Workforce Learning Summit Innovation or Best Practice

College of The Albemarle

Start Now – Following the S.A.M.E. Pathway:
A Unique Framework of Social, Academic and Moral Education

Building internal college-wide and external community relationships is the key to student success. It takes an entire community of educators, social, and workforce agencies and employers to support a student’s progression through a college credential or degree program to completion.

“Start Now” has enabled our lower skilled adults to obtain postsecondary credentials with labor market value. “Start Now” initiatives accelerate Adult Basic Education students faster by combining basic skills and occupational training into one curriculum.

DETAILS

In January 2011, College of The Albemarle (COA) was awarded the Breaking Through Grant. The grant allowed our college to explore, refine, and implement a dual enrolled program of study for our low skilled adult learners seeking to earn the secondary credential GED/AHS Diploma and college credits.

We began our journey by identifying our stakeholders both internally and externally. An advisory steering committee was established with members from the service agencies, business community, college curriculum, and basic skills instructors. The committee set the vision and goals of the “Start Now” Breaking Through program.

In order to accelerate the pace of learning for the students, comprehensive staff development was designed. Instructors from the curriculum, continuing education and basic skills collaborated on contextualization of the curriculum. The Breaking Through contextualization toolkit was the primary material used to assist our instructors in changing the way we deliver instruction.

The Advisory Steering Committee created subcommittees in the following areas in order to facilitate the implementation of the Start Now program.

- Creating Stackable Career Pathways:
  - In 2011, three stackable career pathways were created in the programs of aviation sheet metal, medical professions, and business and computer technologies. As of July 2014, nine career pathways have been established.

- Providing Comprehensive Support Services:
  - The subcommittees brought together the following external partners: Kid’s Taxi, ICPTA (Inter-County Public Transportation Authority) Albemarle Commission, Social Services, Vocational Rehabilitation, faith-based organizations, counseling services, employment agencies, and college advisors. As a result of these collaborations,
external partners were housed in the college so financial assistance was provided to our students.

- **Academic Support Services with a Soft Skill Curriculum:**
  - The internal partnership subcommittee created opportunities for the students to have equitable access to academic tutoring, HRD (Human Resources Development), Google, My Courses, and career counseling from the college curriculum and SSEM (Student Success Enrollment Management) Department.
  - Team teaching was created in each career pathway. The team teaching model allowed the student to receive the academic support both in the curriculum and secondary classroom by delivering comprehensive, contextualized lessons.
  - The What It Takes soft skills curriculum was integrated into both the curriculum and secondary classes. These skills taught students the expectations of being successful in the world of work.

- Finally, the Labor Market Committee worked closely with creating new business partnerships and strong business relationships in the Welding, Aviation, Culinary, and Early Childhood areas which have produced internships, apprenticeships, and employment for the “Start Now” cohort of students.

Implementation began in August 2011.

**Partner Type(s):**
- Business/Industry (direct involvement)
- Workforce Development Board
- Career Centers
- Faith-based Organizations
- Other: Foundations (Jobs for the Future Accelerating Opportunities grant), System Office (Basic Skills Plus) and subcommittee collaboration with organizations such as Inter-County Public Transportation Authority, Social Services, Vocational Rehabilitation

**Impact/Outcomes**
- Thirty-nine students earned six or more credits toward college credentials
- Forty-four students earned a college credential or certificate completion
- Fifty-four students transitioned into Advanced Certificate Diploma/Associate Degree Program or gainfully employed.

- Articulation agreement with the Iron Workers 79
- Internships with students in the welding and aviation pathways
- Increase curriculum FTE for the college
- Increase in the number of NC Readiness Certificate Completers (CRC)

**Funding Source(s)**

Key funding came from Jobs for the Future (JFF).
**REFLECTIONS**

**Innovation or Best Practice**
Using the Completion By Design model as a framework for the Start Now program has allowed the college to break down the barriers at each level of the design. These included connecting with internal and external partners, assisting students in registration and placement through Orientation at the entry level, providing intensive academic tutoring, bridging classes and employability readiness sources support to students. Finally, introducing students to the business community through internships and job shadowing experiences has successfully prepared them to meet today’s workforce needs.

**Lessons Learned**
Advising of students throughout the entire process of Completion By Design, attendance, academic and soft skills is a continuous work in progress.

**Scalability**
The success of the Start Now program involved changing the culture of how we evaluate adult learners. One example was in changing the name from Basic Skills to Basic & Transitional Studies. This allowed students to see beyond the high school equivalency to dually participating in a career academic and employment training experience.

The success of the best practice is based on the collaboration of all stakeholders.

**RESOURCES**

**Workforce Learning Summit Presenters**

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