Culminating Learning Project

1. Engage the workgroup

Briefly describe the composition of your program improvement workgroup.

Checklist	Response
1. __X__ I identified the number of staff on the workgroup. 2. __X__ I described the positions of the staff on the workgroup	The workgroup will consist of the program improvement coordinator (me,) the two onsite ABLE instructors, and the site assistant. The main workgroup will be equally responsible for managing the information for the project. Teachers will be monitoring attendance and communication. The site assistant will be conducting direct communication. The program improvement coordinator will be developing a web-based communication site, interviewing students, and analyzing data for the program improvement project.

2. Identify the program component to target for program improvement

List the program components that need attention that you identified from self-assessments, research review, and data analysis. Indicate the ONE program component that the workgroup selected to target in your pilot project.

Checklist	Response
1. __x__ I listed the needs identified by the self assessments. 2. ___x_ I listed the needs identified by the research review. 3. __x__ I listed the needs identified by the data analysis.	Needs identified in self-assessment: Student Retention Curriculum Standards, Standardization, and Resources Technology Resources, Integration, and Funding

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4. __x__ I listed ONE of those needs for us to use in the pilot.	Needs identified in research review: 1) Adult Reading Components Study 2) Pathways & Outcomes: Tracking ESL Student Performance 3) Increasing Student Achievement for Basic Skills Students – Integrated Instruction Needs identified through data analysis: Student Retention Increasing student achievement level 5 and 6 students/transition students Prioritized need or program component: Student Retention

Briefly describe the process used to select the targeted component, as well as the process used to identify the parts of the targeted program component that you want to keep and the parts that need new strategies.

Checklist	Response
1. __X__ I described the process the workgroup used to narrow the needs down to the one program component to be used in the pilot.	One of the biggest issues that many of the programs in northeast Ohio experience is student retention. Many of our students will come for a short period of time, but with no recourse or student follow-up, often students will separate without completing the program. This component can also decrease the number of students who can improve to the highest EFL levels and transition, so therefore before transition can be improved; we need to see better retention in the program.
I described how we examined the current program component to identify: 2. __X__ what we are doing now that we want to keep, and 3. _X___ what parts of the program component that need new strategies.	Currently, teachers may choose to send out letters to students who have not come to class for a period of time. Additionally, large classes will exit students who have not returned in 90 days. Letters are a helpful tool, especially if parts of the student population do not have internet or phone access on a regular basis. However, as technology has grown, we need to expand the way we keep in touch with our students which will improve retention. Additionally, we need to come up with a consistent attendance policy at sites to improve student responsibility.

3. Set a vision and goals

Vision: Student Retention   will be working well when...

(Fill in the program component you are working on)

Checklist	Response
1. __X_ I described how I engaged the staff in completing the vision statement. 2. __X__ I included the final vision statement.	Student retention will be working well when we have a consistent way to reach all students with class updates, provide a portal for students to reach the program with questions, concerns, or general information, and clearly inform students of their responsibilities within the program. The Angela Mia Building ABLE site strives to maintain a high degree of student retention, achievement, and communication. We believe that our students will have great success with increased direct and indirect contact between students, teachers, and staff.

Goals: When we are finished, we will have achieved the following...

Checklist	Response
1. __X__ I described how I engaged the staff in anticipating achievements 2. __X_ I included that list	The workgroup that will be in the project were met with to decide how to communicate with the students at their location. We brainstormed ideas for the particular site, which is a one-on-one drop in site staffed 4 days a week for 5 hours a day. Weekly/Monthly newsletter or Facebook update Monthly calls to students who do not come to class regularly Check-in meetings with students who come to class Awards for students who have consistent attendance Culminating student survey to how they feel with communication

Evaluation criteria: What evidence will you collect to determine if you meet your goals? Identify each of the end user groups and the evidence each end user group identified as evidence they would need to convince them to use the new strategy.

End User	Evidence to Collect
Teachers	Attendance, Student Identification, Interviews with Students on best communication information
Site Aide/Assistant	Phone calls to students, letters to students, feedback from individual students
Program Improvement Coordinator	Data statistics on attendance, retention, and communication feedback
Program Director	The program director will be provided with details on success of program improvement plan.
Checklist	

1. _X___ I identified each of the end users (e.g., teachers, tutors, aides, managers) who will be using the new strategies.

