

Working Together for Student Success: Lessons from Ohio's College-ABLE Partnership Project

Summary Findings—May 2012

The Ohio Board of Regents

The Ohio State University, Center on Education and Training for Employment

Why Change is Needed

There is a perceived failure of traditional developmental education approaches to move students forward in post-secondary education. This is a concern because large numbers of students begin their post-secondary studies with at least one developmental education course. Ohio's data for Fiscal Year 2011 indicate that 38% of all first time traditional students (those less than 20 years of age) enroll in at least one developmental education course their first year at college and 47% of all students 20 or older do so.

A sizable percentage of students who begin their post-secondary careers in developmental education courses never obtain a credential. Complete College America's 2011 report, *Time is the Enemy*, notes that "remedial education has become the Bermuda Triangle of higher education. Most students are lost, and few will ever be seen on graduation day."

Data from the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS) and the Community College Research Center (CCRC) confirm that students who enter college needing considerable remedial coursework are far less likely to complete a degree or certificate than students who do not need remediation. A NELS report revealed that only 10% of students whose placement scores indicated they should enroll in pre-collegiate math completed their developmental math sequence. The same report indicates that only 20% of students referred to any level developmental education complete their math remediation sequence and subsequently enroll in and pass a college credit math course. For students

referred to reading remediation, outcomes are only slightly improved. Thirty-seven percent of students referred to remedial courses complete their remedial sequence and enroll in and pass a college-level English course.

Aligning Remediation Services

In parallel, the Ohio Board of Regents (OBR) and the Ohio Association of Community Colleges, through their state level Developmental Education Initiative, began to explore other options for delivering remediation, including encouraging colleges and adult basic education programs to align their services for students in most need of remediation. At the same time, OBR investigated ways to better align the services and resources of Adult Basic and Literacy Education (ABLE), Adult Workforce Education (AWE), and community colleges. OBR recommended a pilot project for colleges and ABLE programs to urge the coordinated delivery of remedial education services.

Considering the lowest level of developmental education, 24% of English students complete remediation and subsequently enroll in and pass a college-level English course. That figure is only 10% for students referred to the lowest level of developmental math.

Source: *National Education Longitudinal Study*

Exploring how ABLE-college partnerships serve those most in need of remediation seemed a sound strategy to improve student outcomes. ABLE programs target instruction to specific learner needs; screenings to offer students insight into

their learning style is a hallmark of ABLE instruction. In recent years, more ABLE programs have infused both career awareness and post-secondary-related information into day-to-day instruction. ABLE directly teaches students learning strategies to help

them improve their abilities to obtain, retain, and recall information as well as manage their learning experience. Too, by referring students most in need of remediation to an ABLE partner, colleges would be able to focus more attention on helping students who need little or no remediation to complete their education.

Community College-ABLE Partnership Pilot

All 23 Ohio community colleges sent a representative to a meeting in the summer of 2010 to learn about the Developmental Education Initiative (DEI) pilot.

The purpose of the pilot was to experiment with ways to improve alignment of ABLE and community college programs and resources to serve students who wanted to pursue post-secondary education, but who were not yet college-ready.

All 23 community colleges and four university regional campuses submitted agreements to participate. By doing so they agreed to establish a policy for referring students to ABLE and sharing information about their partnership and progress with the Ohio Board of Regents.

What Has Been Learned To Date?

The examination of partnerships through surveys, telephone interviews, and site visits suggest eight characteristics of good partnerships. These emerging characteristics serve as guideposts for developing partnerships.

1. Secure Support from the College Administration

Having strong support from the college president or provost is a key success factor for college-ABLE partnerships. There is a clear relationship between the amount of remediation needed and the likeliness of obtaining a post-secondary credential. Several

college leaders have begun to question the wisdom of enrolling students who need considerable remediation

when the credential completion rate for these students has been very low. But, these administrators trust, too, that exploring partnerships is the right thing to do for their institutions. They believe

that through such referral arrangements, students who do return to post-secondary will be better equipped to achieve, more likely to persist in their education, and obtain a credential. Thus, from a business perspective they believe that forgoing revenue now will result in greater revenue later.

2. Ensure that Every College Entity Required for the Partnership's Implementation is Represented in the Planning Process with ABLERepresentatives

If multiple ABLEReprogram(s) will be involved in the partnership, each needs to have a place at the table when key decisions are made about referral processes, student monitoring, and curriculum content. Equally important is ensuring that representatives from the areas of the college who will be instrumental to the success of the partnership are involved early on in the planning process. Columbus State Community College, Central Ohio Technical College, and Owens Community College are colleges that provide a good example of wide-scale engagement of college and ABLEReprogram staff.

3. Establish and Follow a Consistent Student Referral Policy

Partnerships depend upon the willingness of ABLEReprogram personnel to serve students who are referred to them and for colleges to ensure that a sufficient number of students are referred to make ABLEReprogram involvement cost effective. In strong partnerships, the college and ABLEReprogram(s) establish mutually agreed upon criteria for when a student will be referred to ABLEReprogram. These criteria and the rationale for the partnership must be communicated to, and understood by, the admission counselors at the college. Counselor buy-in ensures that students who meet the referral criteria find their way to and register in the ABLEReprogram. Counselor support is particularly critical when ABLEReprogram

referral is voluntary—when the student has a chance to follow or not follow the recommended referral to ABLEReprogram. Importantly, several partnerships have concluded that voluntary referral programs do not work. When a voluntary approach was tried, too few students took advantage of the ABLEReprogram option for remediation. Community colleges, notably Sinclair, Columbus State, Owens, Rhodes, Miami Hamilton, Lorain, and North Central have adopted some form of mandatory referral to ABLEReprogram. North Central Community College also mandates ABLEReprogram referral if a student's reading score on the COMPASS falls below a specified level.

