

Adult Basic Education Navigating and Advising

Support Services Legislative Grant

Grant funds must be expended by June 30, 2019. Complete this report after all grant funds have been expended, no later than July 15, 2019. Submit via email to Cherie.Eichinger@state.mn.us Please address the following items in a final report of three pages or less.

Please briefly describe your project.

The Adult Academic Program is fortunate to have a licensed and experience school counselor, Dan Woodbury who, throughout the school year, addresses academic and career needs of our students. During scheduled visits with Dan, our students receive guidance on finishing their GED/diploma; optimizing their English language learning; exploring career/job opportunities; and planning for career and college. Dan’s counseling services are a huge benefit to our school and are greatly appreciated by our students and staff.

In the fall of 2016, we surveyed our student body to determine if our students would benefit from additional, wrap-around assistance to overcome non-academic problems/concerns. The survey results showed that sixty-six percent of our students would benefit from regular assistance in addressing non-academic problems/concerns that impact their lives, for example: transportation needs; employment application; and review of mail correspondences, to name a few. With survey data in hand, we set out to create navigating/counseling services that would be an extension of Dan’s well-established academic/career counseling. In addition, we developed leadership lessons that would empower students to help one another with non-academic problems/concerns. Ultimately, our framework for providing such navigating/advising support services to our students involved a 3-part plan that includes the following:

* **Provide career and college navigating and counseling services to students** – Dan Woodbury, Licensed School Counselor. Dan provides weekly orientations for prospective students; teaches customized classes on employment skills; conducts field trips to businesses and colleges; and assists students with academic and career questions in one-to-one meetings.
* **Help students resolve/remove personal situations that might be barriers to their education** – Resource Room under the guidance of Colleen Crossley, Academic Skills Teacher. Colleen organized the Resource Room including the flyers and websites that would be shared with students in order to address their non-academic problems/concerns. The Resource Room is open on 3-4 days a week for an hour during a time when students can visit and not miss classroom instruction. Volunteers and the school’s Special Projects Coordinator, Julie Kleve, maintain the Resource Room. In 2017, after attending the SAB leadership & communication trainings, a student, Mali Menendez, was recruited to work in the Resource Room for three hours a week. For her help, Mali received a stipend of $18 per hour.
* **Empower and train Student Advisory Board (SAB) members and other students to solve problems and build self-efficacy and help others** – Academic Skills Teachers, Colleen Crossley and John Trerotola created eight leadership & communication lessons for our Student Advisory Board (SAB) members. For two consecutive years of the grant, SAB members participated in the eight leadership & communication lessons. Once trained, SAB members were invited to be mentors to their fellow students and to help staff the school’s Resource Room. The eight lessons are as follows:
* What is Leadership? The Role of the Peer Leader/Mentor
* Communication: Perception and Style
* Communication: Active Listening
* Trust/Confidentiality in Peer Relationships
* Resource Room Basics: Internet and Telephone Skills
* Conflict Resolution and Peer Mediation
* Stress Management and Mental Health
* Self-Empowerment

What were the implementation challenges?

In adult basic education, it is understood that students are juggling life responsibilities including work and family needs. Furthermore, transportation is often a challenge for our students. Considering these student challenges, our school experiences a fluid student body. Throughout the school year, students are starting and stopping out of their classes making it challenging to teach the eight leadership & communication lessons to our SAB members.

A second challenge was the start of our grant funding. Instead of starting at the beginning of the 2016-17 school year, our funding for this grant started in December 2016. That caused a short delay in our recruiting of and hiring of the Student Advisory Board member, Mali Menendez, who staffed and organized our Resource Room.

A third challenge came when Mali had to return to her home country of Mexico for a long period of time due to a family emergency. Her absence, albeit necessary, created a disruption in the regular staffing of the Resource Room. Then Mali resigned from her position before the end of the grant. The school’s Special Projects Coordinator, Julie Kleve, and volunteers covered the shifts that would have been staffed by Mali.

What were the successes in implementation?

Our successes definitely outweighed our challenges. A total of twenty-one students completed the Student Advisory Board leadership & communication trainings. Coming from many levels of our ELL & Academic Skills/GED classes, our SAB members truly represented our students. After finishing their leadership & communication lessons, these SAB students were identified in their classrooms as mentors and helpers to their fellow classmates. Furthermore, trained SAB members helped advertise the value of the Resource Room. On average, the Resource Room staff and volunteers provided assistance to ten students per month which is double our prediction of five students per month. We continue to provide the Resource Room, and lately, much of the staff and volunteer efforts go toward helping students apply for jobs which have resulted in students getting part-time work. Other valuable assistance provided in the Resource Room includes: finding bus transportation; helping with driver’s permit information; preparing for job interviews; understanding health insurance benefits; navigating unemployment benefits; and assisting with tax forms.

Another success is our annual Resource Fair which we have held for over four years. Our students have grown to really appreciate the Resource Fair and look forward to the event. Our fair includes local support organizations that may be of help to our students and families. Over the years, these organizations have included: PRISM Food Shelf, CAPI USA, Hennepin County Libraries, CareerForce – Brooklyn Park, Community Action Partnership of Hennepin County, North Hennepin Community College, District Family & Community Engagement Specialist, and Office of Multi-Cultural Services. This year, we added a representative from the 2020 Census Office.

Instead of holding the Resource Fair twice, we decided to hold a Job Fair every year. In preparation for the Job Fair, we contact and invite local businesses who are hiring. Considering our school is located in the Crystal Shopping Center, we are surrounded by businesses and restaurants that are often looking for employees. Job opportunities presented in our past Job Fairs have included: HyVee, Dairy Queen, Target, Atlas Staffing, Covenant Village of Golden Valley, Davanni’s Pizza, and O’Reilly Auto Parts. The Job Fair is a popular event with our students.

What were the lessons learned from this implementation?

As with most projects in adult basic education, we learned to be flexible with our plans while still striving to achieve our goal to provide quality support services. Considering our students are starting and stopping throughout the school year, we had to offer homework and repeat lessons for the leadership & communication training offered to the Student Advisory Board members. We also learned that our students’ non-academic problems/concerns change causing our Resource Room staff and volunteers to continually be on the look-out for helpful resources to address current issues. For example, we recently have gathered a lot of information about the 2020 Census, immigration lawyers, and voter registration. Finally, we learned that the Resource Room is a valuable service for our students, but one that does not get used everyday that it is open; therefore, on a regular basis, volunteers, students and staff visit classrooms to remind students and inform new students of the Resource Room and its hours of operation. That said, there are still stays when no student visits the Resource Room. To address this issue, on a regular basis, the Special Projects Coordinator and Resource Room volunteers discuss the traffic into the Resource Room and make adjustments to the hours of operation when necessary.

Please identify any promising practices, tools, resources, materials and/or recommendations for colleagues in the field to use?

Some useful tools used in implementing this project include:

* Resource Room Log-in sheet that includes: the date, student’s name, teacher’s name, reason for visit, Resource Room person, and follow up notes. Our school uses this log-in sheet to calculate how many students are using the room and to get an idea of the students’ needs.
* Job Fair flyer that gives a brief description of our school and student body, promotes the day of our Job Fair, and gives contact information. This flyer makes it easy to recruit local businesses to participate in the Job Fair.
* Resource Room files and business cards organized according to services such as: food shelf, domestic abuse, housing, employment, child care, taxes, transportation, etc. Also, whenever possible, provide resource information is other languages.

Please identify a contact person (name, email, phone number) for any questions regarding this project:

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