

Practices for Persistence

Promising Practices 13

Suggestions for Program Improvement for Ohio ABLE Practitioners

Retention

Program Puzzler

One of your classes is held at your main site, three days a week for six hours a day. Students may come in to study whenever the classroom is open. The instructor provides the students with materials to work on and is always willing to help when students have questions. You have noticed that although several students attend the class a few times, few persist for more than a few weeks. What modifications could be tried that would encourage student persistence?



Timely Tips

Contact students who do not return to class (e.g., postcards, phone calls, contacts through partner agencies).

Collect student e-mail addresses and send “miss you” e-mails.

Peer Perspective

- Interview some current and former students of the class to ascertain why they did not persist.

Orientation

- Focus on rapport-building between teacher and student and between students in the class.
 - Use ice-breakers during orientation and during class (e.g., pass out pennies and have students tell what they were doing on the year of penny).
- Provided one-on-one goal setting.

Class Structure

- Provide added structure for students who need it. Do not wait for students to ask questions. Rather, be proactive.
- Encourage students to ask for help.
- Implement a buddy system so that students can help one another. A buddy system or peer teaching can empower students to take responsibility for the class and their own learning.
- Providing challenging materials and activities for students (e.g., General Educational Development [GED] score boost packets for homework).
- Use a mix of small group activities and large group lessons.

Class Management

- Structure class similarly to postsecondary requirements.
 - Implement attendance policy.
 - Students need to know requirements of starting over.
- Shorten class time to decrease availability and increase demand.

Professional Development

- Improve communication between teacher and administrator.
- Rely on advice and coaching from a peer teacher.
- Have the administrator observe the class and offer insights afterwards.

Added Insights

Literature related to class management indicates the merits of managed enrollment. In particular, it is hard for teachers to monitor students when the membership is always in flux; it is difficult for teachers to assign projects and work on higher-level materials. Also, continuous enrollment is detrimental to maintaining a classroom community. Some programs have seen an increase in enrollment and retention after implementing a managed process. The process increased the perceived value of enrolling in the program, thereby, creating a demand for the product (the program).

Literature suggests that monitoring student information can help to identify trends in persistence and guide improvement in services to better meet student needs and increase retention. Items to monitor include:

1) persistence – participation beyond initial sessions; 2) attendance – hours offered versus hours student attended; 3) completion – of levels or program in general; and 4) achievement – extent to which student goals are met. It is also good to track students who do not return and their reasons for leaving.

The above information can be used to understand 1) what the program is doing that helps or inhibits persistence; 2) characteristics of students who persist; 3) characteristics of those who leave or do not return; 4) obstacles to

Literature mentioned in the Added Insights of this document is drawn from reviews, reports, and papers housed on the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL) website. Refer to <http://www.ncsall.net/index.php?id=15> for more information. In addition, the reference below, also found at the NCSALL site, is more directly cited in this document.

Taylor, J., Smith, C., & Bingman, B. (December 2005). *Program Administrators' Sourcebook: A Resource on NCSALL's Research for Adult Education Program Administrators*. Cambridge, MA.
<http://www.ncsall.net/fileadmin/resources/teach/PASourcebook.pdf>

ABLELink Accompaniments

- ◆ Attendance by Class by Month
- ◆ Attendance by Site by Class by Month
- ◆ Attendance by Student by Site by Class by Month
- ◆ Primary Reasons for Attendance - by Site
- ◆ Student Without Attendance In The Last 90 Days
- ◆ Students Who Left Before 12 Hours and Reasons Why
- ◆ Students With Less Than 12 Hours by Site

Developed by the OSU ABLE Evaluation and Design Project, 2008; revised edition, 2010.

Funds for producing and distributing this publication were provided by the Ohio Board of Regents under authority of Section 223 of the Workforce Investment Act, 1998. Opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the Ohio Board of Regents or the U.S. Department of Education, and no endorsement should be inferred.

