



High School Referral (HSR) & Adult Diploma (AD) Low Performing Students

To: Madelyn Arballo

From: Nancy Aguirre, M.A., Project Coordinator and Dan Lamoree, B.A/B.S., Educational
Research Assessment Analyst, Research & Institutional Effectiveness Office

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Abstract

Many young students participate in the courses offered at the Adult Basic Education (ABE) Department. This particular analysis focuses on the High School Referral (HSR) Program and Adult Diploma (AD) Program, which are both components of the high school program. These students have fallen behind in school due to any challenges or obstacles in their personal as well as academic lives. This project will ensure that students are sufficiently prepared in Basic Skills courses, and it will inform the program staff on the effectiveness of the services they offer. The AD project seeks to assist students in increasing the number of credits they earn by 10%, overall. It also will examine the effectiveness of tutoring as well as its impact on student achievement. While not all Student Learning Outcomes were met, the implementation of Action Plans yielded positive results.

The Adult Basic Education (ABE) Department contains a high school program, which assists students who are not fully prepared for college or do not have sufficient high school credits. There are two components to this overarching program; one is the High School Referral (HSR) Program, and the other is the Adult Diploma (AD) Program. These programs serve over 2,500 students each year. Specifically, the HSR Program targets about 1,600 students, and the sample will be about 63% of the fall 2009 - spring 2010 population. The purpose of this program is to enable students to make-up any missing high school credits. These students are at-risk for not graduating from high school or being underprepared to attend college. Tutors and counselors are available to assist students in completing credits. The project will examine course completion rates. More students should complete high school credits and earn a diploma. Tutors will log all student contact hours, and counselors will record notes from their meetings with students. Student progress and attendance will be documented for future reference.

The AD Program is for students 17 and older, which is the most difficult, labor intensive group in the ABE Department. This is because students are high school drop-outs and come from tumultuous backgrounds such as foster care, abusive home environments, gangs, incarceration, as well as poverty. They are learning to cope with these challenges and have probably never experienced positive relationships in school. In-class tutors help increase the number of student credits earned and diplomas earned, which is the goal of this project. They assist students with the tools on how to become self-directed learners. Other objectives are that students' Basic Skills will improve. This will be done by examining the following components: Frequency and characteristics of tutor usage; the relationship between time spent

in tutoring and credits earned; anecdotal data; and professional development opportunities for tutors.

To facilitate this process, Counselors and Tutors will be hired and provide 618 and 3400 hours of support, respectively. Low performing students will be identified and referred to counseling; during this counseling session, an action plan will be developed to best guide the student toward success. Additionally, tutors and program staff will create a rubric which will rate how well the students understood concepts presented in the tutoring session.

The specific objectives of this project are as follows: (1) of the HSR students and AD students receiving tutoring, 75% of HSR students along with 50% of AD students will score a *meets expectations* rating on all three sections of the tutoring rubric, (2) there will be an overall 10% increase in high school credits earned in the HSR and AD program, (3) of the HSR and AD students tutored, 75% will earn at least five high school credits, (4) of the targeted HSR population that received counseling, 75% of the students who completed 75% of the tasks on the action plan will achieve at least five high school credits, (5) 50% of identified students will create an Action Plan with a counselor, and (6) of the students that created an Action Plan, 50% will complete 75% of the tasks on their Action Plan.

Purpose

Analysis of the HSR Program is essential because it addresses the needs of at-risk students in non-credit Basic Skills classes. Almost 32% of the HSR students become Mt. SAC credit students; thus, it is important to ensure that the students are well-prepared for college-level courses. This project will inform the HSR directors on the efficacy of their program, so that any necessary modifications can be made.

Students in AD have the chance to receive individual assistance and claim ownership of their studies. They should have greater odds of earning a diploma and gain motivation to continue forth in their education. Considering that this is such an at-risk population, meeting their needs is crucial. This assessment will help investigate whether this objective is being met in the anticipated capacity. As a result of one-on-one tutoring, AD and HSR students will communicate effectively as well as become more self-directed in their learning by identifying their plan for completing the assignment/project or preparing for a test.

