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Technology and Adult Learning

Mentimeter for Engagement and Assessment

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Abstract

Mentimeter is a browser-based interactive presentation platform that turns passive slides into live polls, word clouds, quizzes, and open-ended prompts, all accessible from any device a learner already owns. This column examines Mentimeter through the lens of adult learning: how anonymous participation lowers affective barriers for learners returning to education after a long absence, how real-time response data supports responsive teaching, and how the platform's brevity fits the fragmented schedules adults bring to class. It offers concrete classroom applications across ESOL, ABE, IET, and professional development contexts and closes with an honest accounting of the platform's infrastructure, training, workload, and cost constraints. Where research on Mentimeter itself exists (Mayhew et al., 2020; Pichardo et al., 2021), this column draws on it directly rather than inferring the platform's value from general principle.

Introduction

Marisol has been in the same workplace English class for six weeks. She has never once raised her hand.

It is not that she has nothing to say. It is that the calculation runs the same way every time: to answer is to risk being the person who answered wrong, in front of eighteen adults she will see next Tuesday again, in a language she is still building. She was a licensed pharmacist in her first country. She is not willing to be the one who does not know. So, she watches the same two classmates volunteer, and she keeps her hand in her lap, and the class moves on without her.

Then, one Tuesday, the instructor asks the class to take out their phones. The question on the screen is one Marisol has an answer to: *How confident do you feel writing an email to your supervisor?* She taps "1–not confident." No name is attachedto it. No one turns to look.

What appears on the screen is not her answer. It is everyone's. Eleven of eighteen have tapped the same thing she did.

For six weeks, Marisol had been carrying something she believed was hers alone. In four seconds, she learned it was not, and so did the ten other people carrying it. For the first time, the instructor put away the lesson she had planned and taught email openings instead.

That is the gap this column is about: the distance between what adult learners know and what a classroom lets them say. Adult education has always been full of learners who are competent, deliberate, and silent, and who are silent precisely because they are competent and deliberate, because the cost of being visibly wrong is one that adults have learned to calculate carefully. What follows is an examination of Mentimeter, a tool that can shorten that distance, and an honest accounting of where it falls short.

What is Mentimeter?

Mentimeter is a web-based interactive presentation platform built on a Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) model. Learners join a session from a phone, tablet, or laptop by entering a code at menti.com; no app installation, account creation, or specialized hardware is required. The presenter's screen updates in real time as responses arrive.

Unlike clicker systems or card-based response tools, which are typically limited to multiple-choice input, Mentimeter supports a range of response types (open text, ranking, scales, image selection, word clouds) that

