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 program improvement workgroup has changed slightly since we began this process last fall. One of the instructors who was part of the initial workgroup is now on maternity leave, and I have hired two new instructors who started this process with me when we did the research review. My workgroup now consists of myself, one experienced instructor who has been with me throughout this entire process, and my two new instructors.

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: - Assisting students who have health or social barriers overcome those barriers - Organizing activities that encourage student retention - Providing classes of sufficient intensity, duration, and flexibility Needs identified in research review: - Assessing the strengths and needs of my students in the four component reading skills (vocabulary, fluency, decoding, and comprehension) - Making an effective ABE-to-college transition program - Increasing the student achievement levels for basic skills students Needs identified through data analysis: - Increasing enrollment - Increasing number of students being post-tested Prioritized need or program component:

	- Providing classes of sufficient intensity, duration, and flexibility by switching to leveled classes for reading/writing and math

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. 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.	I compiled the lists of needs identified in the program self-assessment, research review, and data analysis. I then had a meeting with two of the three other members of my workgroup to discuss trends we saw within the list. We all noted that in our classroom experience, having both lower level and higher level students in the same classroom can be a struggle, especially in math and language arts. We try to differentiate instruction as much as possible and offer additional class times for students to stop in and get some one-on-one time with their instructors, but occasionally the lower level students get overwhelmed and the higher level students get bored and frustrated covering material they are already comfortable with. We feel that this leads to students on both ends of the continuum not getting what they need from us and stopping out. We started brainstorming ways that we could work around this, including several ideas for changes to the class schedule and the material we present. We decided that we would keep our class times, orientation schedule, and our eight-week session blocks, alternating between studying reading/writing/social studies one block, and then math/science the next, as is. It works well with our sites, instructors, and budget. We also would keep most of our curriculum material the same. It meets the standards and our students' needs. And we would keep the one, three-hour class of either science or social studies the same each week. However, the math and the language arts classes will be divided into a level one class for EFLs 1 through 4 and a level two class for EFLs 5 and 6, each meeting for two, one-and-a-half hour classes each week. This will allow students who come into the program at a high level to get through the material they need quickly, while giving lower level students time to build those important foundational skills and work their way up to the higher level class. We will need to decide upon how to divide up our existing curriculum materials between the two levels, and then find or create materials to supplement any missing components.

3. Set a vision and goals

Vision: <u>Providing classes of sufficient intensity, duration, and flexibility by switching to leveled classes for reading/writing and math</u> will be working well when...

(Fill in the program component you are working on)

Checklist	Response
1. ✓ I described how I engaged the staff in completing the vision statement. 2. ✓ I included the final vision statement.	I met with one of the instructors in my workgroup to help decide upon the wording of our vision statement for this project. We decided upon the following as our vision statement: Providing classes of sufficient intensity, duration, and flexibility by switching to leveled classes for reading/writing and math will be working well when our students show increased persistence and progress after attending these leveled classes.

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	My workgroup and I believe that this change to our teaching strategy will lead to increased student persistence and achievement, as evidenced by increased attendance, higher post-test rates, higher scores on post-tests, and greater numbers of students earning their GEDs.

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
Aspire coordinator	Attendance sheets, TABE retest scores, GED test results, ABLELink data
Instructors	Attendance sheets, TABE retest scores, student work samples

Checklist	Response
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	We will begin by implementing this strategy in just one classroom, and then hopefully expand it to all of our GED/basic skills classes. Therefore, at first, it will just be one instructor and the Aspire coordinator using the strategy and collecting evidence. The instructor would like to see students being more engaged and showing more progress in the classroom. The Aspire coordinator would like to see an increase in students being post-tested and showing a skills gain.

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.	In all of the trainings we do about teaching adult learners, some central themes are present – differentiation is crucial when teaching a multilevel classroom, adult learners need some choices in their educational materials, and working in small groups helps increase learning. This pilot project will incorporate many of these elements.