Method

Participants

A sample of the HSR and AD students participated. For HSR, there were 480 students while AD had 183 students.

Design

This study is a non-experimental, cross-sectional design. All able and willing people participated.

Measures

An action plan rating was used in this analysis; first of all, it asked whether students even created an action plan with a counselor, which was rated dichotomously. Next, the student was assessed on whether they completed the recommended steps of the individual action plan. The criteria centers on attendance, productivity, academic success, counseling follow-up, and any other possible actions. Additionally, students receiving tutorial support were assessed using a rubric to evaluate their tutorial interaction. The rubric consisted of a boolean question querying the student if they had read the directions to the assignment. Then the

student was rated on three variables (articulation, understanding, application) on a 3-point scale ranging from 1 (below expectations) to 3 (exceeds expectations). Lastly, another boolean question asked the evaluator if the student returned to their desk to complete the assignment.

Procedure

In January 2010, tutors and ABE department faculty worked collaboratively to create a rubric that would be used after in-class tutoring sessions. They determined the areas that they observed students may benefit from a more focused effort. These were goal setting for completing an assignment or studying for tests as well as the ability for students to be more independent in their learning. A rubric was created that would measure these areas. Once the rubrics were finalized in February 2010, the in-class tutors tested the rubric for two weeks. After a two week period, the rubric was slightly adjusted and was then utilized for the remainder of the semester. A scoring sheet that allowed the tutors to list multiple students' names and ratings was also created. Once the final rubric was approved for use by tutors and faculty in February 2010, the project was underway.

The development of a student action plan began in January 2010. HSR and AD counseling faculty determined that students needed a more defined plan of action for completing credits. While they provided interventions on an ongoing basis to students who appeared to be at-risk of not completing credits, the students generally did not create a written plan of action. Furthermore, the counselors believed the students' input on their own plan was critical to the success of the action plan and completion of their courses.

The action plan format was created by the counselors with components necessary to guide the students. It included progress information for the student, attendance information,

and a section indicating the student's academic steps. It was decided by all of the counselors that although the action plans were individual and would differ among students, there were two steps that all students needed to have listed on their action plans. These were 1) to complete the course with a "C" or better, and 2) complete at least 62.5 hours of seat time in order to earn credits. The process for defining a low-performing student was the counselors' next steps. It was determined that the criteria for a low performing student were as follows:

- Attendance in excess of 80-90 hours (without completing the class)
- Current grade below 70%
- Less than 20% of assignments done*
- Referrals from teaching faculty

**Newer students would not be identified for intervention since they would be expected to have less work completed.*

If students met any of the above criteria, then they would be recommended for an action plan. In February 2010, Students were identified through referrals from the classroom faculty and course records listing grades and hours attended. Counselors sent emails to instructors asking to meet with the students when they arrived for class. The first meeting was conducted in this manner. The counselor, in conjunction with the student, then discussed any progress and completed an action plan. Subsequent meetings, which were part of the action plans, were also discussed and sometimes scheduled for the following weeks.

Counselors monitored these students' grades and attendance after the first meeting. These would be discussed at subsequent meetings. Additionally, the instructors provided feedback on study habits, classroom issues, and learning challenges observed about the students. The students were monitored until they finished the class, stopped attending, or dropped out of the program. The project ended May 28, 2010.

Generally, students initiated assistance from the tutor when needed. At the beginning of the project, the tutors informed the students that they were working on a project to assist students in learning better study habits. The tutors explained that they wanted the students to come prepared to each session only after they read the directions and had first attempted the work on their own. In addition, they told the students that they would be rating them on how well they demonstrated that they understood the material after tutoring and had an action plan to complete their goals. After the session was over, the tutors marked the students' ratings on a tally sheet. The tutors submitted the tally sheets to the high school supervisor on a weekly basis, and she gave them to a staff member to compile. The data collection period was February 2010 to May 2010.

