

Culminating Learning Project

1. Engage the workgroup

Briefly describe the composition of your program improvement workgroup.

Checklist	Response
1. ___ I identified the number of staff on the workgroup.	My PICP workgroup consists of 5 individuals: 3 ESOL teachers, 1 ESOL Site Coordinator/ABLELink Coordinator and 1 Adult Education Coordinator.
2. ___ I described the positions of the staff on the workgroup	

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. ___ I listed the needs identified by the self assessments.	Needs identified in self-assessment: We identified areas we felt could improve which included: Orientation/Registration Events, Student Persistence and Retention levels.
2. ___ I listed the needs identified by the research review.	
3. ___ I listed the needs identified by the data analysis.	

<p>4. ___ I listed ONE of those needs for us to use in the pilot.</p>	<p>Student Persistence and Retention levels.</p> <p>Needs identified through data analysis:</p> <p>ABLELink data identified which ESOL levels showed the lowest Student Persistence and Retention.</p> <p>Prioritized need or program component:</p> <p>Based on that data – we decided to focus efforts on Low/High Intermediate ESOL student retention rates.</p>
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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
<p>1. ___ I described the process the workgroup used to narrow the needs down to the one program component to be used in the pilot.</p> <p>I described how we examined the current program component to identify:</p> <p>2. ___ what we are doing now that we want to keep, and</p> <p>3. ___ what parts of the program component that need new strategies.</p>	<p>Previous Program Improvement efforts have already focused on our ESOL Registration/Orientation component and we have continued to see improvement in that area and it is moving in the right direction. Our workgroup recognized that improving student retention is important to the overall success of our program so we decided to focus on that program component in this pilot.</p> <p>We looked at data from ABLELink and identified that our Low/High Intermediate level students show the lowest retention levels. Components that we feel are working well include: creating a classroom environment where students feel safe and welcomed; positive interactions between teachers and students; and contacting students who begin to miss class on a regular basis.</p> <p>Parts of the program component that need new strategies include: hiring more instructors to cut down on class size; the ABLELink Coordinator will closely monitor student attendance and will notify teachers which students they need to follow up on beginning in early November; and a follow up reminder post card being sent out from our Program in early December.</p>

3. Set a vision and goals

Vision: This initiative will be working well when student retention levels in Low/High Intermediate ESOL classes improve by 10% for FY2013/2014.

Checklist	Response
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> ___ I described how I engaged the staff in completing the vision statement. ___ I included the final vision statement. 	<p>We came up with our vision after discussing what it was that we actually wanted to accomplish. It needed to be more specific than just working to improve student retention in general. So we focused on a targeted student population and discussed what would be a reasonable goal to work to achieve. Our Vision Statement is: This initiative will be working well when student retention levels in Low/High Intermediate ESOL classes improve by 10% for FY 2013/2014.</p>

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

Checklist	Response
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> ___ I described how I engaged the staff in anticipating achievements ___ I included that list 	<p>I engaged the staff in determining “how” we could measure our success in this initiative. While it was agreed that “any” improvement was grounds for celebration, we collectively determined that a 10% improvement over last year’s numbers (Table 4) would be an indicator of significant program improvement</p> <p>We anticipate that, with smaller class sizes, more closely monitoring student attendance levels, more contact from teachers when student attendance records drop, and a follow-up contact from our school, student retention levels will improve.</p>

