

# Culminating Learning Project

## 1. Engage the workgroup

Briefly describe the composition of your program improvement workgroup.

Checklist	Response
1. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I identified the number of staff on the workgroup.	My workgroup is small. I have 2 ABLE instructors and 1 support staff member participating.
2. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 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. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I listed the needs identified by the self assessments.	<p><b>Needs identified in self-assessment:</b></p> <p>Student Recruitment, Student Persistence and unified curriculum were revealed as needs through self-assessment.</p> <p><b>Needs identified in research review:</b></p> <p>Our program needs to focus on improving student persistence and expanding opportunities for student learning that keeps students engaged long enough to meet goals and make progress,</p>
2. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I listed the needs identified by the research review.	
3. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I listed the needs identified by the data analysis.	

<p>4. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I listed ONE of those needs for us to use in the pilot.</p>	<p><b>Needs identified through data analysis:</b></p> <p>Persistence is a problem, especially in EFL levels 2, 3 and 4, where we have failed to meet state standards. Too many students have sporadic attendance that results in long waits until progress testing can occur. We also need to launch recruitment effort geared at ESOL.</p> <p><b>Prioritized need or program component:</b></p> <p>Persistence is the priority that all agree must be addressed through our pilot.</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. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 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</p>	<p>The workgroup engaged in a review of the different data sources and quickly agreed that Student Persistence was the major need that should be addressed. Aside from the data, instructors shared their struggles with inconsistent attendance and it's negative impact on classroom instruction and ultimately the student's separation from the program prior to meeting goals.</p> <p>The workgroup also identified factors that positively and negatively impact attendance and persistence. Positive factors identified include managed enrollment ( 8 and 12 week closed enrollment classes) and leveled classes composed of students of</p>

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.

similar skill levels. These aspects of our program should be maintained. Factors negatively impacting persistence include:

- students who are mandated to attend by other agencies,
- the modules (language and math course taught separately by level)
- Students personal barriers and complicated home lives
- Inconsistent attendance policy enforcement, leading students to disregard it entirely.
- Unrealistic expectations of the work involved in mastering the material needed to meet goals.
- Students’ need to work. They find work when needed and classes are secondary to meeting their immediate financial needs. They can not juggle work and school well.

From this list, we believe that we need new strategies to engage the referring agencies in order to gain a shared understanding of the ABLÉ program and the needs of the referring agency.

We also need to examine our attendance policy and its positive impact along with unintended negative consequences.

We also agreed that we are unable to provide all of the supportive services that our students need. We need to connect them sooner with college, community and workforce resources where trained staff assists in the development of a plan for success. Currently, students have short term ABLÉ goals but no plan for overall success, and no coordination between the multiple entities to whom they must answer in some way (TANF, Child Support, Metro Housing, Probation and Parole, family and work)

	Lastly, we need to proactively re-engage students who have separated from class for 30 days, and find ways to get them back into class.
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### 3. Set a vision and goals

Vision: Our Student Persistence Initiative will be working well when our program meets performance indicators for at least 5 of 6 ABL EFL levels at quarterly intervals.

(Fill in the program component you are working on)

Checklist	Response
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I described how I engaged the staff in completing the vision statement.</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I included the final vision statement.</li> </ol>	<p>The workgroup discussed how to measure persistence, and agreed that it is best measured by attendance and progress testing. The group agreed that the ultimate outcome we strive to is having persistence increase to the level where the Lorain ABL EFL Program succeeds in all 6 ABL EFL levels, but realistically set our goal to include 5 of the 6 levels.</p> <p>Additional work will need to be done to determine how to define the cohort within each EFL level for quarterly analysis. We need to exclude new students who have attended regularly but who have not logged enough class time to be considered for progress testing.</p>

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

Checklist	Response
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I described how I engaged the staff in anticipating achievements</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I included that list</li> </ol>	When we are finished, we will have achieved ABL staff

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
Instructors	Attendance spreadsheets
Support Staff	ABLELink data, queries on progress, table 4 data
Checklist	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I identified each of the end users (e.g., teachers, tutors, aides, managers) who will be using the new strategies.</li> <li>2. <input type="checkbox"/> 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.</li> </ol>	

#### 4. Gather and select promising practices

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

Checklist	Response
3. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I identified all of the sources we explored to find models and strategies that address our program improvement component.	Our workgroup began planning for implementation of an incentive program in December, However, by January, our focus quickly shifted, as did our pilot project, due to dramatically reduced attendance at our sites. November and December were dramatically lower than September and October, which we initially attributed to students who stopped attending as the tested. However, despite adding a number of new students, January was still lower than desired. We revisited our previous strategy and adjusted our pilot to address <b>Strategy 2: Making personal contact with students with low or no attendance.</b>

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. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I included a description of the new strategies selected to pilot test.	Our procedure was simple and straight forward. Phone calls would be placed to students who had missed a week of class at our CLE day site to encourage their return and determine if they needed assistance in order to return.
2. <input type="checkbox"/> I included a description of the adaptations we made to the new strategy and the rationale for those adaptations.	Ideally, calls would be placed after one or two absences, but the logistics of having immediate attendance available, and staff scheduling made this unrealistic.

