The Results of Implementing an ESL Orientation Class

SJSU Action Research Project by Elizabeth Cunningham, Cathy Diaz, Kim Iwasko and Cary Keisler

Prepared for the Meeting of the Minds II Saturday, December 2, 2006

Watsonville/Aptos Adult Education
“Persistence is…

adults staying in programs for as long as they can, engaging in self-directed study when they must drop out of their programs, and returning to their program as soon as the demands of their lives allow. Persistence is a continuing learning process that lasts until an adult student meets his or her educational goal.”

(Comings, 1999)
Introduction

Watsonville/Aptos Adult Education

- 31 sites
- 130 staff members
- 11,000 students annually
- 99 % Hispanic/Latino
- 1 % Other
- 5,000 students attend ESL classes
Problem Statement

Fall 2003 and 2004

• Only one-third of registered ESL students completed pre and post CASAS exams or paired scores.

• ESL students did not persist long enough at WAAE to obtain paired CASAS scores.
Out of 1,497 ESL students 490 students - 33%, completed both pre and post CASAS exams.
Out of 1,354 ESL students only 436 students, 32%, completed both pre and post CASAS exams.
The research identified four principles within the theme of student persistence:

- student orientation
- data including assessment
- student support
- content standards
“…at least one third of incoming students are at risk of dropping out in the first three weeks of instruction”

(Comings, J.P., Parrella, A., & Soricone, L., 1999)
Research

One of the most effective interventions was a “small-group approach” or orientation that included valuable tools and strategies to produce the greatest persistence.

(Comings et al, 1999)
Quigley suggests that the intake and orientation processes of the first three weeks are critical to improving persistence.

(Quigley, 1998)
The purpose of this action research project was to create an ESL Orientation class that would potentially...

- Increase hours of attendance
- Increase CASAS paired scores
- Increase the number of returning students
Curriculum Content

• Goal Setting
• Force Field Analysis
• Student Success Stories
• Importance of CASAS Exams
• Stop Out Forms
• School Tour and Staff Introductions
• Program Offerings
ESL Orientation Curriculum

Stopping School Form

Student ID: __________ Name of Your Teacher: ________________ Date of Birth: __________

First and Last Name: __________________________________________
Address: __________________________________________________________________________

City: ___________________ State: __________ Zip Code: __________

Apt# ____________________

Number Street ____________________________

Home Phone Number: (____) __________
Cell Phone Number: (____) __________

I am “stopping out” of school because:

Estoy dejando la escuela porque:

1. _____ I have a job. I will return to school on __________________________.
   Month   Day   Year
   _____Tengo un nuevo trabajo. Regreso a la escuela __________________________.
   mes   día   año

2. _____ I am moving to ____________________________________________.
   _____Estoy mudando a ____________________________________________.

3. _____ I am going on vacation. I will be back to school on __________________________.
   Month   Day   Year
   _____Voy de vacaciones. Regreso a la escuela __________________________.
   mes   día   año

4. _____ I have family problems and need to be home until __________________________.
   Month   Day   Year
   _____Tengo problemas en mi familia. Necesito quedar en casa hasta __________________________.
   mes   día   año

5. Other/Otra razón ____________________________________________________________

Do you want your teacher to contact you at home? _____ Yes- Si _____ No

Do you want an advisor to contact you at home?

Usted quiere que su maestro/a te llame en su casa? _____ Yes- Si _____ No
Norma and Marco are brother and sister. Norma is nineteen years old. Marco is 18 years old. They study English at Watsonville/Aptos Adult Education. They are going to take the CASAS exam.

Practice Exam

CASAS Exam

1. Maria Garcia needs to buy chicken, strawberries and milk.
What does Maria need to buy?
A. chicken
B. fish
C. eggs
D. Tuna

2. Luz Martinez works in a store Monday to Saturday.
Which days does Luz work?
A. Saturday and Sunday
B. Monday to Saturday
C. Sundays only
D. Monday through Friday
Intervention Groups

• Sixty-two students participated in the morning and evening ESL Orientation classes over a three-week period at the beginning of the fall 2005 academic year.