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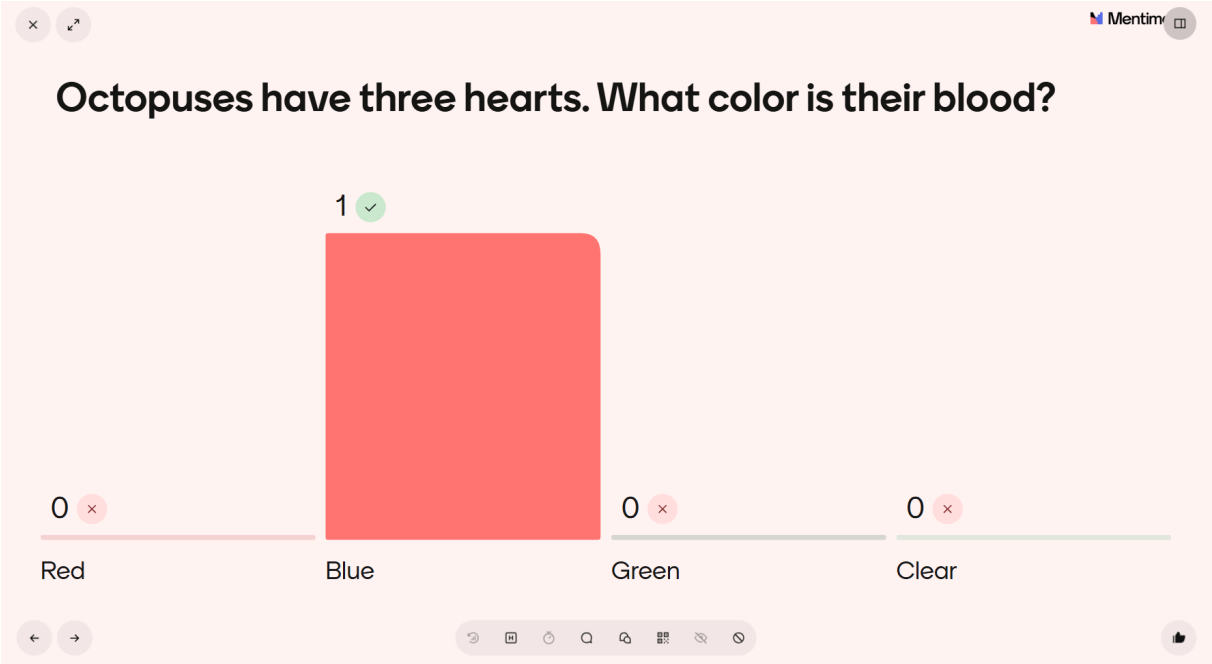
allow learners to generate content rather than simply select from it. The platform has been reviewed in the educational technology literature since its early adoption in higher education, where it was noted for its low barrier to entry and its wider range of question formats relative to earlier student response systems (Rudolph, 2018). For adult educators, the practical value is straightforward: the instructor can see, in seconds, what an entire room is thinking, including the learners who would never volunteer that information out loud.

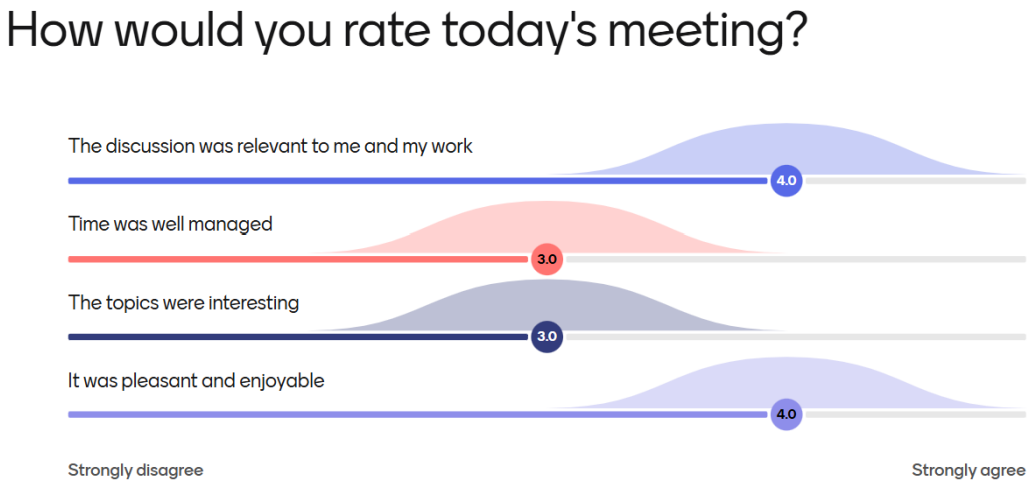
Features

Mentimeter offers a diverse suite of question formats, administrative tools, and presentation features to accommodate various learning objectives. The platform offers the following core features:

- **Live Polls and Interactive Quizzes:** Multiple-choice, scale, and quiz slides display aggregate results instantly (Figure 1), giving instructors immediate evidence of comprehension and a basis for adjusting instruction mid-lesson.