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
2. ✓ I included a description of the new strategies selected to pilot test. 3. ✓ I included a description of the adaptations we made to the new strategy and the rationale for those adaptations.	The strategy that we chose to pilot test in our program was dividing our math and reading/writing classes, in which we currently have all levels of students learning together, into a level one (EFLs 1 through 4) and a level two (EFLs 5 and 6), within the class schedule that we already have set. Essentially, we would divide each class period in half, and the instructor would work with level one students during one half while level two students work independently, and then switching so that the instructor works with the level two students while the level one students work independently. This strategy would give us the benefits of fully leveled classes, such as allowing us to focus on the two groups of students' needs to increase retention and test scores and encouraging independence and self-efficacy, while allowing us to stay within our current constraints of budget and time for completely separate classes.

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: 1. ✓ who was involved in selecting the pilots 2. ✓ the criteria and rationale we used for selecting the pilots.	My work group has remained the same since we decided upon the pilot project – my three instructors and I. We worked together to select the pilot activity and site. We decided to pilot the project with my class for several reasons. The class size is usually mid-range for our program, and the students tend to be a variety of levels. I do most of our curriculum development for math, so it made sense for me to take the lead with this project.

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

Checklist	Response
I included a description of: 3. ✓ the training that was necessary to get the pilot sites up to speed 4. ✓ who delivered the training	Our pilot did not require any additional training.

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	Staff meeting – Review current curriculum materials available	1/29/2018	Christina
	Find additional materials to use	February 2018	Christina, Kara, Karen, Ben
	Staff meeting – Gather and organize curriculum materials, discuss our goals for the pilot	2/26/2018	Christina
Implementing	Introduce new class structure to new and returning students at OhioMeansJobs site	3/13/2018	Christina

	Begin using new class structure in math classes at OhioMeansJobs site	3/13/2018	Christina
Evaluating	End pilot early due to lack of level two students	3/29/2018	Christina
	Staff meeting – discuss initial findings from pilot	4/23/2018	Christina
	Review data at end of class session	4/26/2018	Christina

What were your primary financial expenditures for the pilot project?

Expenditure Category	Cost
We had no expenditures for this pilot project.	$0

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.	As lead instructor, I headed the curriculum development for this pilot. The rest of my workgroup served as supports for this project. They have been a part of the entire process of developing and initiating the class structure change, and they found many of the materials I planned to use, especially additional worksheets and activities that students could complete individually or in small groups while I was working with the other level group. We did not offer any incentives to encourage participation. We discussed how we would be looking at both student persistence and achievement when we evaluate the project.

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
1. ✓ I included an overall narrative of the results of the pilot. 2. ✓ I included results based on the end users' evaluation criteria.	Our pilot class started with four students in the level one group (two returning students and two new students) and three students in the level two group (two returning students and one new student). The new students were very open to trying the new class structure, but the returning students were initially very resistant to a change. They wanted to do what the other group was doing, too, and did not want to work alone or with the others in their level. I attempted to keep the two groups divided as planned for a couple of weeks to allow them to adjust to the different classroom style, but I ended up losing all three of my level two students from the class within that time. However, they did not stop attending due to the class. One took (and passed!) his GED test, one got a job that interferes with her class schedule, and one had transportation issues, but is scheduling to take his GED test the end of April. After the level two students all left, we just reverted back to our usual class schedule with the remaining students. I did use some of the independent work that I had planned with these students to start encouraging them to be more proactive in their learning. Some of the activities were well-liked by the group. I feel that, although this project did not go as planned, the results for student achievement were good for the level two group. One of the three level two students earned his HSE, one got a job, and the third will have his HSE within the month. It is difficult to determine if these quick successes were due to the class format or just motivated students. The number of persistence was lower than our average for this group due to them reaching their goals quickly. The level one students who have remained in the program will be taking their posttests on April 26, and I hope to see an increase in persistence hours and NRS level gains in this group compared to other groups this fiscal year.

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

Checklist	Response
3. ✓ I included a description of specific changes I needed to make before implementing program-wide.	Now that some of our long-term students are familiar with the proposed changes to the class, I feel that they may be more open to giving this style a try next session, when we attempt the same process with a reading and writing class. I would like to try having the student group who is working independently move to a separate space, perhaps the computer lab, to minimize distractions. This would also encourage more computer work for students who are reluctant to use technology.

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.	Even though this project did not go as I envisioned it, I did learn a lot from the process. The biggest thing is that change is difficult for both our students and our staff, even if it's a change for the better. Patience, persistence, and consistency with the new routine are key. I am looking forward to making adjustments to the initial pilot and trying again to make this work.