediately try out with my third grade class. I learned so much that year!

It was 7:30 p.m. and time for the workshop to end and, even though I worked all day, I was still energized. I remember thinking, Is it time to go already?

I learned as much from the participants in my class as we talked together as I did from my teacher.

My best learning as an adult actually came from my peer coach, who had the patience, wisdom, and knowledge to help me achieve the goals that we had set together.

There was something for everyone in the presentation regardless of how you learned best!
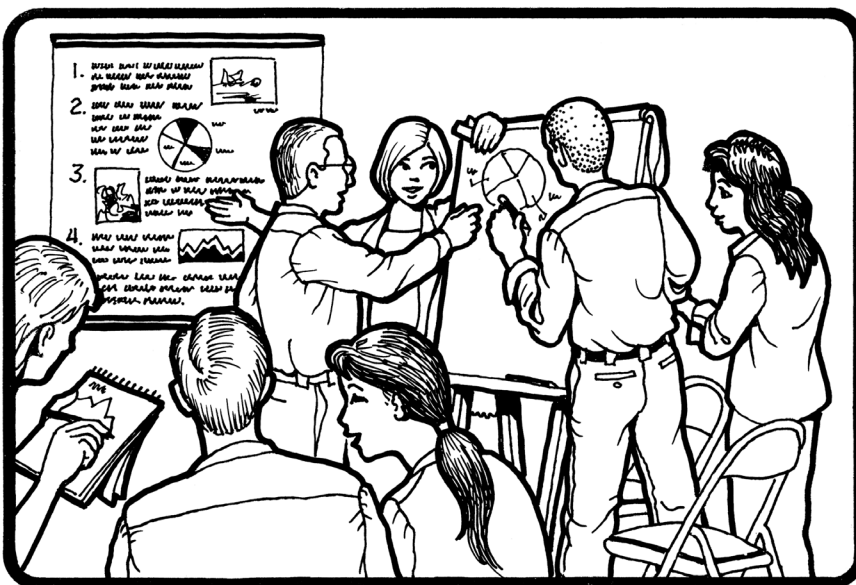
◼ 20 STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING THE ADULT BRAIN

In nearly all professions, adults are required to attend meetings, workshops, and classes during which pertinent content is imparted. Professional developers, consultants, administrators, college and university professors, and even keynote speakers who have the privilege of teaching adults are obligated to make their presentations memorable. Yet, all too often, they do not. How many times have you sat through a staff meeting, workshop, or even a semester-long course and left asking, *What did he say?* or *What did I actually learn?* How many times did you cram for an exam only to forget the information just as soon as the exam had ended?

Let me tell you a true story. Last summer, I was sitting in the lobby of the Hampton Inn in Dallas, Texas, eating breakfast when I overheard a conversation between two executives for a sales company sitting at a nearby table. One was going to present to the sales staff that day and was discussing his presentation with a coworker. He related that he had been told to limit the presentation so he had whittled it down to 100 PowerPoint slides. I bowed my head in prayer! Not for him—for his audience! Then he went on to say that each slide would take approximately 3 minutes of explanation. Can you imagine an audience listening to and looking at 300 minutes of PowerPoint? I call that *Death by PowerPoint!*

Close to 40 years in this profession have taught me that there are instructional strategies that can teach anybody anything because, by their very nature, these strategies take advantage of ways in which the brain learns best. Although these strategies are used most often in kindergarten or with primary grade students, with minor modifications, they work similarly for adult brains as well. After all, you do remember the book *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*! Speakers and teachers who use these strategies are remembered because they have participants who are capable of understanding and retaining large amounts of information. On a more personal note, for many years I have received extremely positive evaluations of my presentations to adult audiences. I now realize that those evaluations are due in large part to the consistent use of the 20 brain-compatible strategies outlined in this book. You will find them applicable not only to what happens during the presentation of new information to adult audiences but also during other professional learning activities that are so crucial for long-term retention and behavior change.

WHY THESE STRATEGIES?   ■

Theories abound from researchers such as Howard Gardner (1983), Robert Sternberg (1997), Sternberg and Grigorenko, (2000), and Bernice McCarthy (1990) related to the variety of ways that individuals acquire and retain content. An exciting sign of our time is the fact that brain research now provides neurological rationales as to why some strategies simply work best, not only for student brains but for adult brains as well. Consultants like Eric Jensen (2008, 2009a, 2009b), David Sousa (2006), and Patricia Wolfe (2001) continue to make practical application for educators from this important research. Yet the very strategies that are recommended for teachers to use in instructing students are seldom modeled during presentations to adult audiences. For this reason, many teachers abhor staff development workshops and courses and actually bring other things to do while their boring presenter is teaching.

