**PLAs, Trend in Adult Learning Assessment**

Prior Learning Assessment has been around for a long time. When I was in college, it was possible for learners to take a written CLEP test that measured one’s life experience in a set subject and determined by an objective score if one was able to “CLEP out” or skip the course having acquired proficiency through either work experience or prior non-college learning. However, Prior Learning Assessment now involves other forms of assessment in addition to standardized tests. Learners are entering college with years of work and life experience that may not always be tested satisfactorily through an objective test. Prior Learning Assessment may take the form of narrative essays, digital media presentations, videos of a presentation or performance, or an e-portfolio. Whatever the form of the assessment, the purpose is to demonstrate for faculty evaluators that a learner has met course objectives and mastered required knowledge or skills.

-What is Prior Learning Assessment (PLA)?—For an introduction to PLA, view this [YouTube video with Pam Tate of CAEL.](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q0cNK_mlA80)

-Why is PLA is of interest to corporations and politicians? Statistics show that students with PLA complete degrees in less time which saves money. Success rates are also higher. For more statistics supported PLA, see [“The Prior Edge”](http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2010/03/01/prior) from *Inside Higher Ed.*

-What is the role of Instructional Designer in PLA? Instructional Designers may be involved in designing assessments or e-portfolio templates.

For an example of PLA Narrative Guidelines and elements that a portfolio may include see, Thomas Edison State College’s [PLA Self-Assessment Guide](http://www.tesc.edu/4848.php).

For a list of examples different forms of PLA including portfolios, exams, etc. see [PLA Options](http://www.cael.org/pla.htm), at the CAEL home page. CAEL or The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning is a nonprofit organization that “which creates and manages effective learning strategies for working adults through partnerships with [employers](http://www.cael.org/business_industry.htm), [higher education](http://www.cael.org/colleges_universities.htm), [the public sector](http://www.cael.org/public_sector.htm), and [labor](http://www.cael.org/labor.htm).”

Creating E-portfolios? Consider the following:

[Using Google Docs: The Easiest E-Portfolio Ever](http://wiki.gpaea.k12.ia.us/groups/cornerstone/wiki/46449/Using_Google_Docs__The_Easiest_ePortfolio_Ever.html)

[Foliospaces](http://www.foliospaces.com/)

[Weebly](http://www.weebly.com/)

Julie Kling, Intern