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. 2. ___ I described the positions of the staff on the workgroup	My workgroup includes one support staff member, five instructors, and one administrator. I wanted to have at least one support staff, one instructor and one administrator in the group. I also wanted to have instructors from various subject backgrounds, different locations, and who have students at different academic levels. I am the grant manager. I ensure program compliance with the ABLE grant and complete most of the program fiscal duties such as payroll, billing deposits and account auditing. I manage the day to day operations for office and support staff. I am the program's ABLElink data entry person and the program's Technology Point Person. Our receptionist was the support staff representative. She welcomes customers, receives phone calls, schedules orientations, and is our contact person with ABLE Distance Education. There were five instructors. All of our instructors are part-time, but some teach at more than one site. Two instructors focus on ASE students, two mainly serve ABE students, and one teaches all levels and all subjects. The most of the instructors have changed from our first activity because of staff taking full time employment elsewhere.

LEADERSHIP EXCELLENCE ACADEMIES

	Our Program Coordinator was the administrator.

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. 2. ___ I listed the needs identified by the research review. 3. ___ I listed the needs identified by the data analysis. 4. ___ I listed ONE of those needs for us to use in the pilot.	Needs identified in self-assessment: Offer classes at more/different hours Improve balance of remedial vs. higher level academics Provide more study materials Needs identified in research review: We need to develop a curriculum that addresses both academic and soft skills of our students. We have found through research that students who are not meeting their basic survival needs are very limited in academic success. We need to work with students

	to remove the "fixed mindset" and help them move into a "growth mindset" through goal setting and other activities.

Needs identified through data analysis:

Increase recruitment and retention. The data shows that the need for our service is great in our area, but we do not serve even a minority of those who need our services.

Prioritized need or program component:

With the changes getting ready to take place with WIOA and the increase in the number of our students placing in ABE EFL levels, we would like to focus on creating a contextualized curriculum for our ABE students. We want to create a curriculum that addresses the academic standards, but also addresses goal setting, employment skills and soft skills. |

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. ___ I described the process the workgroup used to narrow the needs down to the one program component to be used in the pilot.	Like most programs, we have multiple program components that could be reviewed and revised. We started with looking at increasing enrollment. We did not meet our enrollment projection last year. We have done various things to try to increase enrollment, but we tried to look at what has really worked. There were so many outside variables that we felt effected enrollment that we couldn't come up with one component to target.
I described how we examined the current program component to identify: 2. ___ what we are doing now that we want to keep, and 3. ___ what parts of the program component that need new strategies.	So we then turned our focus on something that we thought we could control more internally and that was meeting Minimum Performance Level completion rates, retaining students who complete orientation, and complying with WIOA directives to increase the involvement of workforce development. We looked at data from the past two years. We looked at our desk review for FY 14 and our FY 15 ABLElink data. We decided that contextualizing the academic instruction in the ABE level classes will foster a better learning environment and engage students. Currently we are in the planning phase of new lessons for our ABE classrooms. Because every instructor is part-time it is hard to find time to plan. Even when you set hours aside just for planning, many times the instructors end up dealing with immediate student issues left over form that day's class. We have one instructor who has been given the duty to create lessons that are hands on. She has been given two hours per day, eight hours per week, to create contextualized and hands on activities. The goal is for her to create the lessons, give them a test run in other instructor's classes, and then help create a curriculum. We will need to provide professional development for our staff and provide them with time to plan new lessons. It is hard to resist

	teaching directly to the GED test because that is what every student asks us about. Even when a student comes in very low, they question when we do an activity that they don't feel is directly related to the test. We need to be able to explain to the students how the contextualized lesson help them prepare for both the GED exam and gives them marketable job skills. The instructors also have to buy in to the process because it does take a lot of work to change what you have done for a long time and start new lessons that you are not familiar with. If a student feels that what they are working on can be used in their everyday life, then they will retain more information and attend class more regularly.

3. Set a vision and goals

Vision: Contextualized instruction in the ABE classroom   will be working well when students' retention, persistence, and achievement increase.