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 and Program Coordinators	Monthly attendance records and student contact information necessary to call or e-mail students whose attendance begins to drop off.
	ABLELink Data
Checklist	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ___ I identified each of the end users (e.g., teachers, tutors, aides, managers) who will be using the new strategies. 2. ___ 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. ___ I identified all of the sources we explored to find models and strategies that address our program improvement component.	Our workgroup targeted improving Student Persistence in the Adult ESOL classroom. In addition to materials and resources provided to me through the Ohio LEA, I asked my workgroup to look for other sources that might address our program improvement component so they might take more ownership in the pilot as a whole. Models we explored included: A NCSALL/TCAL Study Circle Meetings on Learner Persistence; CALPRO’s study circles on learner persistence; and “Stopping Out, Not Dropping Out: Focus on Basics. Many of the resources we were able to find were not targeted towards the Adult ESOL student but we were able to identify strategies that were better suited to our program and include them in our 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
<p>1. ___ I included a description of the new strategies selected to pilot test.</p> <p>2. ___ I included a description of the adaptations we made to the new strategy and the rationale for those adaptations.</p>	<p>New strategies we identified and implemented in our January Orientation included:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The Appointment of our First Student Ambassador who served on the panel and answered questions from a current student’s perspective. This was perceived as a reward (achieved by regular attendance and showing progress in the classroom). Many other current students showed interest in serving in this capacity in the future. We plan to adapt this strategy to include one student from each classroom at our September 2014 Orientation. 2) We partnered with The Salvation Army to present a Job Readiness class from our upper level ESOL classes. We strategized that our targeted Intermediate classes would see this as an incentive to stay with the program. This was received very well and we don’t feel we need to make any adaptations for next year. 3) We piloted a strategy where teachers called students in November who were not attending on a regular basis and encouraged them to return to class, mentioned how much we missed seeing them in class and looked forward to their return. In addition, our Career Center created follow up post cards for teachers to send to students in December. One adaptation we discovered was that, many of the telephone numbers students gave us at Orientation were either no longer working or not correct. Next fall we plan to make “Welcome to my class” phone calls to students while they are actively attending. This will make sure we have the number correct in the event they stop attending later. 4) We continued with our Cultural Sharing potluck dinners to help build rapport between students but adapted our strategy to have students become more involved in the planning and implementing aspect of the potluck dinners. We also planned a talent show for children of our students who attend our Kids Club Program. This worked very well and we will continue with this in the future.

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
<p>I included a description of:</p> <p>4. ___ who was involved in selecting the pilots</p> <p>5. ___ the criteria and rationale we used for selecting the pilots.</p>	<p>In addition to myself, I included all 6 ESOL instructors, an Adult Services Coordinator from our Technical Center, two veteran classroom volunteers and one of our Partners who coordinates the Kids Club Program.</p> <p>The pilot site we selected is the location where we conduct our Adult ESOL Program. Characteristics we considered in the selection process were: where are ways we can improve student persistence that do not cost additional funds, what would have greater impact on the most students and contribute to the overall program, and pilots that would not require an exurbanite about of time and effort on an already overworked staff.</p>

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

Checklist	Response
<p>I included a description of:</p> <p>1. ___ the training that was necessary to get the pilot sites up to speed</p> <p>2. ___ who delivered the training</p>	<p>With respect to training, I conducted some staff meetings where data was shared and we collectively determined which areas we wanted to pilot. Regarding offering the Job Readiness program with The Salvation Army, we determined the basic curriculum and had handouts that teachers in the upper level classes were provided ahead of time and then could be reviewed prior to the Job Readiness program. We also conducted mock interviews as part of the program. Individuals who conducted the mock interviews were given suggestions for questions they could ask during the interviews. Training for that was provided by The Salvation Army presenters. The other pilots did not require</p>

