Merriam & Caffarell (1999) have observed that adults “typically add the role of learner to other full-time roles and responsibilities. The learning that adults do arises from the context of their lives, which is intimately tied to the socio-cultural setting in which they live” (p. 393). In this study, we have seen that between the years of 1831 to 1837, a group of people united by a common belief system gathered from various locales to the frontier setting of Kirtland, Ohio. They shared a common ideology - a religious system they believed to be the restored Church of Jesus Christ. They felt the necessity of sharing with the world the wonderful news of this restoration - that God lives and is personally involved in the lives of humanity. They believed that God had a plan for man that if lived would bring them happiness. Accordingly, many of the new faith went on proselyting missions to share the gospel. But in propagating the new faith, they often proselyted people whose academic attainments exceeded their own (Gentry, 1978). The members of this new church were frontier people. They had received little if any secular education. Further, their understanding of the doctrines of the new church was limited. Consequently, they were not fully equipped to carry the message of their beliefs to the world. Therefore, it was necessary that though they were farmers, merchants, wheelwrights, carpenters, and coopers, and though they had familial responsibilities, these converts to a new faith had to take upon themselves the role of becoming adult learners in order to enable them to meet the task of spreading the message of the restored Church.
The history reported in the preceding chapters reveals that in order to meet the needs of these adults learners, Joseph Smith, the founder of the new church, aided by other Church leaders, established a number of adult education schools beginning in the winter of 1833. Though short lived, these schools proved to be very successful.

Those familiar with current successful adult-centered institutions will notice several similarities between the practices employed in the Kirtland schools and present day adult educational programs. Recall in Chapter One of this study that current practitioners (Flint, 1999; Mancuso et al., 1999; Mancuso, 2001) of adult education have, by examining successful programs, synthesized the “best practices” of these programs. What follows is a comparison of the list of “best practices” delineated in Chapter One with those practiced in Kirtland.

In making this comparison, it should be kept in mind that the history produced in the preceding chapters was literally pieced together from a variety of primary sources, none of which was intended to report the complete history of adult education in Kirtland between 1833-37. Therefore, the history is incomplete with large gaps in some places. Therefore as the following comparisons are made, it likewise will be incomplete with gaps. Nonetheless, from what is known, the similarity between present day “best practices” and those employed in an adult educational institution in early America are striking.

**A Comparison to Current “Best Practices”**

1. **Those operating these programs have the adult learner foremost in their minds.**

   Mancuso, et al. (1999) states, “The Adult Learning Focused Institution thinks, breathes, and operates with adult learners in mind” (p. 43). Evidence of this focus existing in the
Church leaders who organized adult-centered programs in Kirtland can be seen in the fact that adult education was one of the first programs instituted in the LDS church. The Church was organized in April 1830 in western New York state. Immediately, persecution plagued the young Church forcing it to leave New York and resettle in Ohio during the winter and spring of 1831. A year and a half later, adult education was organized as the needs of the adult members of the Church became apparent. Joseph Smith and the other Church leaders immediate response to the needs of the adults illustrates the concern and care they had for the adult members of the Church.

Joseph Smith, himself, exemplified the consummate adult educator who was devoted to his adult learners. Though he was the prophet and head of the Church, though he claimed having a vision of God the Father and Jesus Christ, and other angels, and though he, himself, was a remarkable teacher, it does not appear that he felt he was the sole source of knowledge. Nor does it appear that he felt the schools centered around him. For him, knowledge was best gained from the best source. He employed whatever means it took to get that source for the schools. For example, he and the committee over the Hebrew School, spent a great deal of effort to find the best teacher they could for the school. But when the teacher they had hired proved to be undependable, the Hebrew School decided to begin their studies anyway, asking Joseph Smith to become an interim teacher. (He was able to do so because, as a consummate adult learner, he had already been studying Hebrew in preparation for the school.) But when the School hired Joshua Seixas, a very capable Hebraist, Joseph Smith the teacher was more than willing to become Joseph Smith the student. Further, Joseph Smith actively recruited other adults to the Hebrew School after the arrival of Professor Seixas.

