



## TEACHING TIDBITS

# All About Andragogy

Welcome back to 185 West Broadway! When we weren't working the early bird shift at the IELT Sports Bar and Grill™, we spent the summer in a meditative trance, contemplating the ways that adults learn differently than children, and how those differences might inform the way we teach.

## Pedagogy vs. Andragogy

The word pedagogy comes from the Greek words *paid* (meaning “child”) and *agogus* (which means “leader of.”) Taken literally, pedagogy means the “art and science of teaching children.” As educational theorist [Malcolm Knowles](#) described it, traditional pedagogy is based on certain assumptions about the immaturity and limited life experiences of child learners. Pedagogy often results in teacher-directed education, where learners only need to learn content in order to pass the course, not how it will apply to their lives. The child learner is seen as dependent on the teacher for all knowledge acquisition, the learner's own experiences are of little value, and the student is motivated primarily by external motivators, like grades.

By contrast, the [andragogical model](#) (from the Greek for “man”) begins with the observation that adults learners are different from children. These differences manifest in several ways, including:

- **Relevance and Goal-Orientation.** Adults are more likely to want to know *why* they need to learn something, and expect that learning will help them perform specific tasks or solve particular problems.
- **Autonomous and Self-Directed.** Unlike children, adults see themselves as independent thinkers who are responsible for their own decisions.
- **Role of Experience.** Adults accumulate a greater body of experience than children, and expect to use that experience as a resource.
- **Motivation.** For adult learners, [intrinsic motivators](#) (like an enhanced sense of purpose, greater self-esteem, and mastery) are often more effective than extrinsic motivators (like grades, class rank, and other rewards.)

## Andragogy in the Law School Classroom

If these assumptions about adult learners are correct, there are obvious implications for how we approach law teaching. The shift towards andragogy might involve:

- A greater classroom focus on active learning, experiential simulations, and problem-solving;
- Teacher-student interactions based on mutual inquiry and [authentic questions](#), where all learning does not have to come directly from the teacher;
- Generating opportunities for students to operate as autonomous and self-directed learners;
- Connecting knowledge to a student's pre-existing base of experience;
- Clear explanations of how knowledge will help students achieve specific goals, and opportunities to put knowledge into practice to perform specific tasks;
- Creating a psychological climate where students feel that their experience and knowledge is respected; and
- Motivating students through intrinsic rather than extrinsic incentives.

[Clinicians](#) have already made heavy use of andragogical theory, and we're eager to explore how these ideas might influence the traditional doctrinal law school classroom. For more information on andragogy, click [here](#) and [here](#).

Best wishes for a semester of happy and joyful teaching!

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