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	1) Creation of the first Student Ambassador. One student was identified by the ESOL Coordinator. She met with that student to review his responsibilities prior to the January Orientation.	December 12, 2013	Tracey S., ESOL Coordinator
	2) Job Readiness Program. Contacted The Salvation Army and discussed their availability to partner. Reviewed their curriculum and altered it to better fit our students' needs and language levels.	January 30, 2014	ESOL Transitions Instructor, Lorraine Z and Advanced ESOL Instructor, Liz S. Also partnered closely with The Salvation Army presenters.
	3) Instructors calling students who were not attending and postcard follow up by Career & Technical Center.	October 26, 2013	All ESOL instructors participated.
	4) Culturally sharing potluck dinner which had more student involvement in its planning as well as the addition of a Kids Club Talent Show. Each instructor solicited two students from each class to volunteer to assist with the potluck's coordination.	January 30, 2014	Tracey S., ESOL Coordinator and Alison R., SON Ministries Children's Programming
Implementing	1) Following up with a reminder phone call to Student Ambassador and asked him to arrive one hour early to review any questions he might have. He was also paired with two teachers to greet students as they arrived and to assist with Arabic translations as needed.	January 9, 2014	Tracey S., ESOL Coordinator (and Kamil - Student Ambassador).
	2) Moving classrooms around to accommodate this 12 hour program. Preparing separate attendance sheets and copying all handouts to be presented. Arranging for a separate room where Mock Interviews could be conducted at the end of the Program. Covering classroom	March 11-20, 2014	Tracey S., ESOL Coordinator, Lorraine Z., ESOL Transitions Instructor, Liz S., Advanced ESOL Instructors, and Salvation Army presenters.

	instruction for those students who did not choose to participate.		
	3) Instructors called students who were not attending on a regular basis as well as followed up with a post card from the Career & Technical Center.	To be completed by November 14, 2013 and December 12, 2013.	All ESOL Instructors were asked to participate in this.
	4) Culturally sharing potluck dinner. Volunteer students distributed flyers promoting the program and were asked to arrive early to assist with room set up and to work with other volunteers to help with clean up. They also manned a table with index cards to write the name and origin of their dish and whether or not pork was in the dish they brought. They were identified on stage and thanked just before the dinner began.	February 18, 2014	Tracey S., ESOL Coordinator and student volunteers. Alison R., SON Ministries Children's Programming.
Evaluating	1) Based on other students inquiring about how they could be the next Student Ambassador – I would say this went better than expected. He also saved his “Student Ambassador” nametag and I observed that he placed it on his class binder – this showed me he was proud to serve in this capacity. Next year, we plan to have one student from each class to serve in this capacity and will include student feedback on our survey after the orientation to monitor its effectiveness.	Following the January 9, 2014 New Student Orientation.	Tracey S., ESOL Coordinator
	2) Instructors responded via group e-mail correspondences as to how effective they felt it was. They were also asked how many students returned as a result of phone calls and post cards. Several post cards were returned to the Career Center as not having correct addresses. It was determined that we need to call students while they are attending so that if their contact information is not correct we can update our information.	November 14, 2013 and December 12, 2013.	All ESOL Instructors were asked to participate in this. Tracey S. oversaw the results.

	<p>3) Student survey feedback – as well as that of the Transitions and Advanced Instructors was that the program was very well received. Students in lower level classes observed the certificates that were given for participation. We hope this will serve as an incentive for others to persist in the program until they reach the higher levels.</p>	<p>April 1, 2014</p>	<p>Transitions and Advanced ESOL Instructors.</p>
	<p>4) Students who, in the past, may not have attended the potluck dinner – but who had children participating in the Talent Show – showed up and took lots of pictures. This created a sense of pride in family and culture and it was enjoyed by students who did not have children participating but enjoyed the performances. Volunteers also appreciated being invited to the dinner.</p>	<p>February 18, 2014</p>	<p>Tracey S., ESOL Coordinator.</p>

What were your primary financial expenditures for the pilot project?

Expenditure Category	Cost
<p>Financial expenditures for this pilot project were limited to teacher prep time (which was already budgeted) and printing/postage costs of post cards from the Career & Technical Center. This minimal expense was not attributed to our ESOL budget.</p>	