The concern that he and other Church leaders had for adult education is also seen in the
continued expansion of adult education in Kirtland. They searched for the best teachers who could provide the kind of education needed. They put forth great efforts in building suitable places that were large enough to accommodate any who wished to participate. They expanded the curriculum to meet the various needs of the adults. Remedial courses were offered for those who were in need of fundamental education while at the same time offering more progressive courses for others. In these ways, it is clear that the Church leaders had the adult learners foremost in their minds.

2. **These programs have a clearly defined mission.**

Mancuso (2001) states that successful adult educational programs “have clearly articulated missions that permeate the institution and inspire and direct practice” (p. 170). In the revelation calling for the organization of adult education in Kirtland, the mission statement was clearly stated. It consists of three statements. The verses dictating the mission statement are reproduced below divided into the three statements.

(A) And I give unto you a commandment that you shall teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom.

(B) Teach ye diligently and my grace shall attend you, that you may be instructed more perfectly in theory, in principle, in doctrine, in the law of the gospel, in all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God, that are expedient for you to understand; Of things both in heaven and in the earth, and under the earth; things which have been, things which are, things which must shortly come to pass; things which are at home, things which are abroad; the wars and the perplexities of the nations, and the judgments which are on the land; and a knowledge also of countries and of kingdoms --

(C) That ye may be prepared in all things when I shall send you again to magnify the calling whereunto I have called you, and the mission with which I have commissioned you. (D&C 88:77-80)

This mission statement dictated the procedures and practices of the Kirtland schools.
Consider the following. The first statement directed the practice of teaching. Teaching one another took place on several occasions. In the 1833 session of the School of the Prophets, the three teachers - Joseph Smith, Orson Hyde, and Sidney Rigdon - shared teaching duties. But when one was teaching the other two became students. Likewise, in the 1834 School of the Elders, though Sidney Rigdon was the main teacher, all were given opportunities to teach.

The second statement dictated the curricula of schools. Both theological and secular subjects were taught every year the schools were in existence. In these schools courses were offered in theology, history, literature, penmanship, arithmetic, mathematics, geography, and languages including English, Hebrew, Greek, and Latin.

The purpose of the school as stated in the third statement - preparing of missionaries - always remained the motive of the schools. This is evidenced by several statements made by Joseph Smith during the several seasons the schools were in existence. For example, at the beginning of the second season of the School of the Prophets in 1834, he said that the School would qualify missionaries “as messengers of Jesus Christ, to be ready to do His will in carrying glad tidings to all that would open their eyes, ears and hearts” (Smith, 1980, Vol. 2, p. 176). Again, while attending the Hebrew School in 1836, he wrote, “my prayer is that God will speedily endue us with a knowledge of all languages and tongues, that his servants may go forth for the last time, the better prepared to bind up the law, and seal up the testimony” (Smith, 1984, p. 172).

3. **Administrators and staff engage the adult learner in an on-going dialogue to determine learner needs and wants, prior learning, and educational goals.**

Successful adult-centered institutions “assist learners with determining what their level
of educational development is upon entry, where they are going, and how to get there as efficiently as possible” (Mancuso et al., 1999 p. 57). The evidence for this practice in the Kirtland schools is lacking. It is clear that the Church leaders in Kirtland were keenly aware of many of the educational needs of the adult learners in Kirtland. This can be seen by the number of remedial courses offered. What is lacking are records stating how they determined the educational needs of the adult learners.

4. **Faculty and staff collaborate to meet the educational needs of those they serve by not only offering the courses needed but at times and places most convenient to the adults.**

   Mancuso (2001) points out that effective adult educational institutions “focus on assuring that the individual learning interests and needs of the students are met, not on fitting the students into an existing curriculum” (p. 171). Further, Axford (1980) reminds us that “The person seeking continuing or adult education comes with specific needs. These needs often relate to the integration of mind, body and spirit.” In order to be successful as adult educators, practitioners need to establish programs that “address the needs of holistic humans” (pp. 7-8). Meeting the holistic needs of the adult learners in Kirtland was paramount for the Church leaders. Therefore the curricula of the schools they organized focused on the immediate needs of adult learners which included “mind, body and spirit.”

   Intellectually, many of the adult learners lacked the basic rudiments in education: grammar, reading, writing, arithmetic, etc. Therefore, a major aspect of the adult schools in Kirtland was to provide several schools where remedial education was offered. But the thirst of learning for many adult learners took them beyond the fundamentals. They wanted to
know geography and history. They wanted to understand higher mathematics. They wanted to learn languages. They wanted to become skilled in the art of debate. And they wanted to learn how to sing. To fulfill these desires, the schools provided courses in which all these were made available.