Checklist	Response
1. ___ I described how I engaged the staff in completing the vision statement. 2. ___ I included the final vision statement.	We met on August 14th, 2015 and discussed the vision statement. We could expand and list a lot of things that we hope would improve, but you always want to make sure that you can measure completion. We thought about adding in something with increasing the number of students who become employed, but because of how long it takes to verify that with a data match, we decided to leave it out. We discussed the difference between a vision statement and goals and decided to leave the vision statement more general and add the specifics into the goals. Vision: Contextualized instruction in the ABE classroom will be working well when students' retention, persistence, and achievement rates increase.

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

Checklist	Response
1. ___ I described how I engaged the staff in anticipating achievements 2. ___ I included that list	We worked on goals during the same meeting about the vision. We wrote down some ideas for goals and I worked with the staff to make sure that we are picking goals that can be measured by data that we collect in ABLElink. Increase ABE student retention (students who enter with EFL 1-4) Increase ABE student persistence (students who enter with EFL 1-4) Increase ABE student achievement (students who enter with EFL 1-4)

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
Student	Increase achievement
Student	Increase the number of students who transition into ASE/GED classes
Instructor	Increase student persistence
Instructor	Increase student achievement
Administrator	Increase student retention
Administrator	Meeting requirements of State Unified Plan for WIOA
Checklist	
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.	One source was from talking to other programs about how they currently integrate contextualized learning. I talked to some colleagues at our LEA in person meetings. I also have talked to some other Ohio ABLE staff members during other trainings and email. In the LEA we were given some information about the I-Best program in Washington. I went online to review how that program is run and I also read some articles about how the program is run. The I-Best program is much more comprehensive than anything I could do with this project, but I wanted to review it just for ideas. Our program is not co-located with career technology training, so I visited on of our partners at Madison Adult Career Center. The director of that program gave me a tour of all of their programs and I spoke with multiple instructors about how they teach academics in the career tech field. They are already doing contextualized learning every day, so it was a great resource. I went to the NCSALL website and reviewed multiple research articles. I looked at many and tried to find any areas related to contextualized instruction, persistence and increasing academic completion rates. One paper that is spent a lot of time reviewing was Classroom Dynamics in Adult Literacy Education NCSALL Report #18. We also drew from our staff's professional experiences. We have multiple staff members who worked at GM or other industrial settings. We worked with them to see what type of math skills are needed for entry level workers.

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. ___ I included a description of the new strategies selected to pilot test. 2. ___ I included a description of the adaptations we made to the new strategy and the rationale for those adaptations.	We decided to integrate contextualized lessons into our Pre-GED math class. The instructor for this class is new to the education field. He has a background in electrical engineering and worked for multiple car manufacturing companies and parts suppliers. He was very receptive to the idea of integrating workplace math skills into his classroom. Because this was a pilot program we decided to focus on measurement as a theme and we were able to fit multiple math concepts under it. We purchased various measurement tools such as tape measures, measuring wheels, calipers, measuring cups and devices for volume. We did not have to purchase books, because we were able to use materials that we already have and download some from internet resources. The adaptations that had to be made were to spend more time on each concept. Sometimes in adult education we are in a hurry because our students feel like they should move faster. We want to continue to introduce the math concept, but then spend the extra time reinforcing it with a hands one activity. This moves the math concepts from the students short term memory to their long term memory and they are much more likely to retain it.

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. ___ who was involved in selecting the pilots 5. ___ the criteria and rationale we used for selecting the pilots.	I met with our director, our lead ABLE teacher, the teacher who would be in the pilot program to select the site. We decided to do the pilot at our main location. Transport and storage of material is very limited at our off-sites because we are using classrooms that are used by other programs during the same day. At our main site we can do an activity and leave it there until the next day to finish it up. This site also worked better because we wanted to specifically target Pre-GED students. At our main location we can separate the classes by level. At our off-site locations every student is in the same classroom.

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

Checklist	Response
I included a description of: 1. ___ the training that was necessary to get the pilot sites up to speed 2. ___ who delivered the training	I worked with our lead teacher and the teacher who would be implementing the lessons. I reviewed information with the teachers about why I wanted them to do it and what we wanted the results to show. They are both math teachers, so I allowed them to determine what math concepts to address and how we could make them hands on.

