



Promising Practices in Immigrant Education– Submission Form

CCCIE keeps a repository of promising practices in immigrant education. It is our hope to provide meaningful information to community colleges across the country serving the needs of immigrant populations. Please respond to the questions below:

Name of Community College: Passaic County Community College

Title of Program: English Language Studies Program

Primary Division(s) or Department(s) involved: English Language Studies

Key Partners: (Please note partners both within the college and any other outside organizations or agencies)

Achieving the Dream

1. Need for Program (Explain the significant need or problem that the initiative addresses and how long the program has been in place.)

In 2011, PCCC joined “Achieving the Dream,” a national initiative that is focused on improving student success rates among community college students, especially low-income students and students of color. ATD provided the framework for examining the performance of ESL students and identifying program changes that could improve student success. As a first step, the faculty examined data that revealed the following challenges:

- 1. Emphasis:** Community colleges have changed their focus from **access** (open enrollment) to **success** (attainment of a degree or other credential).
- 2. Status:** While approximately 80 percent of ESL students were part-time, retention was greater for full-time students.
- 3. Persistence:** Lower level students were typically less likely to complete the ESL program.
- 4. Passing Rates:** 75-80% passing rates in ESL reading and grammar courses; 58% in ESL writing courses; level one students were passing at a lower rate.
- 5. Student Performance:** Analysis of ESL student writing samples at all levels indicated incorrect grammar as the primary reason for not passing writing. Yet, students were passing grammar courses at a disproportionately high rate.

2. Brief Description of Program

During the 2011-2013 academic years, the English as a Second Department (now the English Language Studies (ELS) Department), redesigned its structure and curriculum.

- **A PREP Workshop:** Upper-beginning students may enroll in an intensive PREP workshop designed to build their language skills sufficiently to enter the academic ELS program.



- **A redesigned curriculum** increases the number of credits per semester and integrates grammar and writing instruction. Reading courses were expanded to include greater emphasis on the development of speaking and listening.
- Through the **English Language Studies' Accelerated Learning Program**, borderline students who fail writing classes are invited to attend an intensive workshop allowing them a second chance to take the writing exit exams at each level.
- **Paired courses**, which allow ELS upper-level reading students to take college-level courses, are offered with Sociology, Psychology, and Computer Information Systems & Early Childhood Education courses. Additional pairings are being planned.
- **A career track** has developed to create pathways to stackable credentials for ELS students. A bridge and paired course allow ELS students to prepare to take a national credential exam and apply credits towards an Early Childhood Education Career certificate and an AAS in Early Childhood Education. Pathways in other disciplines are currently being explored.

3. Specific Population Served

Upper-beginning level through advanced (pre-college) level English language learners

4. Goals and Objectives (Note broad program goals and identify major objectives that define how these goals will be accomplished.)

1. Provide opportunities for students to study full-time.
2. Improve writing skills; omit ancillary grammar instruction and focus on grammar needed for development of academic writing skills.
3. Expand speaking and listening instruction at the lower level.
4. Improve the skills of ESL students entering the program.
5. Offer pathways for career and academic certificates.

5. Outcomes (What has the program improved / corrected / increased / decreased by addressing this need, e.g. retention, student performance, student services, workforce training, language acquisition etc? Please include any data regarding outcomes e.g. completion rates, employment, economic impact)

1. Percentage change in the number of full-time ELS students from fall 2011 to fall 2013 was **93%**.
2. Passing rates in ELS writing courses seem to be trending upward showing an overall increase of approximately 5% after the program revision.
3. Revised reading courses at the lower level integrate speaking practice; class credits (from 3.5 to 7) and contact hours have doubled (from 75 min. /week to 150 min. /week).
4. PREP Workshops Fall 2013 thru Pre-Spring 2014: 71% of participants have passed to the 020 level. Students tracked into level two courses showed a slightly lower success rate than students placed directly into level two. PREP program revisions are being implemented to address the disparity.
5. A Child Development Certificate pathway includes an ELS bridge course, an ELS/Early Childhood paired course and an opportunity to study for a national credential test. Course work applies toward completion of the



academic ELS program and Early Childhood Education Certificate. Additional pathways are currently being explored.

6. Collaboration (If applicable, please note the role of each key partner organization

—both internal across the college campus and external—involved in the program.)

There has been a tremendous collaboration among the ELS faculty and the academic Deans. Other crucial areas involved in the redesign were the Testing Department, the Registrar, Admissions, academic counselors and advisors, lab tutors and staff.

7. Success Factors (What factors have been most critical to the success of your program?)

The passion of the faculty and administration and their commitment to improving students success have been extraordinary. The willingness of the institution to take bold and risky steps has been powerful. The support and participation of the Office of Institutional Research allowed us initially to identify gaps in achievement and areas needing change. They continue to provide the support we need to assess the interventions on an ongoing basis and implement improvements.

8. Challenges Faced and Overcome (Describe any challenges and how you have overcome them or are currently addressing them)

The challenges we faced were significant. Faculty had to learn how to use data as an effective tool for driving planning, assessment and improvement. Once the data revealed barriers to student success, it was easier to generate the enthusiasm for taking on the project. The need was obvious and not just anecdotal. Frequent meetings provided a forum for sharing ideas, and research on best practices in TESOL. Collaborations increased buy-in, held individuals accountable and created a sense of ownership. Once the redesign was created, implementation of the new courses presented other challenges. Faculty committed to creating a new curriculum and course syllabi, and having them approved and implemented in a year. Complications arose in numbering and scheduling new courses and workshops, making adjustments to students' degree audits, registering and advising students. Through many open discussions and a commitment to stay focused on the goal, to improve student success, it all came together.

9. Funding and Sustainability (How is the program funded? If the program was funded through a grant, how will the program be sustained?)

The four-level academic program including the paired courses is funded through tuition and financial aid. Students are charged a small fee for the PREP workshops.

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