### 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. <input type="checkbox"/> who was involved in selecting the pilots 5. <input type="checkbox"/> the criteria and rationale we used for selecting the pilots.	The team, (myself, support staff and instructor) chose the CLE site because there had been a significant drop in attendance, (one day where nobody showed up) especially in the lower level class. Additionally, since this site is located alongside the ABLE Administrative Offices, attendance info would be readily available, as most sites submit attendance bi-weekly.

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

Checklist	Response
I included a description of:  1. <u>  x  </u> the training that was necessary to get the pilot sites up to speed  2. <u>    </u> who delivered the training	No training was needed

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	Procedure for sharing attendance and making calls established.	2/1/14	Mary
	Forms for tracking calls created	2/1/14	Support Staff
Implementing	Office staff to receive weekly attendance from instructor	2/1/14	Support Staff
	Place calls to absent students as indicated by instructor	2/1/14 to 3/31/14	Support Staff
	Record outcome of call		Support Staff
Evaluating	Compare attendance reports. Determine if calls had an impact on students returning to class post-absence.	4/1/14	Mary

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What were your primary financial expenditures for the pilot project?

Expenditure Category	Cost
No expenses	

### 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"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> initial meetings I had with pilot sites to explain their roles and responsibilities</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> consultants or other staff used as a resource to support the pilot staff NO</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> any incentives you provided to pilot staff to encourage and/or reward their participation NO</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> how you made sure that pilot staff knew the evaluation criteria and data they would need to collect to determine impact.</li> </ol>	<p>Preparation was simple. Staff collected attendance from the 2 classes on a weekly basis and consulted with the teacher to determine who had not attended, and whether or not they had contacted the teacher to advise her of their absence. Those who did not contact the teacher and for whom we had no reason for an absence were placed on a call list.</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. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I included an overall narrative of the results of the pilot.</p> <p>4. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I included results based on the end users' evaluation criteria.</p>	<p>Because of the switch of our pilot's focus from offering Incentives to placing phone calls to absentees, we implemented in February. Weekly attendance reports from the 2 classes at the CLE site were reviewed and calls were placed to those absent more than twice. This included newly assigned students who did not show. Students were called three times</p> <p>Because of the ongoing, horrible weather that we experienced this winter, many students experienced attendance issues due to these conditions, When contacted, many <b>ongoing</b> students expressed intentions to return, and most followed through. <b>New students</b> that we could contact also expressed intention to attend, but fewer of them actually did.</p> <p>Many students could not be reached by phone. Their phones were either disconnected or could not accept voicemail messages, or the mailbox was full. If a voicemail message was left, many did not return it, especially new students.</p> <p><u>End User Impact:</u> For <b>support staff</b> making calls, this project demonstrated the enormous amount of time spent repeatedly calling students, leaving voice mails, calling emergency contacts, etc... for students who may have never intended to attend post-orientation. This situation, which seems to be getting worse as fewer participants have house phones and young students do not use voicemail, prompted change.</p> <p>For the <b>instructor</b>, the increase in attendance (which could be attributable to improved weather, or our calls) is a positive outcome, although the increase was small. (From an average attendance of 2 to 5 in Class 1, and an increase from 7 to 8 in Class 2). IN the winter of the "Polar Vortex", and post GED 14 implementation, even the slightest increase is a god one.</p> <p>Overall, we need to weigh the outcome with the expenditure of effort.</p>

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

Checklist	Response
5. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I included a description of specific changes I needed to make before implementing program-wide.	We are exploring the use of social media, specifically facebook, to communicate with students. Their transitory nature and “on-again, off-again” phones made contact difficult. To implement the phone call system program wide would require significant staff time that we just don’t have, especially when so many phones were disconnected, had voice mail disabled or full mailboxes.

### Final Reflection

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

Checklist	Response
3. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I included an overview of what I learned from this project.	I learned that even a small pilot can yield significant results. We got off to a late start, but implementing change, even on the small scale of 2 classes, has forced us to embrace social media as a tool that we really must implement. The effort spent on calling students would be better spent on increasing transition conversations with students.....which we could also do using Facebook. If we can get just 50% of our students to “like” us and check our updates, the impact could be significant.