FIGURE 1: Multiple-Choice and Scale Polling





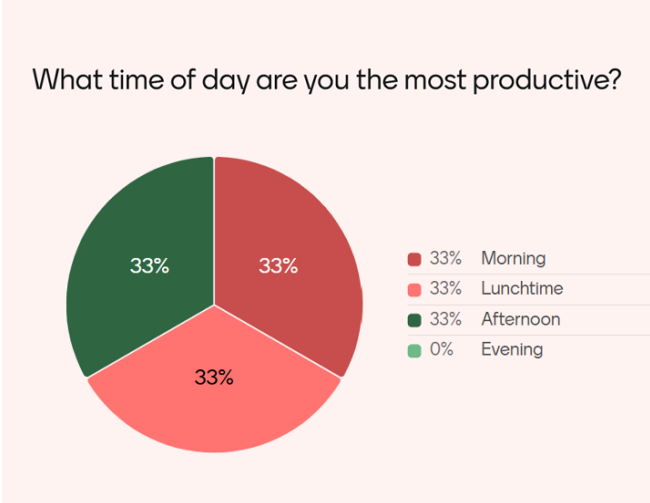
- **Word Clouds and Open-Ended Responses:** Learners submit words or short phrases that populate a shared visual (Figure 2), with frequently submitted terms rendered larger. This surfaces the group's collective thinking rather than a single learner's answer.

FIGURE 2: Word Cloud Example



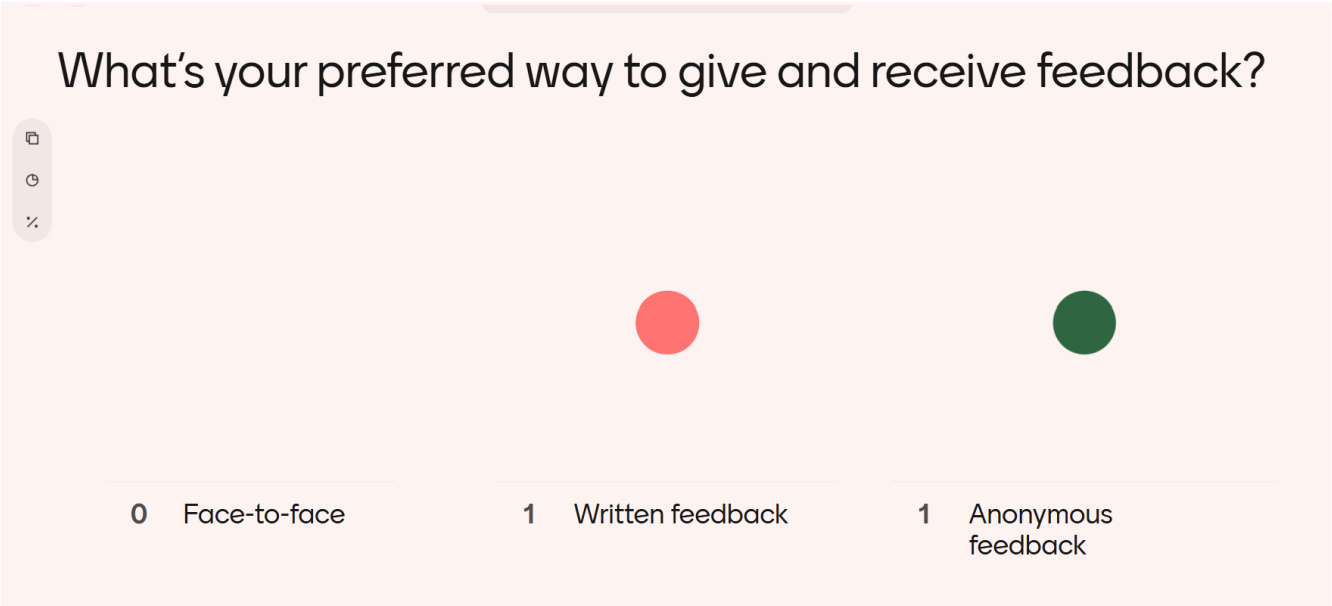
- **Real-Time Feedback and Data Visualization:** Responses aggregate as they arrive (Figure 3), letting learners see how their thinking compares to the group's and letting instructors see where the group diverges from the intended understanding.

FIGURE 3: Data Visualization



- **Anonymous Participation:** Responses are not attributed to individual learners by default (Figure 4). This is Mentimeter's most consequential feature for adult education and the one this column returns to. When students in one large study were asked to rank why Mentimeter mattered, their two highest-ranked reasons were that it allowed shy participants to take part and that it allowed everyone to take part (Pichardo et al., 2021), ahead of engagement, attention, and enjoyment.

