

The Higher Learning Commission Action Project Directory

Bay de Noc Community College

Project Details			
Title	Reading for Learning	Status	COMPLETED
Category	1-Helping Students Learn	Updated	09-03-2009
Timeline		Reviewed	09-26-2009
	Planned Project Kickoff	Created	11-24-2009
	Actual Completion	Version	1
	09-15-2008		
	04-30-2010		

1: Project Goal

A: The goal of this Action Project is to appropriately address gaps in students' reading abilities to ensure they are successful in their college courses. Bay College does not currently place students into reading courses based on reading ability and does not have required reading levels established as prerequisites for courses. By the time this Action Project is completed, we will have hired a reading instructor, developed new transitional reading courses, and implemented a mandatory reading placement policy for students who show a need for these courses.

2: Reasons For Project

A: We have found that Bay students who struggle with reading are not successful in their college course-work and have identified through research, as well as through other colleges' experiences, that both reading placement processes and targeted developmental reading programs can be successful interventions. Reading for Learning is also one of the intervention strategies that we have taken on as part of our work with Achieving the Dream, which has provided us with the funding needed to initiate this improvement process.

3: Organizational Areas Affected

A: The institutional department most affected by this program will be Instruction and Student Learning, since its primary role is the oversight of academics. Because students' reading skills play a role in their success in most classes, Reading for Learning should affect all six of our academic divisions to some extent. However, our Arts and Letters division will be most affected, as it will govern the reading courses directly.

4: Key Organizational Process(es)

A: Bay College has a developmental placement program in place known as PASS – Program Aimed at Student Success. This Action Project will directly affect this process, since new reading placement cut-off scores will be developed and students will now be placed into required developmental reading courses. Therefore, other organizational processes; such as advising, registration, and orientation; will also be affected by these new procedures. Overall, this program is intended to improve student success via the establishment of accurate reading prerequisite levels and a sequence of reading courses that help students acquire the appropriate reading levels necessary for them to be successful throughout their college career and beyond.

5: Project Time Frame Rationale

A: This Action Project began in September 2008 when we first began work towards implementing our Achieving the Dream interventions and first brought on board our new reading instructor. During the fall term, we also piloted a linked course between one of our existing reading courses and a psychology gateway course. For the next academic year, we will be running multiple pilot sessions and implementing the mandatory reading placement process. Therefore, our pilots should be finished, our curriculum in place, and our placement policies initiated, by the end of fall 2009.

6: Project Success Monitoring

A: Because this Action Project is also part of Achieving the Dream, we will regularly be monitoring its progress and reporting out on the

results of our data-driven analysis. Our AtD Core Team and AtD Evaluation Team will be tasked with the oversight of this project's progress. Our Instructional Leadership Team will also receive reports on the progress of Reading for Learning. Lastly, a Transitional Studies Committee regularly meets to discuss issues related to developmental education, so this committee will provide yet another avenue for input and review of this project.

7: Project Outcome Measures

A: One of the key performance indicators we will be using to measure this project's success is the pass rate of reading students in gateway courses. The primary question we are trying to answer is, "Does the addition of the reading curriculum increase student success in college-level courses, especially those that are considered to be 'reading intensive'?" We will also be monitoring the effect that reading courses have on student retention, both from term-to-term and year-to-year.

8: Other Information

A:

Project Update

1: Project Accomplishments and Status

A: In the fall of 2008, a Reading Subcommittee was formed--in coordination with the college's Achieving the Dream (AtD) initiative--to establish a reading program at Bay College. At that time, the college had one reading course that was not mandatory. After several meetings and much research, the committee established a reading competency equivalent to 11.8 (eleventh grade, eighth month). This is comparable to a COMPASS score of 78 or an ACT score of 18. Students with scores below the established competency level will be required to enroll in a reading course at Bay College. This competency was based on the model used by Lake Michigan Community College. LMCC is one of only 37 schools in the nation (and one of only two in Michigan) that is NADE (National Association for Developmental Education) certified; therefore, it has conducted an in-depth study of its developmental reading program. After the competency was established, the Subcommittee implemented a three-tiered model of developmental reading courses at Bay. Enrollment in the low- and mid-range courses will be required and determined by mandatory placement. Enrollment in the highest reading course will be by recommendation only. After deciding to use the grade equivalents and COMPASS scores implemented by Lake Michigan, the Reading Subcommittee consulted a COMPASS/ACT concordance chart provided by Victoria Thompson-Campbell, the Senior Consultant Postsecondary/Business Services at ACT. The chart converts COMPASS scores into ACT scores. The third recommendation the Subcommittee made was for all courses requiring reading proficiency for student success be coded with an "R" designation in all college documents. This designation accompanies the M (Math) and W (Writing) designations being used by other divisions at Bay College. The Instructional Leaders Team at the college accepted the recommendations. As a result, readability tests were performed on several textbooks campus-wide to determine which ones should have the "R" designation; the college established mandatory placement; and curriculum for the following reading courses was developed: EN 070 Basic Reading Skills, EN 075 College Reading Skills, and EN 105 Strategic Reading & Critical Thinking.

2: Institution Involvement

A: The AtD Reading Subcommittee was comprised of both full-time and part-time faculty and staff at Bay College from both the Escanaba and Iron Mountain campuses. Membership was open to all interested. To move the task of establishing a reading program forward, the Subcommittee established timelines and divided tasks amongst the members. Meeting minutes were sent to committee members as well as those who were not on the committee but were interested in our efforts. Bay's reading instructor and a full-time writing instructor held campus-wide informational meetings to keep all faculty and staff members informed about the project and its progress.

3: Next Steps

A: Since the implementation of mandatory placement in reading this fall, the college is now in the information collection stage to assess if mandatory placement and the addition of the new reading courses help with retention and student success. The Nelson-Denny Reading Test will be administered at the start and finish of each semester as one form of assessment for student growth. Retention rates from semester to semester and, eventually, year to year will be examined to see if students are impacted by taking a reading

course. Additionally, the college is offering a paired course between PY 201 Introduction to Psychology and EN 075 College Reading Skills and collecting Nelson-Denny scores, exit surveys, grades, and retention rates. After these last few remaining implementation steps are taken this fall, we believe that this Action Project can be retired. Data collection and analysis will still need to take place, but the majority of the implementation work will be complete. Therefore, it is our recommendation that this Action Project be retired as originally planned in December 2009.

4: Resulting Effective Practices

A: Other institutions should research student success in relation to students' reading assessment scores. At Bay, it was clear that students with low reading scores were not succeeding in content-heavy courses. Many were failing or withdrawing, which not only affected the students' morale but also affected their retention. By establishing mandatory placement in reading, Bay College is able to ensure students have the best chance for success.

5: Project Challenges

A: The registration process has been a challenge. There is a system in place that blocks students with low reading assessment score from enrolling in courses with "R" designation. However, there are glitches in the computer system, making it difficult to advise or register students. In addition, helping faculty stay informed about the advising process has been difficult. Some faculty members don't attend advising meetings; therefore, they are unsure of which courses to enroll students with low reading scores. Overall, the majority of advisors are doing well, but there are a few who have misadvised students.

6: AQIP Involvement

A:

Update Review

1: Project Accomplishments and Status

A: Bay de Noc Community College undertook a one year Action Project focused on creating and implementing a reading policy, developing recommended reading courses, and hiring a reading instructor. While this seems like a lofty goal for 15 months, this Action Project contributes to two larger programs, Achieving the Dream (AtD), and Program Aimed at Student Success (PASS). Bay de Noc Community College accomplished a lot in this past year: Formed the Reading Sub-Committee; established the minimum reading competency and connected the competency to both COMPASS and ACT tests; wrote the reading competency policy; developed three developmental reading courses; and designated all courses that require reading proficiency as "R" courses, which builds on the existing system where math proficiency courses are "M" and writing proficiency courses are "W." Adding the reading proficiency appears to be a natural progression for this institution, or an example of one more step in their continuous quality improvement for student development and success. Bay de Noc Community College initially outlined goals impacting the pass rate for students in gateway courses, impacting student success in college-level courses, and improving student retention. These goals are not accomplished in the same year when the systems are developed, and the College is simply not at a point to monitor. However, the action project outlined the foundational work, and this was accomplished through a systems approach. Bay de Noc's undertaking of this action project followed the Plan-Do-Study-Act model, and used existing processes for improvement. They have made reasonable progress in the past year and continue to monitor this new system and the impact the new reading policy has on students.

2: Institution Involvement

A: Bay de Noc stated that "everyone was invited," but they did not describe how this invitation occurred. The report says that full- and part-time faculty participated on the Reading Sub-Committee. There is no description regarding why this committee complement was the most appropriate. The report also identifies that minutes were sent to committee members and interested parties, but the interested parties were not described or listed. In addition, campus-wide information meetings were held to communicate progress, but again, there is no information provided to determine how this was accomplished. The institution would benefit in a more detailed description of who was involved and how. This would assure inclusion from key stakeholders.

3: Next Steps

A: Bay de Noc is retiring the implementation portion of this Action Project; and they deserve accolades for the new activities that will contribute to student success. They state the importance of collecting data, but they do not identify the plan for data collection. The College would benefit from a clearly specified plan including who will do what and when. There is no information provided regarding monitoring and improvement. Organizations committed to continuous quality improvement never consider a cycle completed without plans for monitoring and improvement.

4: Resulting Effective Practices

A: Bay de Noc Community College should be commended for identifying a specific problem (reading competency in students), and using the PDSA model for solutions. The College invested resources in investigating the problem and solutions, and building infrastructure for ongoing resolution. This Action Project built upon their success of other systems, specifically the math and writing competencies. However, the model falls short in their final data collection, and dedication to monitoring and process for improvement in this established system. In their report, they state they are "able to ensure students have the best chance for success," but that is strong wording for a program that does not have a strong data collection process.

5: Project Challenges

A: Bay de Noc Community College recognizes that there are challenges in the implementation of this new system, including registration issues, uninformed faculty, and faculty not adhering to the new policy. While challenges are to be expected, Bay de Noc's report does not address how the institution is systematically overcoming these problems. Again, this is directly related to an unspecified monitoring and oversight process, and a lack of understanding who will do what and when to understand and improve the system.

6: AQIP Involvement

A: 9834 This institution is making reasonable progress (2) and there is development of an institution-wide continuous quality improvement culture.

Project Outcome

1: Reason for completion

A: The hiring of a full-time reading instructor, the implementation of mandatory placement, and the development of curriculum for two levels of reading courses have been completed.

2: Success Factors

A: Bay College currently has a full-time instructor devoted to the teaching of reading, along with two part-time instructors spanning both campuses. In addition, a Reading Committee comprised of faculty and staff was established to research ACT and COMPASS cut-off scores and curriculum at other community colleges prior to establishing the College's program. With the implementation of mandatory placement in reading, the committee urged instructors of reading-intensive courses to establish course prerequisites in reading. The full-time reading instructor conducted readability profiles on dozens of college textbooks to assist faculty in determining the need for a reading prerequisite for their courses. Currently, more than twenty courses have reading prerequisites. Furthermore, a permanent Transitional Studies Committee has been formed to oversee the reading program and other transitional programs at Bay College. The Transitional Studies Committee, which will be led by the Transitional Studies Coordinator, will continue to collect and analyze data related to the reading program and use the results of this process to guide further improvements.

3: Unsuccessful Factors

A: Retention rates for students enrolled in reading are not as high as expected; however, the reading curriculum is being examined, along with ways to improve student placement. Additionally, data will continue to be collected to help improve the reading courses at Bay College.