Results

The tutors provided 3,437 tutoring sessions to 183 AD students, with many of the students participating in multiple sessions. Of the total tutoring sessions, students scored a "meets" or "exceeds" expectations for 70% of the sessions; the objective that 50% would achieve a rating of "meets" or "exceeds" expectations was met. Of the 183 students who received tutoring, 78 or 43% earned high school credits. This falls short of the objective of having 75% of tutored AD students achieve five or more credits.

For the AD program, there were 55 students who created action plans, and there were 106 targeted. Therefore, 52% of the targeted population created action plans, and 12% completed the steps of the action plan. Of those creating action plans, 36% earned credits, and these students completed 65% of their action plan steps. This is compared to those who did not finish/pass the class where 46% of the tasks were completed, and those who dropped where

18% of the steps were completed. The criteria were not met since those creating action plans completed 12% of their plans.

The tutors provided 9,060 tutoring sessions to 480 HSR students, with many of the students participating in multiple sessions. Of the total tutoring sessions, students scored a “meets” or “exceeds” expectations for 67% of the sessions. Of the 480 students who received tutoring, 350 or 73% earned high school credits. For the HSR program, there were 143 students who created action plans with counselor, and this is 100% of those targeted. Thirty-nine percent completed all the tasks on the action plans. Of this number, 77 students, or 54%, of those having action plans earned credits and completed 93% of their action plan steps. This is compared to those who did not finish/pass the class, where 18% of the steps were completed and those who dropped, where 37% of the action plan steps were completed. The criteria were not met since those creating action plans completed 39% of their plans.

Discussion

Although the results above show that the criteria were not met for this project, there is one finding that is evident. That is, those who earned credits completed more steps of their action plans than students who dropped or did not earn credits. This supports the fact that action plans may have assisted students in completing their credits. Counselors believe this is due to the fact that students took ownership of their progress and felt some accountability with the action plans.

According to the counselors, the action plan is a tool that they will continue using with students in future semesters, since it provided students with concrete steps to complete their credits. One of the challenges faced in this project was the limited time to organize the project

and then implement the action plans. Counselors would change the timing and begin action plans in fall semesters. Another is more prevalent for AD counselors who state that the most difficult challenge was to simply make contact with students who were struggling. Almost half of these students had already dropped out before intervention efforts were possible.

Other insight gotten from this project was that students were more willing to come to follow-up counseling appointments after having clearer expectations regarding their coursework. Also, counselors noted that by involving students with the creation of the action plans, they took more ownership of the responsibility.

The biggest obstacle in serving students who were low-performing was with regards to transiency, especially with Adult Diploma students. These students often dropped out without any notice and did not leave contact information. Therefore, counselors could not determine the reasons for students dropping out, which would help them with preventative measures for other students at-risk of dropout. HSR counselors had more of an ability to contact students who stopped attending to verify that they had dropped out of the program. The counselors believe that a greater emphasis on challenges students may face should be presented at orientation. This may prevent some students from dropping out and/or encourage them to seek intervention prior to dropping out of school.

There were two SLO's that the AD program met; they had at least 50% of their students score a *meets expectations* rating on all three sections of the tutoring rubric. Their results showed that 70% accomplished this goal. The AD program also had at least 50% of their students create an action plan with their counselor. The only SLO that the HSR program met is

that 100% of the students created an action plan with their counselor; the goal was that 50% of them would accomplish this. Therefore, this objective was greatly surpassed.

In-class tutoring is a valuable resource for high school referral and adult high school diploma students. It is evident that the students frequently access tutoring. Overall, the tutors believe the project allowed them to provide students with more structured learning and study skills strategies. The tutors found it challenging to rate some students' efforts because it was difficult to determine students' levels of motivation and willingness to complete work. The tutors did not always recognize if students were simply unmotivated or unable to do so. Further training for tutors and instructional support staff relating to student motivation may enable staff to use a different lens when determining an instructional approach.