FIGURE 4: Anonymous Responses



- **Multi-Modal Delivery Support:** Sessions function across in-person, synchronous online, hybrid, and asynchronous formats, which matters for programs running cohorts across several modalities at once.
- **Exportable Results:** Session data can be downloaded for post-session analysis on paid plans, supporting program-level evaluation and in-the-moment instruction.

Why Mentimeter Fits Adult Learners

Adult educators face constraints that differ from those in K-12 or traditional undergraduate settings. Their learners are balancing work, caregiving, and often precarious schedules. Engagement is not a nice-to-have; it is a condition of persistence.

Engagement is Tied to Persistence, Not Just Enjoyment.

Student engagement increases satisfaction, enhances motivation, reduces feelings of isolation, and improves performance in online courses (Martin & Bolliger, 2018). Isolation and infrastructure access are recurring concerns for adult learners in online and distance programs, alongside a strong preference for time efficiency and device flexibility (Mansoor et al., 2024). Mentimeter addresses these by creating interactive moments without requiring specialized hardware, extended setup, or a separate login.

Assessment for Learning, Not Assessment of Learning

Adult educators should draw on a wide range of pre- and post-assessment tools matched to learners' individual differences, with emphasis on "assessment for learning" and learning-oriented assessment that supports lifelong learning rather than assessment that simply ranks (Bin Mubayrik, 2020). Reflection and immediate feedback are central to this approach. Mentimeter operationalizes this: the instructor sees the misconception before the class period ends.

Anonymity Supports Autonomy

Strategies that strengthen engagement and learner autonomy in blended adult learning emphasize self-directed participation and flexible environments that accommodate learners juggling academic, professional, and personal demands (Galani, 2025). Anonymous response is the mechanism.

This is not merely plausible; it is the finding that comes through most consistently in the research on Mentimeter specifically. In a mixed-methods study of 400 students and 12 lecturers across several Spanish institutions, both groups independently ranked the participation of learners who do not normally speak as the single most valuable feature of the platform (Pichardo et al., 2021). Students described the effect in terms that will be familiar to any adult educator: anonymity removed the pressure of being wrong in front of the group and made it possible to raise a question that would otherwise expose a gap in understanding. Instructors reported the corollary. When learners stopped fearing the wrong answer, the instructor could finally see what learners actually knew.

That mechanism is precisely what adult education needs. A learner who is embarrassed to admit they do not understand percentages will tell a poll what they will not tell a room, and that willingness is what makes the data usable.

Real-Time Feedback Changes the Instruction

In the same study, immediate feedback was the feature instructors valued most for their own practice: it allowed them to monitor learners' progress and adjust content and pace within the session rather than after it (Pichardo et al., 2021). One instructor's summary is worth the whole finding: in a minute, you can have the opinion of sixty people. For adult educators working in compressed timeframes with learners who cannot easily attend a make-up session, the ability to reroute a lesson while it is still happening is not a convenience. It is the difference between a wasted hour and a useful one.

Real-Life Applications of Mentimeter

Educators can integrate Mentimeter into diverse instructional contexts. The following practical examples demonstrate how teachers can embed the platform into specific learning activities across adult education settings.

Interactive Knowledge Checks

- **Pre-Class Poll to Activate Prior Knowledge:** An adult educator teaching financial literacy opens with a multiple-choice poll: "Before saving

money, which should you do first?" (a) Open a savings account, (b) Create a budget, (c) Invest in stocks, (d) Pay down debt." The results appear instantly. Sixty percent select "Invest in stocks." The instructor pauses the planned lecture and spends five minutes on why budgeting comes first. Without the poll, that misconception goes undetected until the unit test.

- **Mid-Lesson Comprehension Check:** A workplace compliance trainer delivering harassment prevention training runs a poll every ten to fifteen minutes: "According to the company policy we just reviewed, what should you do if you witness inappropriate conduct?" The word cloud feature is used to have participants type specific examples, ensuring the group can articulate the policy in their own words before moving forward.