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
<p>I included a description of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ___ initial meetings I had with pilot sites to explain their roles and responsibilities 2. ___ consultants or other staff used as a resource to support the pilot staff 3. ___ any incentives you provided to pilot staff to encourage and/or reward their participation 4. ___ how you made sure that pilot staff knew the evaluation criteria and data they would need to collect to determine impact. 	<p>At a regularly scheduled staff meeting in late October, we met to discuss which strategies we wanted to pilot at our Adult ESOL site. After determining our 4 targeted pilots, meetings regarding pilots which included non staff members were conducted between the ESOL Coordinator and those individuals. I would arrive prior to the start of class time and was generally able to conduct most discussions either in person or via e-mail or over the telephone.</p> <p>Consultants included presenters from The Salvation Army as well as our partner with SON Ministries who coordinates the Children’s Programming activities.</p> <p>I confess to not having to provide incentives to encourage/reward the pilot staff as they are all highly engaged in the success of our students and program. I do believe they were happy to be included in the development, implementation and evaluation of our strategies. In the past they were occasionally not included in the planning phase of program improvement initiatives and were just asked to add to their current duties from an Administrator. Including them in this pilot made them feel more ownership and very much a part of the program.</p> <p>We all discussed that evaluation criteria would be – initially observational and student survey feedback. The final data would be reflected, hopefully, in increased student attendance as well as student persistence</p>

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
<p>3. ___ I included an overall narrative of the results of the pilot.</p> <p>4. ___ I included results based on the end users' evaluation criteria.</p>	<p>The results of our pilot are still being determined but are looking very promising. When I consider this topic, I think about “what value was delivered to the end user”?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Feedback regarding the Student Ambassador Program indicates that there is great interest in other students serving in this capacity. I feel this will be a great incentive for current students to continue to attend, achieve and possibly be asked to serve as next Fall's Orientation. 2) Students who received the Job Readiness certificates were very pleased and students who are currently in lower level courses are aware of this being something they strive to achieve. This was a very good “carrot” to many of the students in our program. 3) In a perfect world, every student who was contacted by his or her teacher and/or via a post card from the Career Center, would have immediately returned to class and been a star student. The very nature of our student population is that they work when they have work, they move from place to place, they return to their countries, or they simply don't have the motivation to attend class. We found that we had many non-working phone numbers and that some of the post cards were returned because of incorrect addresses. We may have retained approximately 5 students from this pilot. I think it is worth continuing. 4) The Cultural Sharing Potluck dinner, I feel, achieved our goal. Students and their families from all 7 classes gathered to share a meal, meet and greet others , and feel a sense of community outside of the classroom. The addition of the children's talent show was genius! The fact that students brought cameras and took pictures of their friends, families and teachers told me they valued this very much.

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

Checklist	Response
5. ___ I included a description of specific changes I needed to make before implementing program-wide.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) With respect to the Student Ambassador appointment, I recognize that at the Fall Orientation, I will include a panel of Ambassadors – students from each of the class levels and a variety of countries will be represented. I think this will be very well received. 2) Regarding our Job Readiness program/partnership with The Salvation Army, I feel very confident with how things went and do not anticipate any changes I would make to the new strategy. 3) Regarding teachers calling on students whose attendance has been dropping off – I would definitely have teachers “test out” the phone numbers given by students at registration with a “Welcome To My Class” phone call. We found that many of the numbers given by students were not viable. This way we can catch students in class and get correct numbers in the event we need to call them later in the year. 4) 4) Regarding the Cultural Sharing Potluck dinner, I was very pleased with how things went. One thing that might make it more memorable would be to have a slideshow of students, families and volunteers running on the big screen while families were eating.

Final Reflection

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

Checklist	Response
3. ___ I included an overview of what I learned from this project.	<p>This program improvement project was very helpful to me as a new coordinator as well as to my staff and program as a whole. The most important thing I learned was how important/valuable it was for me to continue to engage and involve my staff in this process. This way they would feel more ownership of the whole process of identifying areas for improvement as well as in the planning and implementation of our pilot. I learned the importance of analyzing data as a means of identifying and prioritizing those areas in need of program improvement. I also learned how important it is to include a variety of individuals in my workgroup as there are many perspectives that need to be considered before implementing a pilot. I also learned that I work with a great group of teachers, administrators and partners and how much I respect and value their input. I was surprised that they were as engaged in the process as they were and, because I involved them in this process, I feel we are all a much more cohesive group than ever before.</p>