Another area that can be further examined is the concept of self-directed learning. Tutors reported that students struggled with independent learning although they emphasized and tried to teach students to self-direct their own learning prior to asking for assistance. This was very difficult for some students, and perhaps some training for students as well as tutors on how to direct their own learning would be helpful. Teaching students how to take notes, outline chapters, take tests, etc. are all study skills that tutors believe would help in encouraging students to be more self-directed.

With regards to the rubric, the tutors believed the rubric was generally easy to score; however, some ratings were too similar, did not contain enough description, and may not have been accurate. It was difficult for tutors to know if their ratings were consistent with other tutors' ratings. In addition, when tutoring for assignments and tests, students had a different level of motivation; thus, the ratings were often quite different for the same students. More

discussion on the rubric and descriptions would have been helpful. The tutors also suggested having monthly tutor meetings to share best practices on tutoring and study skills strategies. Finally, some of the tutors suggested that the rubric may not have been an effective tool for rating students whose first language was not English. They had entirely different experiences as well as strategies with these students and the rubric was often not applicable. Further consideration of ESL students when creating BSI projects would be beneficial in serving them more effectively.

Limitations

The tutors had some difficulty in rating student motivation and willingness to complete their assignments. The tutors faced obstacles in trying to instruct students on how to self-direct and become independent learners. Tutors also had no way of knowing whether they had interrater reliability with their fellow tutors. In other words, there was no way to ensure that their ratings had consistency with other tutors. Students were also motivated differently for assignments, tests, etc. Thus, it was possible that one student had inconsistent ratings.

Recommendations

- The concept of self-directed learning can be further explored.
- Different criteria should be developed for ESL students because tutors utilized another set of teaching strategies with this pool.
- Perhaps, some more clear-cut guidelines on how to rate student motivational levels would be helpful for tutors.

Tutoring Rubric – AD Program

Q1: Student read the directions to the assignment Yes No

		1 Below expectations	2 Meets expectations	3 Exceeds expectations
A	Student is able to describe clearly and in detail the problem he/she is having on the assignment or project.	No Articulation or requires assistance to describe the problem.	Independently describes the problem clearly and in detail.	Articulates a possible solution or plan of action to solve the problem
B	Student will demonstrate their understanding of the concepts learned by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repeating the answer/solution/process for getting there OR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing the answer/solution/process and how it was determined 	Cannot articulate the concepts from the tutoring session needed to complete the assignment. (even with assistance)	Explains the concepts, without assistance from the tutoring session, needed to complete the assignment.	Draws connections to other assignments/concept (able to build on previous lessons)
C	Student is able to describe the next steps they will take to complete the assignment/project, prepare for a test or solve the problem he/she is having.	Cannot list the next steps needed to complete the assignment. (is unsure of what to do when returning to his/her desk or may show some hesitation in answering)	Lists the steps to be performed when returning to his/her desk. Might need slight reminder of steps.	Performs the next steps needed to complete the assignment; Is expected to continue working with no assistance.

Q2: Student returns to his/her desk and completes the rest of the assignment Yes No

Name _____

Subject _____ Assignment # _____ Grade _____ (instructor requested)

TABE score _____ (instructor requested)



High School Program Student Success Action Plan

Please list out various ways in which you can be more successful in your class.

- 1. Fulfilled seat time requirement (minimum of 62.5 hours)
- 2. Completed all course assignments
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____
- 6. _____
- 7. _____
- 8. _____
- 9. _____
- 10. _____

Total Steps Completed: _____

Final Grade in class: _____

Student Name: _____

Subject: _____ ID# _____

Initial Meeting Date: _____ Hours to Date: _____

Follow-Up Meeting Date: _____ Hours to Date: _____

Student Signature

Counselor Signature