A code of conduct was applied that was designed to invigorate the body in order that both the mind and spirit could be fed. Students were expected to avoid light-mindedness, control lustful appetites, avoid pride, treat others with love, refrain from covetous, and to be unselfish. They were to get the needed rest the body requires, “retir[ing] to [their] bed early, that [they] may not be weary; arise early, that [their] bodies and [their] minds may be invigorated” (D&C 88:124; emphasis added). Further, they were to refrain from alcohol, tobacco, coffee, and tea - all of which are habit forming and can inhibit both body and mind. They were promised that if they kept the code of honor they would be blessed with “wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures” (D&C 89: 18-19).

The adult learners in Kirtland were also hungry for spiritual things. These people were products of the Second Great Awakening. They had been aroused to the things of God and they wanted to know those things. They wanted to feel the Spirit of God and understand the doctrines of the kingdom. The schools in Kirtland, particularly the School of the Prophets or the Elder’s School, were designed to fulfill these needs both in the classroom and in actual experience. In fact, through the Elder’s School these adults were prepared intellectually and spiritually to participate in one of the greatest spiritual feasts of their lives - the dedication of the Kirtland Temple and the subsequent solemn assembly (for details, see Smith 1980, Vol. 2, pp. 410-433).

By addressing the needs of the mind, body, and spirit, the leaders of the Church were not
only meeting the individual needs of the adult learners but were likewise preparing the learners to meet one of the organizational concerns of the Church - missionary work. As a result of participating in the schools in Kirtland, these adult learners were better prepared to successfully met the task of proclaiming the gospel in the world as well. At the same time the adult learners were better prepared to fulfill their roles as husband, wives, parents, citizens, etc.

5. **Multiple instructional delivery methods are employed.**

Speaking of this, Mancuso (2001) says “the design and delivery of instruction” of successful adult-centered institutions “is framed to break time and place barriers.” To be effective “instruction can take place any time, any way, and any where. To maximize flexibility and convenience, there are multiple modes of instruction, a variety of schedules, and diverse locations to access education” (pp. 172-173). Flint (1999) added, “Several options are provided for students to access learning contracts, distance education courses, cross registration at other colleges and universities, correspondence courses, group courses, and tutorials” (p. 9).

Evidence for this practice in the Kirtland schools is sparse. The Church leaders made attempts to try to break the “time and place barriers.” One endeavor at breaking the “time barrier” was the addition of night schools. Of course, this made it possible for those who could not attend the daytime schools to receive educational opportunities. In an attempt to break the “place barrier” the Church leaders in Missouri decided to establish their own “school of Elders.” Parley P. Pratt (1985) was appointed the teacher. He recorded in his autobiography the following regarding the school:
In the latter part of summer and in the autumn, I devoted almost my entire time in ministering among the churches; holding meetings; visiting the sick; comforting the afflicted, and giving counsel. A school of Elders was also organized, over which I was called to preside. This class, to the number of about sixty, met for instruction once a week. The place of meeting was in the open air, under some tall trees, in a retired place in the wilderness, where we prayed, preached and prophesied, and exercised ourselves in the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Here great blessings were poured out, and many great and marvelous things were manifested and taught. The Lord gave me great wisdom, and enabled me to teach and edify the Elders, and comfort and encourage them in their preparations for the great work which lay before us. I was also much edified and strengthened. To attend this school I had to travel on foot, and sometimes with bare feet at that, about six miles. This I did once a week, besides visiting and preaching in five or six branches a week. (pp. 75-76)

After the school commenced, the Missouri church leaders received a letter from Joseph Smith expressing his approval of the school and that the school should continue (see p. 76; also D&C 97:3-9). But it does not appear the that Missouri Elder’s School was an extension of the Kirtland schools.

Beside these efforts, there is no evidence that the Church leaders attempted other forms of adult education such as distance education courses, correspondence courses, or tutorials. But the Kirtland schools were only in existence for few years. If they had continued, who knows but other methods of education may have been employed.