4. Help Referred Students See Themselves as Post-Secondary Students

It is critical that students referred to ABLEReprogram for remediation by the college see themselves on a post-secondary path. Community colleges and ABLEReprogram partnerships can take several actions to reinforce ABLEReprogram as indeed a step to post-secondary credential attainment.

Classes for a cohort of referred students can be held at the college following the college schedule. The partnership can provide a program identity such as Columbus State College's Cougar Edge, North Central's Solutions, Lakeland's First Rung, or Terra's FOCUS to help students see this option as something other than traditional ABLEReprogram.

Giving referred students college privileges even if they are not enrolled in any college classes is critical to post-secondary identity. All colleges taking part in the partnership offer some privileges to ABLEReprogram students such as use of the learning lab, student parking, use of recreation facilities.

5. Assign a Staff Member to Help Students Transition Between ABLEReprogram and College

Having an individual chiefly responsible for serving as a link or liaison between the ABLEReprogram and the college is a major benefit for students. The Sinclair-Miami Valley CTC/Kettering ABLEReprogram, Miami Hamilton ABLEReprogram, and North Central-Mansfield City partnerships are partnerships that have designated an individual to serve as a bridge for students from college to ABLEReprogram and back. The main job of these staff members is to help explain the ABLEReprogram option and how students can succeed in transitioning to

college course work. But these individuals could also ensure that students are linked to other support services that may be available to the student at the college, e.g., disability services and counseling.

6. Ensure Agreement on the Content to be Addressed in ABLERemediation

It is critical that community college and ABLEReprogram staff agree on what will be taught to referred students. Examples of partnerships that have brought together ABLEReprogram staff and developmental education faculty to share and discuss curriculum include Hocking, Rhodes, and Stark State, among others. Several ABLEReprogram partners, most notably Sinclair-Miami Valley CTC/Kettering ABLEReprogram and Terra-Vanguard Sentinel-Norwalk-Fostoria partnerships, have actually adopted the developmental education curriculum for use in their ABLEReprogram classes. Other ABLEReprogram programs have modified their curriculum to ensure coverage of topics thought necessary by college faculty.

7. Experiment with Delivery of ABLERemediation Instruction for the Cohort of Students Referred by the College

Most ABLEReprogram programs in partnerships where ABLEReprogram attendance has been mandated by the college have made adjustments to make their classes more college like. For example, they have adopted stricter attendance policies, managed enrollment, syllabi, final exams, and out of class assignments.



Frequently ABLEReprogram classes have been arranged in terms that coincide with those of the college. In some cases, such as with the Stark State Community College – Canton City ABLEReprogram partnership, ABLEReprogram classes are provided as “mini” sessions within a college term. This enables a student who initially enrolls in a college class but then experiences difficulty, to drop the class and enter ABLERemediation during the term.

The Mansfield ABLÉ program that is partnering with North Central Community College takes a different approach from the classroom model. Students instructed by ABLÉ instructors at the college in the Solutions program primarily receive individual tutoring although some small group instruction occasionally occurs.



Other options include the following:

- Owens Community College is offering students referred to ABLÉ by the college the opportunity to receive credit for successful involvement in the Transitions Learning Community (TLC).
- Hamilton City ABLÉ has a distance education option. The Miami Hamilton-Hamilton ABLÉ program also offers a summer term for students who are required to attend ABLÉ. Students who complete their ABLÉ remediation can retake the COMPASS test before fall term. If they have advanced sufficiently and pass the test, they may enroll in college classes in the fall.
- The Sinclair-Miami Valley CTC/Kettering partnership provides career counseling in areas such as the Machinist and State Tested Nurse Aide programs available at Sinclair.
- Hocking Community College—Lancaster-Fairfield Community Action ABLÉ program provides remediation for EMT/Fire Science students using the EMT/Fire Science texts.

8. Monitor Student Progress and Share Information Across Systems

As is clear from the preceding characteristics, partnerships require that colleges and ABLÉ program personnel work together to establish and implement strong partnerships. It is critical that both partners also be involved in reviewing program data and monitoring student progress of those referred.

Doing so requires that both partners establish clear processes for how and when this sharing will occur. For example, ABLÉ program staff should be provided referred students' initial college placement test and any retest scores. Further it would be helpful for ABLÉ programs to be kept informed of student progress as they move through the post-secondary system at least for a year or two.

College representatives should periodically be provided with information on the progress of referred students as well. Reports by class could be produced periodically from ABLÉLink and discussed during partnership meetings.

Eight characteristics of good partnerships:

1. Secure Support from the College Administration
 2. Ensure that Every College Entity Required for the Partnership's Implementation is Represented in the Planning Process with ABLÉ Representatives
 3. Establish and Follow a Consistent Student Referral Policy
 4. Help Referred Students See Themselves as Post-Secondary Students
 5. Assign a Staff Member to Help Students Transition Between ABLÉ and College
 6. Ensure Agreement on the Content to be Addressed in ABLÉ Remediation
 7. Experiment with Delivery of ABLÉ Instruction for the Cohort of Students Referred by the College
 8. Monitor Student Progress and Share Information Across Systems
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The full report is available at:
<http://www.ohioable.org/files/DEI%20report.pdf>