Formative Assessment with Immediate Feedback

- **Character Analysis in Literature:** A reading and writing instructor asks learners to type adjectives describing a novel's protagonist. As words arrive ("brave," "thoughtful," "impulsive"), the cloud grows on the screen, with the most common terms largest. The instructor then works backward: "We chose 'brave' and 'determined' most often. Let's find the passage where those showed up." Formative assessment becomes collective and visible rather than individual and evaluative.
- **Ranking for Priority-Setting:** A professional development facilitator teaching microlearning design asks educators to rank four elements from most to least important when building a five-minute module: clear learning objective, engaging visuals, summary and reflection, interactive check-in. The spread in responses becomes the discussion.

Anonymous Participation to Lower Barriers

- **Workplace Literacy Assessment:** An ESOL instructor teaching workplace English uses an anonymous scale poll: "How confident are you in writing a professional email? (1) Not confident, (2) Somewhat confident, (3) Very confident." Results inform whether the group needs more modeling, practice, or can move to independent writing tasks.
- **Sensitive Topics in Wellness Training:** A workplace mental health trainer asks: "Have you ever struggled to balance work and personal responsibilities?" and "Do you know how to access your school's mental health resources?" Anonymity produces honest answers that a show of hands would not. The resulting data ("73% report work-life balance challenges") becomes the basis for normalizing the struggle and introducing resources.

Open-Ended Responses and Brainstorming

- **Learner-Driven Needs Assessment:** A math instructor designing a new unit asks, "What do you want to focus on this session?" Learners type "fractions," "percentages," "overcoming math anxiety." The curriculum follows the learners rather than the instructor's assumptions about them.
- **Vocabulary Building in Language Learning:** An ESOL instructor teaching health vocabulary prompts, "Type one health challenge you've faced this week." Learners submit responses such as "reading prescriptions," "talk to doctor," and "not losing weight." The word cloud becomes the vocabulary focus for that day's lesson, grounding instruction in learners' authentic needs.

Exit Tickets

- **Reflection and Retention:** An ABE reading and writing instructor closes each class with, "What is one thing you are taking away today?" The responses give the instructor a read on what actually landed across the group and surface misconceptions worth revisiting at the next session's opening.
- **Plenary Assessment:** A business IET instructor closes a 2-hour class session by asking: "In three words or fewer, describe the main idea of a growth mindset." The word cloud ("keep learning," "open-minded," "challenge") confirms that the message landed or reveals that it did not.

How to Get Started

1. Create a free account at mentimeter.com
2. Build a presentation and add a question slide. Start with a single multiple-choice or word cloud slide; resist the urge to gamify everything at once.

3. Click "Present." Learners go to menti.com and enter the six-digit code on your screen.
4. Observe the responses as they populate, and then, importantly, take action based on them. A poll that does not influence what happens next is merely decoration.

Accessibility and Privacy Considerations

Mentimeter's voting interface is keyboard-navigable, but presenters carry real responsibility, and the platform has documented gaps. In the Pichardo et al. (2021) study, visually impaired students could not read the questions on their devices or view live results, and instructors had to send questions in advance and narrate the onscreen results aloud. The researchers also noted that the platform did not permit questions to be voiced, fonts to be changed, or text size to be adjusted, limitations they identified as constraining its inclusive potential.

Verify the current state of these features before adopting Mentimeter program-wide; the platform has changed since 2021. Keep text large and high-contrast, read every poll question aloud rather than assuming learners can see the projected screen, and offer a paper or verbal alternative for any learner without a working device or sufficient data. For ESOL learners at NRS levels 1-3, project the question in simplified language alongside the original and allow extra response time for open-ended prompts, which are far more demanding than multiple-choice for emergent writers.

On privacy: Mentimeter is a Swedish company operating under GDPR, and anonymous responses are not tied to learner identity. Even so, programs should avoid prompts that could surface personally identifying or protected information (immigration status, health conditions, disability), since aggregate visibility does not equal confidentiality in a small class where the group can often infer who wrote what. Anonymity is a design feature, not a guarantee.