6. **Such programs have open admissions policies as well as a variety of student services.**

Mancuso (2001) describes this practice as follows:

Students and the institutions are partners in the admissions process. Rather than requiring students to meet specific traditional admissions criteria, such as SAT score or minimum GPA, the diverse knowledge, skills, and interests adult learners bring to the college experience are considered important factors in the mutual admissions decision. (p. 174)

The practice of open admissions policies was not practiced in the first season of the
School of the Prophets which was limited to the “first laborers” in the Church. Enrollment into the Elder’s School was open to all elders of the Church. It appears that the Kirtland School held in the winter of 1834-35 was subject to open enrollment, as were the night schools and the Hebrew School. However, we are not given enough information relative to the Kirtland High School held during 1836-37 to know of its enrollment practices. The only admissions criteria mentioned is the code of conduct and this was only for the School of the Prophets which also had a limited enrollment.

Regarding student services, Flint (1999) states the successful adult-centered institutions provide student services that help minimize time and place barriers. They provide a number of access points where students can register for classes - in person, telephone, web-sites, email, etc. Also student counseling is provided. Unfortunately, the records regarding the Kirtland schools reveal nothing regarding student services.

7. Faculty often perform both teaching and administrative duties.

As is typical of many adult-centered institutions, faculty fulfill both teaching and administrative duties. Mancuso et al. (1999) notes that such faculty “are willing to act in a variety of blended roles which may include administrative duties, advising, and teaching” (p. 66). Evidence of this practice is seen in the Kirtland schools. Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon both taught in the School of the Prophets as well as presided over the school. They also presided over the Elder’s School while at the same time were part of its faculty. Sidney Rigdon also directed and taught night schools. Both Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon were on the Board of Trustees of the Kirtland School and High School. Further, they were both on the committee in charge of the Hebrew School in which Joseph Smith taught for a brief
period of time as an interim teacher.

8. **Adjunct faculty with special expertise are employed to expand course offerings when needed.**

The use of adjunct faculty in current adult-centered institutions is common place. Mancuso (2001) observes that the use of adjunct faculty “allows institutions to offer a more diverse curriculum and to alter the curriculum rapidly to meet the needs and desires of their student population” (p. 177). The Church leaders of the Kirtland schools used a number of adjunct faculty to increase the course offerings in the curricula of the schools. Most of these faculty came from within the Church. But the Church leaders were willing to look beyond Church membership to find qualified adjunct faculty to teach specialized courses that members of the Church were untrained in. Such was the case with Joshua Seixas in the Hebrew School and Professor H. M. Hawes in the Kirtland High School.

9. **And every effort is made to ensure that the education offered is affordable.**

Successful adult-centered institutions must be creative in finding ways to keep the cost of education at a minimum (Flint, 1999; Mancuso et al, 2001). Though little is said relative to tuition costs associated with the Kirtland schools, there are two pieces of evidence indicating efforts were made to keep the costs as low as possible. First, in anticipating the second season of the School of the Prophets, the Church leadership prepared a circular to be sent to all the branches of the Church seeking for donations to “to build a house, and to aid the Elders to attend this school” (Smith, 1980, Vol. 1, p. 350). What became of this is never stated. Second, the cost of the Hebrew School was $6.00 (Peterson, 1972, p. 59). This was a
fainter price than what students were required to pay at Hudson Seminary for private instruction. There, Joshua Seixas charged $7.50 for six weeks of instruction (Snow, 1936, p. 69). Obviously, by teaching a larger group of students, Seixas was willing to charge a lesser amount.

**Summary of Findings**

The history of the preceding chapters has shown that the LDS adult education programs in Kirtland, Ohio, between 1833-37, were very successful. Comparing the practices of the Kirtland schools to the “best practices” of current adult-centered institutions reveals in part the reason for the success. The following “best practices” of current adult-centered institutions were followed by the organizers of the Kirtland schools:

- It has been shown that Joseph Smith and the other Church leaders who organized the schools in Kirtland were deeply concerned with the adult learners of the Church.
- The schools they organized were clearly defined by a mission statement dictating three things: (1) school members should teach one another, (2) curriculum should consist of theological and secular subjects, and (3) the goal of the schools was to prepare missionaries to magnify their callings as teachers.
- Church leaders were aware of the holistic needs (mind, body, and spirit) of the adult learners. Schools were established with the purpose of addressing both their intellectual and spiritual needs. They also established a code of conduct that was intended to invigorate the body so that intellectual and spiritual learning could take place.
- Attempts were made by Church leaders to break the “time barrier” by offering night schools for those who were unable to attend the daytime schools.
• Several of the schools had open admission policies. Certain of the schools were aimed at a particular student and admitted only them. No admissions criteria have been found.
• Faculty often performed teaching and administrative duties.
• Adjunct faculty with specialized training were used to teach courses the regular faculty were untrained in.
• Attempts were made to keep the education affordable.