2. _X___ I solicited from each group the evidence they would need to convince them the new strategy worked, and I included each piece of evidence identified.

4. Gather and select promising practices

Briefly describe where you looked for models or strategies that would address your targeted component.

Checklist	Response
3. __X__ I identified all of the sources we explored to find models and strategies that address our program improvement component.	The main source of information for the strategy targeted for this project was the NCSALL PERSISTENCE AMONG ADULT BASIC EDUCATION STUDENTS IN PRE-GED CLASSES study. (http://www.ncsall.net/fileadmin/resources/research/report12.pdf) The big picture point we focused on was the self-efficacy. We really wanted the students to feel ownership of their growth and be the facilitators of the educational path. We also looked at various sources such as http://www.biz.colostate.edu/mti/tips/pages/AdultLearners.aspx for aspects of our adult learners and what they bring into the classroom. We liked the information from http://www.academicimpressions.com/news/re-enrolling-stop-outs-overcoming-barriers, where it talked about having a concierge for contact to stopped-out students. We felt that this was a good idea for the pilot location first picked, as it had a dedicated staff assistant who could fill that role. Finally, we accessed

	http://www.ncsall.net/fileadmin/resources/teach/pasourcebook_persistence.pdf for program administrator information about the strategy for the pilot.

Briefly describe the strategy, procedure, or practice that the workgroup selected to pilot. Include a description of any adaptations that were made to make the strategy "fit" your program.

Checklist	Response
1. _X_ I included a description of the new strategies selected to pilot test. 2. __X_ I included a description of the adaptations we made to the new strategy and the rationale for those adaptations.	From the initial list of strategies we brainstormed in the workgroup, we decided to focus on the individual communication strategies to really address retention and personal responsibility for academic growth. Based on time allotment of teachers, students, and aides, we focused on phone calls for students missing one week of class, and check-in meetings following 10 hours of instruction time, which would be weekly or bi-weekly depending on the student. The rationale is that enabling adults to take responsibility for their growth would be dependent on accountability for attendance, and following their academic growth status. The Facebook page was eliminated due to the legality within the community college, and the weekly newsletter was put on hold due to time and individual lesson differences.

5. Develop a pilot testing plan

Describe the process that was used to select the pilot sites - what characteristics did you consider in the selection process?

Checklist	Response
I included a description of: 4. X__ who was involved in selecting the pilots 5. _X__ the criteria and rationale we used for selecting the pilots.	The workgroup/pilot site was chosen as it was the site staffed 4 days a week for 5 hours a day. It was ideal to have the pilot site staff be the workgroup for the pilot project so they had a vested interest in the project.

What type of training was necessary for the pilot sites? Describe how this was provided.

Checklist	Response
I included a description of: 1. __X__ the training that was necessary to get the pilot sites up to speed 2. __X__ who delivered the training	The training needed to implement increased communication at the pilot site was minimal. At the pilot meeting, I trained the staff about how often to make the communication calls, how to document any problems with getting through to students, and about how to address any issues encountered on phone calls, and not to make the phone calls from personal devices. Since the site was setup as a one-on-one instruction site, the instructors were already keeping individual daily assignment/benchmark notations in the folders. The instructors were trained to sit down with students after every 10 hours of instruction time to review what benchmarks have been addressed.

Complete the chart outlining your interim benchmarks, activities, timeline, and responsible parties for planning, implementing, and evaluating your pilot project.

Interim Benchmarks	Activities	Completion Date	Lead Person Responsible for the Activity
Planning	Workgroup choice	12/1/13	Michelle
	Workgroup meeting, deciding which communication types would be piloted	12/4/13	Michelle
	Data collecting timelines	12/4/13	Michelle
Implementing	Pilot Site – Angela Mia • Phone Calls (Gino) • 10 hour sit downs (Adam/Kolleen)	3/14/14	Michelle/Adam
	Pilot Site – Math Boost • Phone Calls • Weekly sit-downs	4/11/14	Michelle
Evaluating	Pilot Site Data – Angela Mia • Phone Calls statistics • Sit down qualitative data • Attendance reports	3/14/14	Michelle (with workgroup)

	Pilot Site Data – Math Boost • Attendance Reports • Phone Call statistics • Qualitative Check-In Meetings	4/11/14	Michelle
	Student Interviews regarding the sit downs and phone calls.	3/14/14, 4/11/14	Michelle

What were your primary financial expenditures for the pilot project?