It doesn't have to be that way. Nor should it! While I was teaching in Australia, a chemistry teacher walked up to me at the first break and pulled a complicated crossword puzzle from his pocket. He told me that he had actually planned to complete the puzzle discretely during the course of my workshop. He admitted that he had not taken the crossword from his pocket until that moment since I had kept him so engaged throughout the entire morning. He thanked me for that. I thank the 20 strategies!

After perusing both learning style and brain research, I have identified 20 strategies that take advantage of the ways all of our brains learn best—adults as well as young people. Because these strategies support both learning style theory and brain research, they enable all teachers to plan and deliver powerful, memorable presentations that have the potential to change adults' minds in light of new information. (See Figure Intro 1 for a comparison of these 20 strategies to learning theories, such as the multiple intelligences and visual, auditory, tactile, and kinesthetic modalities.)

Those who facilitate professional learning have come to believe that no matter how meaningful the initial learning, it is what happens within the context of the job that matters most. Hord (2009), Joyce and Calhoun (2010), and Knight (2009) tell us that it is the job-embedded practice and the follow-up and support that most often lead to sustained improvements in professional practice for the majority of educators Therefore, this book also highlights professional learning activities such as peer coaching, action research, project-based instruction, and teacher-led study groups,

all embedded under the umbrella of professional learning communities. This turns fragmented professional learning into meaningful opportunities for growth, resulting in changes in practice and, ultimately, increased student achievement.

The book you are about to read attempts to accomplish the following six objectives:

- Offer an overview of some of the ways adult learners differ from their younger counterparts
- Identify and describe each of the 20 brain-compatible strategies as they relate to adult learning theory
- Provide a theoretical framework as to why these strategies appear to take advantage of the way adult brains acquire and retain information best
- Supply more than 150 professional learning activities during which these instructional strategies can be used to ensure that adults are acquiring the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for improving their practice
- Equip the reader with opportunities to reflect on and apply these strategies either during or following a meeting, workshop, course, or any other professional learning activity
- Delineate several sample lesson plans that can serve as models for the reader to develop exemplary faculty meetings, workshops, or courses with appropriate follow-up

The activities in this book are merely a sampling of what is possible when professional developers, administrators, college professors, or anyone who teaches adults develops and delivers lessons that incorporate brain-compatible strategies. Once you begin to figure out which strategy is most appropriate for accomplishing a faculty meeting or course objectives, you will be capable of creating lessons easily. This is why the last section in each chapter asks you to reflect on the application of the strategy for your own specific meeting, workshop, or follow-up.

Wouldn't it make sense for those who facilitate professional learning for adults to model the same strategies and practices during the learning opportunity that they would expect their participants to use with their own students? It has been said, *If you are not modeling what you are teaching, then you are teaching something else!* In fact, I am honored to say that a professional learning department in Ontario, California, has turned my last name into a verb. Prior to delivering a presentation, they asked one another the following question, *Have you Tated your presentation?* Another way to ask the same question: *Have you incorporated the 20 strategies into your presentation?*

You will begin to realize that you are doing something right when what has happened to me happens to you. Picture this: It is eight o'clock at night, and you tell your participants that class is over. The following question resounds: *Do we really have to go home?* However, you will really know that your professional learning experience has made a lasting difference when teachers tell you of their improved practice and the increases in their students' achievement. After all, isn't that what matters most?

Comparison of Professional Learning Strategies to Learning Theory		
Professional Learning Strategies	*Multiple Intelligences*	*Learning Modality*
Brainstorming and discussion	Verbal-linguistic	Auditory
Drawing and artwork	Spatial	Kinesthetic/tactile
Field trips	Naturalist	Kinesthetic/tactile
Games	Interpersonal	Kinesthetic/tactile
Graphic organizers, semantic maps, and word webs	Logical-mathematical/spatial	Visual/tactile
Humor and celebration	Verbal-linguistic	Auditory
Manipulatives and models	Logical-mathematical	Tactile
Metaphors, analogies, and similes	Spatial	Visual/auditory
Mnemonic devices	Musical-rhythmic	Visual/auditory
Movement	Bodily-kinesthetic	Kinesthetic
Music, rhythm, rhyme, and rap	Musical-rhythmic	Auditory
Project-based and problem-based instruction	Logical-mathematical	Visual/tactile
Reciprocal teaching, cooperative learning, and peer coaching	Verbal-linguistic	Auditory
Role plays, drama, pantomimes, and charades	Bodily-kinesthetic	Kinesthetic
Storytelling	Verbal-linguistic	Auditory
Technology	Spatial	Visual/tactile
Visualization and guided imagery	Spatial	Visual
Visuals	Spatial	Visual
Work study, action research, and professional learning communities	Interpersonal	Kinesthetic
Writing and reflection	Interpersonal	Visual/tactile

Figure Intro 1