• The control group consisted of the same number of students with similar demographics during the same three-week period.
RESULTS

Gender Chart

Student Group
- AM Control
- AM Orientation
- PM Control
- PM Orientation

Male
Female

Number of Students
0 5 10 15 20 25 30

AM Control: Male=11, Female=15
AM Orientation: Male=7, Female=19
PM Control: Male=28, Female=8
PM Orientation: Male=28, Female=8
RESULTS

ESL Orientation Class & Control Group
Comparison Total Attendance Hours for all students

- ESL Orientation: 6391 hours
- Control Group: 3479 hours

Students

Hours of Attendance

- ESL Orientation: 7000, 6000, 5000, 4000, 3000, 2000, 1000
- Control Group: 7000, 6000, 5000, 4000, 3000, 2000, 1000
RESULTS

Comparison of Average Hours per student for ESL Orientation & Control Group

ESL Orientation Average Hours per student: 103
ESL Control Average Hours per student: 56
RESULTS

Average Attendance Hours for Fall 2005 Semester

- AM Orientation Hours: 164
- AM Control Hours: 74
- PM Orientation Hours: 59
- PM Control Hours: 43

Average Hours for Semester

0 20 40 60 80 100 120 140 160 180

AM Orientation Hours
AM Control Hours
PM Orientation Hours
PM Control Hours
RESULTS

Percentage of CASAS Paired Scores

Student Groups

- ESL AM Orientation: 73%
- ESL AM Control: 23%
- ESL PM Orientation: 53%
- ESL PM Control: 11%
RESULTS

Students Completing Paired CASAS Scores

Number of Students

AM- Orientation Paired Scores
ESL AM Control Group
ESL PM Orientation
ESL PM Control Group

Total number of Orientation Paired scores
Total number Control Group Paired scores

Student Groups
RESULTS

CASAS Point Gain Difference between ESL Orientation Class & Control Group

- **AM Orientation**: Point Gain = 7
- **AM Control Group**: Point Gain = 6
- **PM Orientation**: Point Gain = 5
- **PM Control Group**: Point Gain = 1

Student Group

Point Gain

0 2 4 6 8
RESULTS

Spring 2006 Student Returnees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Groups</th>
<th>AM Orientation</th>
<th>AM Control</th>
<th>PM Orientation</th>
<th>PM Control</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-Returnees</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Returnees</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Teacher Surveys

Four common themes emerged from teacher discussions and surveys:

• an orientation class would benefit students
• the hours for an orientation varied
• administration of CASAS exams varied
• hours of attendance as related to persistence
Teacher Focus Groups

“Students could benefit from such a class because they could get acquainted with school language, objectives, information, schedules, organization, and classroom procedures.”
“The orientation class was a positive new beginning for WAAE. It established a baseline for instruction and was good for students to adjust to a new system."

“Students were more organized and they seemed to know what to do and how to do it.”
Teacher Focus Groups

“I never thought about it before, but now that I see it all together, I see the impact; I think there is a sense of community among orientation students. They are the ones who have the best attendance.”
Student Focus Groups

“…the orientation will make students feel more secure and confident.”

“The orientation helped me feel more secure in order to enter school. I like English; I like the security that I have when I am in the class.”
The students reported that they felt more prepared, oriented and confident for their regular English class.

The orientation made their transition into their regular classes easier and they didn’t feel lost.
Recommendations as of May 2006

• Present results to WAAE committees and staff

• For the fall of 2006 all new and twelve hour or less returning ESL students attend a nine-hour Orientation class prior to entering ESL classes.

• All entering students complete a pre-CASAS exam at time of registration.

• Familiarize the staff to the orientation curriculum
Implementations as of November 2006…

• Cohort presented to various committees at WAAE (Leadership, ESL, Administration)
• Modified model of ESL orientation implemented
• Cohort presented results and curriculum best practices at various conferences and schools
Thanks to all of those who contributed to this project and supported the research team.

A special thanks to Dr. Marty Krovitz and Bob Harper.