



INNOVATION ABSTRACTS

The Need for Adult Education

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Over the past 20 years, the landscape of public education has changed drastically with the introduction of the national No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and the state-led Common Core effort in 2009. Colleges across the country are seeing students who lack some of the most basic academic, essential, and critical-thinking skills. With an ever-changing and demanding job market, the need for adult and developmental education is at an all-time high.

Community and technical colleges are increasingly relying on developmental and adult education to provide remedial services to students. Community college faculty are teaching and re-teaching concepts which should have been mastered in the K-12 setting. It is difficult for students to complete career technical certifications and programs without these basic academic skills.

We must find new ways to help support students and increase academic performance. It should be noted that the increase in academic performance does not mean quantitative calculations of certificates or degrees, but a qualitative approach to performance. Success should be measured through the lens of an employer. Ultimately, our role in higher education is not to keep students, but to prepare and ready them for the demands of the workforce.

AOK

In years past, it was almost unheard of for a student without a high school diploma or equivalent to attend college. Now, those numbers are increasing. Partnerships between adult education and career technical programs are necessary to help students complete their high school degrees while obtaining their career or technical certification, and to provide students with the basic academic skills they need to succeed.

One such program is Accelerating Opportunity: Kansas (AOK), which was designed after the leader in this field, the iBest program out of Washington State. Students can obtain a high school equivalency (HSE) and career technical certification in as little as a semester. In one of our programs at Barton Community College, students attend adult education courses in the morning and career technical courses in the afternoon. The adult education instructor co-teaches the career technical course, providing additional academic skill development as it relates to the content course.

Soft skills are integrated into the program as we continue to hear from employers that students lack these skills. AOK rewards punctuality, attentiveness, and endurance with items such as practice vouchers.

Enrollment and Career Advisor

We created an Enrollment and Career Advisor position to recruit new students, retain current students, and help transition students who are at the end of the program into the workforce. This staff person will attend local and regional events in support of adult education's mission, promote the program, and attract new students. Once a student completes his or her prescribed course work and successfully completes his or her high school equivalency, this staff person works one on one with the student to identify possible postsecondary education options and paths to move forward. Additionally, this staff member works with our partner agencies to identify other supports and resources to assist students with this transition.

Branching Out

Recently, our adult education program has kicked off a new initiative to support students who already have a high school degree or equivalency. The Integrating Academics in CTE program provides opportunities for adult education instructors to support students who already have a high school degree by targeting deficient academic skills and providing in class and out of class support through one-on-one and small-group sessions. The CTE instructor and adult education instructor meet weekly to plan and organize their approach for team teaching. Each student in the course is given the TABE (Test of Adult Basic Education) locator at the start of the semester to establish their knowledge baseline and identify potential areas for improvement. At the conclusion of the semester, students are given a post-test to identify what progress has been made. The program goal is for each student to improve in at least one NRS (National Reporting System) level during the semester.

Conclusion

By the end of an academic semester or program, we expect our AOK students to have achieved the career technical certificate and their high school equivalency credential. Sometimes, students will complete their CTE certificate but struggle with completing their HSE. In these cases, our adult education instructors target the specific areas of concern, provide a plan to allow for a timely completion, and support students as they work to complete their HSE.

The end of a program is not the end of our support. We continue to support our students and will readmit them to the program should they have the need, desire, and qualifications. We provide resume

building courses to current and past students, soft skills workshops with our partner agencies, and practice interviews and other work-focused activities.

The Accelerating Opportunity: Kansas and Integrating Academics in CTE programs, along with our career development process, help students attain the hard and soft skills they need to succeed in the workforce. Our continued goal and mission is to help and support low-achieving students obtain high-quality, student-centered, and work-focused education for generations to come.

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