Challenges of Using Mentimeter

Despite its potential, implementing Mentimeter presents several practical and andragogical obstacles that educators must anticipate and address.

- **Technical and Infrastructure Barriers:** Mentimeter requires a stable internet connection. Network disruption can derail a lesson, and this falls hardest on learners in rural areas, on limited data plans, or in workplaces with restrictive networks. *Solution:* Conduct a technical audit before program-wide adoption to establish bandwidth and device coverage across the learner population. Keep a low-tech fallback ready for every Mentimeter activity (index cards, a show of hands, a whiteboard tally). Designate a technical point person who can troubleshoot in the moment rather than leaving the instructor to debug alone in front of a class.
- **Insufficient Training in Question Design:** The tool is easy, but the pedagogy is not. Writing a poll question that surfaces a genuine misconception, rather than one that simply confirms learners were listening, is a skill. Without support, questions tend to be more superficial. *Solution:* The evidence points to a step most instructors skip. Learners should be told explicitly why Mentimeter is being used, what it is meant to accomplish, and what they stand to gain; the tool does not improve learning on its own, absent that pedagogical framework (Mayhew et al., 2020). Beyond that, professional development must address essential questions, not just button-clicking. Bloom's Taxonomy is a useful scaffold for moving beyond recall, and educators need practice interpreting and acting on response data. A technology-focused professional learning community, where instructors share Mentis that worked and Mentis that flopped, does more than a one-off training session.
- **Time and Workload:** Building interactive slides from scratch is time-consuming. Instructors report that transferring full course content into Mentimeter demands an unsustainable level of effort, and several in one study abandoned the attempt (Pichardo et al., 2021). Staff in a separate evaluation likewise identified preparation time as a principal cost of adoption (Mayhew et al., 2020). *Solution:* Do not try to rebuild your course in Mentimeter. Use it in short bursts, a poll at the opening and a word cloud at the close, alongside your existing slides. Programs should supply ready-to-use templates aligned to common objectives so instructors can adapt rather

than build, and should allocate preparation time within scheduled work hours instead of treating it as an unpaid add-on.

- **Cost:** Cost is the most frequently cited barrier to institutional adoption, and it has been since the earliest reviews of the platform (Rudolph, 2018; Pichardo et al., 2021). The free plan caps you at 50 participants per month, with the counter resetting on your signup anniversary date, not the first of the month. For a single instructor teaching one class of twenty, this is workable. For a program adopting Mentimeter across multiple instructors and sections, it is not. Paid plans (Basic and Pro) remove the participant cap and add slide import, results export, and workspace collaboration. Mentimeter restructured its plans in September 2025, so verify current features and pricing at mentimeter.com/plans before budgeting.

Conclusion

Mentimeter is not a solution to disengagement; it is an instrument for detecting it. The platform's contribution to adult education lies not in the word cloud or the live bar chat, but in the anonymity beneath them, which offers learners a way to disclose what they do not yet understand without incurring a social cost. This is the feature students and instructors alike ranked highest when asked what Mentimeter was actually for (Pichardo et al., 2021).

Two caveats warrant acknowledgement. The research based on Mentimeter is concentrated in higher education rather than adult basic education, and its application to ABE, ESOL, and ASE populations remains an extension of the existing evidence rather than a direct finding of it. Further, the available studies are largely perception studies: they establish that learners report greater engagement and that instructors report better insight into learner understanding, not that measurable outcomes improve. Whether these effects persist once the novelty of the tool subsides is an open question the researchers themselves raise (Pichardo et al., 2021).

Within those limits, the case for adoption is a practical one. Data from a poll is useful only insofar as it changes instruction. A poll that does not alter the next ten minutes of a lesson is a novelty; a poll that reveals eleven of eighteen learners cannot draft a workplace email and redirects the session accordingly is assessment for learning in its most immediate form. The underlying principle is well established (Bin Mubayrik, 2020); Mentimeter shortens the distance between principle and practice. Deployed with that intention, it serves what adult learners bring to the classroom: their autonomy, their accumulated experience, and their claim to be understood before they are taught.

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