

## **Are You Preparing To Return To School?**

This is an important decision that will affect your future! Before registering for a school, it is important to make sure that you are selecting a school that meets your needs.

Here are some suggestions for determining if a school is the “right fit” for you.

### **Important Questions to Ask Before Selecting a School**

*The School's Philosophy* - When considering an adult education school, ask about the school's statement of purpose and philosophy to determine if the school fits your needs.

*The Faculty and Administration* - Certification of school teachers and administrators is not required. However, it is important to know the quality of the teachers in the school. Some questions that may help you determine the quality of teachers in the school are:

- Do all teachers hold four-year college or university degrees?
- Does the school provide continuing education programs for its teachers?
- How long has the principal or school head been at the school and what is his or her administrative qualification and background?

*The Academic Program* – It is important that the instruction you receive is valued by post-secondary institutions, training schools or employers. Some questions that can help you determine the value of the instruction are:

- What is the school's evidence of successful placement of graduates in employment? How many students have been placed and what are the names of some employers?
- What is the school's evidence of successful placement of graduates in post-secondary schools? How many students have entered post-secondary institutions or training schools and what are the names of these schools?
- What curriculum is being used by the school? It is best to review the curriculum yourself to determine if it fits your needs.

*Diplomas and Transcripts* - By what authority does the school issue report cards, diplomas and transcripts? It is always wise to check with post-secondary institutions, training schools or prospective employers to determine whether or not they accept diplomas and transcripts from any school before registering with that school.

*Accreditations and Affiliations* - Most postsecondary training programs, colleges and prospective employers require that the applicant's high school diploma and transcript is from an accredited school. Usually, the accreditation process is conducted through a private education agency or association that has evaluated the program and verified that it meets certain requirements.

Accreditation can be an important clue to a school's ability to provide appropriate training and education.

Schools do not have to be accredited. However, if a school is accredited by a regionally or nationally recognized accrediting association, it is evidence that a school has been evaluated as meeting the association's standards. Examples of a regional accreditation agency in the Mid-Atlantic States, including Delaware, are the Middle States Commission on Secondary Schools and the Middle States Commission of Higher Education.

You may inquire of the school if it is regionally or nationally accredited? If so, what is the name of the accreditation association? Similar to evaluating the school's curriculum, it is best to review the mission and extent of the accreditation association yourself before making any final decisions.

*Financial Policies and Practices* – Adult Education schools have specific policies and practices governing financial matters. Some questions you may want to ask are:

- What are all the fees charged by the school?
- What is the history and financial stability of the school?
- What are the policies and practices concerning payment of fees?
- What is the refund policy?

*Governance* – Adult Education schools are governed in a variety of ways: some by elected school boards, some by specific churches or religious bodies, and some by boards of trustees. Those in governance determine how the school operates and what is taught. You might ask what form of governance is used by the school you are considering.

### **Report a Problem**

If you're not satisfied with the quality of the instruction you receive, talk to faculty members or the school administration. If your dissatisfaction relates to your contract with the school, try to resolve your dispute with the school. If that doesn't work, you can file a complaint with the:

- school's accrediting organization or
- Department of Justice Fraud and Consumer Protection Unit at 302-577-8600

### **You and Your Education**

To be successful in school, it takes dedication, time and effort. You maximize your success rate by making sure that the school you choose will help you attain the goals you desire. It is time well spent to research the school you want to attend before you register.