What May We Learn From This?

Whipple (1964) has stated that one of the purposes of historical research in adult education is that present educators “might increase intelligent borrowing from the past” (p. 210). What may modern adult educators learn from the adult-centered programs in Kirtland? As I have examined the principles and practices of those who founded adult education in the LDS church, I have become increasingly aware of their holistic view of the adult learner. They were not concerned with just educating the mind. Their concern was educating the “soul.” The early verses of the revelation commanding the organization of adult education in Kirtland defined the LDS concept of the soul as “the spirit and the body” (D&C 88:15). Educating the soul required educating the spirit as well as body and mind. This dictated the curriculum used in Kirtland which consisted of learning in both spiritual and secular fields. However, they made little distinction between the two. Mankind should search for truth wherever it may be found. They did not believe in the old adage, “Where knowledge ends religion begins.” They believed the two were inseparable. But they also understood that spiritual truths may only be learned spiritually. Therefore, they taught to “seek learning, even by study [the intellect] and also by faith [inspiration]” (D&C 88:188).
We live in a dynamic world. Few things remain static. One of the things changing in the world is that world society is becoming increasingly secular. More and more there is being made a separation of secular and spiritual things. Likewise education is becoming increasingly secular as well. Perhaps it would be wise for current adult educators to reflect upon the success of the Kirtland schools - the principles of which continue to guide the highly successful LDS Church Educational System - and recall that their success lay within educating the whole soul of man. If the needs of the whole soul are not considered, the needs of the adult learner will never fully be met.

**Suggestions for Further Research**

May I suggest two areas of further research. First, Joseph Smith as an adult learner needs to be examined carefully. Through this study, it has become apparent to me that he was the consummate example of a life long learner. What prompted his hunger to learn? How did he promote the same desire in others? How was he able to be a successful husband and father, administrate a church, deal with constant persecution, fulfill several missionary journeys, and still maintain the desire to learn? Answers to these questions and others would add to our current knowledge of adult learners.

Second, adult education as practiced by the LDS church in Nauvoo, Illinois, where the headquarters of the Church was located from 1839 to 1846 should be studied. It was here that the Church organized its first university. A number of lyceums were organized and maintained during this period. What were they? Who promoted them? Who attended? Answers to these questions should be known for adult education in Nauvoo, like Kirtland, is also unknown in histories of adult education.
Conclusion

As can be seen from the forgoing history and list of comparisons, the LDS church’s adult educational schools in Kirtland were practicing techniques that modern practitioners of adult education have shown are common among successful adult-centered institutions. These schools serviced hundreds of individuals with needed remedial courses as well as higher educational courses. These schools also engendered a deeper hunger for learning in participating adult learners. No doubt, had the Church not been driven out of Ohio through persecution, the schools sponsored by the Church most likely would have grown to include colleges and universities similar to the present day Church.

The history of these programs should be included in the histories of adult education. Being removed from the time period and the sources of information regarding the schools, it is understandable why modern educators are unaware of this venture in adult education. Even educational historians of the 1800's were oblivious to these schools. In an educational conference held in Cleveland, Ohio, on 7 and 8 September 1896, Dr. B. A. Hinsdale (1896) of the University of Michigan delivered a wonderful lecture entitled, “The History of Popular Education on the Western Reserve” - the very area where Kirtland is located! In his lecture, Dr. Hinsdale gave a thorough history of education from the late 1700's through the 1850's. One of the “celebrated” schools he discussed was the Western Reserve Teachers’ Seminary which commenced “in September, 1839, being established in the upper stories of the Temple at Kirtland, Lake county, which the Mormons had abandoned a short time before” (p. 49). Surprisingly, though mentioning the Mormons and their Temple, Dr. Hinsdale mentioned nothing of the educational efforts of the LDS people in Kirtland just a few years earlier. But with this dissertational study, this history is now known.