Expenditure Category	Cost
Class site aide phone calls – during paid aide hours, no additional expenditure	-0-
Math Boost phone calls – during paid planning time, no additional expenditure	-0-
Instructor/Student meetings – during class time, no additional expenditure	-0-
Michelle - Information gathering, extra time during non-work hours	$250.00

6. Select and prepare the pilot sites

Briefly describe the process you used to prepare the pilot sites to implement the new strategy or procedure.

Checklist	Response
I included a description of: 1. _X_ initial meetings I had with pilot sites to explain their roles and responsibilities 2. _X_ consultants or other staff used as a resource to support the pilot staff 3. _X_ any incentives you provided to pilot staff to encourage and/or reward their participation 4. _X_ how you made sure that pilot staff knew the	Initially, the staff and I met prior to the culminating project part 1 to create the workgroup for the culminating project. Each staff member at the Angela Mia site felt optimistic about the plan, and understood the roll that the aide and instructors would take in rolling out the plan. No other consultants or staff was needed at this site as there was sufficient support between 3 staff members and myself. No formal incentives were needed at this pilot site, although I did provide a pizza lunch for their efforts despite the lack of success at the first site with phone, weather and school closing issues. Pilot staff was informed of the data collecting procedures and timeline at the initial meeting/training time.

evaluation criteria and data they would need to collect to determine impact.	

7. Conduct the pilot, measure the impact, and develop/fine tune PD and resources

Briefly describe the results of your pilot project based on your evaluation criteria for each end user group.

Checklist	Response
3. __X_ I included an overall narrative of the results of the pilot. 4. __X__ I included results based on the end users' evaluation criteria.	I first tried to pilot increased communication for student retention at a GED site which has morning and afternoon classes, is staffed with a part-time aide, and has phone capabilities. The aide would phone students who missed a week in a row on Fridays to invite them back to class. We started the pilot in January when classes had resumed after winter break. We encountered continual problems at this site with communication. 80% of the phone calls placed went to full voicemails, no voicemail hook-ups, or disconnected phones. The other 20% were answered. Additionally, many students did not like weekly phone calls during January and February. The issue we encountered was that most students had children in schools. With the extreme cold winter, most schools did not have full 5 day weeks for the first two months of the year. Our students didn't have childcare availability, so were not able to come to classes. The winter seemed to skew results of our communication pilot at this site. The instructors did indicate that the students who were attending class regularly and had check-in meetings appreciated the continual feedback, and seemed to take more ownership in their educational direction. As a result of the issues with this pilot at the general GED class site, I also started a communication for student pilot at my own class site. I teach the MathBoost class, which is a college\ABLE partnership class for free developmental math improvement. I started increased communication for the second 8-week term, which started March 17th. At the current time, if a student misses a week of class, they get a phone call on Thursdays from me. At this time, I have one student who has "stopped-out," which makes the retention in this class currently at 95%. The students also will leave me voicemails if they are not coming to class, or let me know in advance of issues. The class-type with the communication increase seems to have increased the individual responsibility the students feel about attending class. Students liked having weekly check-ins to review their future direction.

What changes, if any, would you make before you implement the new strategy program-wide?

Checklist	Response
5. _X_ I included a description of specific changes I needed to make before implementing program-wide.	In order to implement better communication program-wide, there would need to be a better source for the instructors or staff to communicate with their students. Most sites do not have phone access, and I would not ask staff to use their own personal phones for communications. Additionally, I feel that since communication was more effective in a content specific bridge class, it might be better to try transitions communications before trying to roll out to the entire program. I think in content specific sites, it is also easier for the teachers to monitor students' progress which will also help with check-in meetings and reaching out to students.

Final Reflection

Briefly describe what you learned from this program improvement project that will help you in future work.

Checklist	Response
3. _X_ I included an overview of what I learned from this project.	Overall, I learned that program improvement is not a black and white issue. Many factors can go into whether or not a pilot project is successful, not just based on the need of the improvement, but the location, student make-up, student personal issues, class type, and issues such as weather. It is important to know that any successes or failures can be used as a reflection on current and future program goals. Successes cannot always be duplicated, and failures may be successes at another location. For my project, I think my future goal would be to see communication increased first at content specific classes, where students are specifically addresses limited goals as opposed to a big picture. This would direct rollout across the program in more specific ways.