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	Review ideas from other programs	December 1, 2015	Andrea Karpiak
	Determine what concepts to teach	December 1, 2015	Cliff Chandler
	Review any support material that we may purchase	December 1, 2015	Kevin Uhde
	Purchase supplies	January 4, 2016	Michele Meckes
Implementing	Start instruction on unit	January 4, 2016	Cliff Chandler
	Support instruction on unit	January 4, 2016	Andrea Karpiak
Evaluating	Gather data	March 24, 2016	Kevin Uhde
	Evaluate Data	April 4, 2016	Kevin Uhde

What were your primary financial expenditures for the pilot project?

Expenditure Category		Cost
Instructor Salary to pay time above and beyond normal hours per hour) x 40 hours (2 instructors/20 hours each)	($22.13	$885.20
Tools and materials for unit		$350

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. ___ 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.	We only had one pilot site. The instructor of the site was Cliff Chandler and he was included in our workgroup during the planning phase. We met monthly last year to keep the ideas going and then started to meet weekly towards the end of 2015. Other staff members involved were our lead teacher, who is our only full time instructor, and our program director. Between the two instructors I felt that they had the experience to develop the curriculum side of the pilot. The instructors were paid during our meeting times. I capped the hours to twenty hours per instructor for the project. I am sure they could have spent more time, but we are limited on the amount of money that we can use that isn't predetermined. The pilot staff was included on the initial meetings where we set up the goals of the project and the desired outcomes. We were going to use data that will be collected for ABLE reporting, so no additional data was needed. There would need to be extra time spent pulling specific data and analyzing it, but we used information that would have been collected anyways. We were measuring persistence, retention, and academic gains.

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. ___ I included an overall narrative of the results of the pilot. 4. ___ I included results based on the end users' evaluation criteria.	The results of our pilot were mixed with both positive and negative results. The positive results were that students were enthusiastic about the activities and being able to do hands on work. The instructor was positive about the unit because he felt that it introduced skills that the students could use at home or work. The negatives were that our students do not attend on a regular basis and that makes it difficult to do extended activities that may take longer than one day. Students say that they like it and were enthusiastic while in class, but I am not sure if it changed much in persistence or retention. To measure results I took data from January and February, while the instructor was using the units, and compared them to the same class in other months. **Persistence** During two month unit=22.84 hour per month not during unit=22.55 hour per month **Retention % (student stopped attending and did not return within data recording period)** During two month unit= 19.73% Not during unit (Aug-Dec 2015)=17.46% **Completed a level** I do not feel like I could get accurate data for this field because it was not a closed session. Students in the pilot group had already previously completed a level.

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.	I would do the pilot with a new "managed enrollment" group. I wasn't able to measure academic achievement because I didn't use a group of students that did not have previous instruction. I would need to create a pilot that is longer and more fully contextualized. Some students are very resistant to the contextualized instruction because they do not feel like they are learning what is on the GED test. While we advise them that the GED test measures their ability to locate information and reason, even on the math, they feel like if they are not doing math problems in route learning, they are not prepping for the test.

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.	Because of certain limitations we were not able to develop a larger scale pilot program. If I wanted to do a pilot program that would truly encompass ideas that we brought up during the planning phase it would require taking an instructor completely out of their current assignment and have them completely invested in the pilot. I just didn't feel like I had the financial or time capital to do what I would really like to do. I would truly like to run an concurrent enrollment program with students in a six to nine month career tech program am make it more like the I-Best model. I feel like right now, Ohio ABLE measure results more on quantity and now quality of instruction. I am currently working with partners to write a grant. The grant program will provide funding to send a student to a career training program like CNC, Welding, and Phlebotomy. Since these programs currently require students to have their GED for federal financial aid it limits our ability to do concurrent enrollment. With the grant covering the training cost instead of federal financial aid, it will allow us to dual-enroll some students in ABLE and career tech at the same time. The experience and information gained from doing this project will be used to develop this new grant program and it will give me the chance to make the closed session pilot program longer and more rigorous.