

SASKATCHEWAN ACTION RESEARCH NETWORK PROJECT REPORT

Title of Project: “Increasing student motivation to complete Level 4 with a graduate panel and career planning workshop at SIAST Woodland Campus”

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Location of Project: SIAST Woodland Campus - Prince Albert, Saskatchewan

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Abstract:

This action research project was concerned with the many Adult 12 Basic Education learners that struggle with attendance and program completion in the final weeks of the academic year. We wanted to focus specifically on attendance and motivation which frequently drop noticeably in the final weeks of school. A number of students withdraw or are discontinued when they have almost completed all of their credits.

Our goal in this action research study was to increase the overall attendance in our Level 12 BE program at SIAST Woodland Campus by providing a motivational event involving former Basic Education graduates as guest panelists. Would having them return and speak to the classes make a difference to completion rates?

In addition, we offered a workshop on post-secondary and career planning to the same group in the same time period. We asked for learner feedback prior to and after our events to identify how prepared our students are to further their post-secondary education.

Question Posed: “How do we support students to stay motivated in the last months of school to improve retention and completion rates by, at least, 5% compared with previous years? Would an intervention of inviting BE graduates as guest speakers,

along with a workshop on post-secondary and career planning, improve completion rates?”

Time Frame: April 14 to June 26, 2014

Base Line: Comparison data from three previous academic years in the last 3 months of school (the same time frame as our study). The following statistical summary illustrates the retention and completion rates and percentages of Adult 12 students:

Academic Year	# of Level 4 Students in initial group	# of Level 4 Completed	# of Level 4 Discontinuations & Voluntary Withdrawals	End of Year Attrition Rate
2010 – 2011	55	46	9	16%
2011 – 2012	62	51	11	18%
2012 – 2013	63	47	16	25%
2013 – 2014**	69	55	14	20%
2013-14 study group	34	32	2	1%

69 students started level 4 in April 2014. Of those, **34 were scheduled to complete their programs by June 2014. These 34 students were the focus of our intervention.

Intervention:

- We first compiled a student survey to gather information from Adult 12 students about how prepared they felt to transition to post-secondary education and formulate a career plan.
- April 29th, 2014 – We held a meeting with Adult 12 students to introduce the “SARN Final Months” project and request their participation in a survey and their consent to use survey results.
- May 15th, 2014 – We hosted a Panel Presentation of three guest speakers who were past graduates of Basic Education at Woodland Campus. The speakers shared very touching stories from their lives and the challenges they overcame to be successful in Basic Education. The presenters offered valuable advice to students and were available after the presentation for one-on-one discussions. The event was held over the noon hour and lunch was provided for all who attended.

The method we used to select our panel of guests was, during a regular staff meeting, we asked BE instructors to assist in generating a list of names of past graduates to invite as guest speakers. We contacted the past graduates by telephone and invited them to participate in our event. We explained the purpose of our project and provided details and examples of what the current students were telling us through their individual surveys. This information helped us make our selections and prepare the speakers to address the elements of the survey.

- May 28th, 2014 – *Mapping the Landscape for Post-Secondary Success Workshop*. Coming a week later, a workshop was hosted by SIAST's Student Development Counsellors. This 2 hour workshop provided students with information on transitioning into post-secondary education. The presenters discussed application processes, funding sources, program choices, and the support services offered by the SIAST Student Development team. A feedback evaluation form was completed by the students who attending this workshop.

At the outset, the results from the initial Student Survey were made available to the Student Development Counsellors to assist them in advance in targeting the presentation to address specific concerns and issues identified by our students.

- June 20th, 2014 – Students filled out a post-survey to evaluate the value of the activities and to determine if students felt more prepared for post-secondary education than at the time of the initial survey. We are assuming if they are prepared for further post-secondary, they are planning to complete Level 4.

The Findings:

Pre-Test & Post-Test: We had 34 students from the Level 4, grade 12 program participate in the initial student survey. During the time of the study intervention, we had 2 students who were discontinued by SIAST. We asked the students to complete a post-survey to gather feedback on the action research intervention. Of the 34 students who participated in the initial survey, 26 of them completed the post-survey. It was assumed that if they answered that they felt prepared to go on to further post-secondary training, they were planning to complete the grade 12 program.

Initial Student Survey Results:

Number of completed surveys – 34 (11 males and 23 females)

1. Do you plan to continue with post-secondary training after Adult 12?

31 students responded – Yes

1 student responded – No

2 students - Unsure

**Note that two students did not complete

If yes, what specific programs are you pursuing?

Specific program choice and number of respondents interested in program:

Commerce Program – 1

Primary Care Paramedics - 3

Firefighting/Paramedic Program – 1

Carpentry – 1

Hotel Management – 1

Media Arts and Media Web Design – 1

Addictions Counsellor – 1

Social Work – 2

X-Ray Technician – 1

Environmental Radiation Monitoring Technician – 1

Music Business Administration – 1

Electrician – 2

Early Childhood Education – 2

Nursing – 5

Continuing Care Assistant – 1

Hairstylist – 1

Heavy Duty Equipment/Truck and Transport Mechanic – 1

Botany – 1

Horticultural Science – 1

Resource and Environmental Law – 1

Computer Science – 1

Teacher – 1

Business Certificate/Diploma - 6

Do you plan to work after you complete Adult 12?

Yes – 20

No - 5

Unsure – 3

Currently Employed - 6

2. Have you applied? Yes No

If so, where? (**NOTE: for future reference**, this question will need to be re-worded to ask if the student has applied to a specific post-secondary institution. It was

misinterpreted by some respondents as to whether the person had applied for employment or not.)

Yes – 12

No – Not accurate result

No response - 1

3. Do you feel you need help to decide what you want for your future?

Yes (9) No (19) Unsure (6)

4. What types of jobs and careers interest you?

32 students provided various responses, such as: trades, health care, working with the public, environment and conservation, cooking, social work, accounting, entrepreneur etc.

2 did not provide a response to the question

5. Have you investigated opportunities of learning and work that match your interests? What information do you have to help you explore careers?

11 students responded they had not investigated career opportunities

21 students responded they had investigated career opportunities

2 students did not complete the question

6. Do you find it difficult to decide what you want to do? Why?

17 students responded that they find it difficult to decide what to do

16 students responded that they have decided on a career choice

1 student did not complete the question

7. How do you feel about moving on to post-secondary? What makes you feel excited about continuing your education? What concerns or worries you about school?

All 34 students provided various responses.

Most students answered they were excited to move on to post-secondary.

- The most common overall concern was financial stability while in post-secondary. Some expressed concerns of not securing funding for school.

- Other concerns were: moving to a new place, transportation, childcare, workload of program, doubting academic abilities, family obligations

8. How will you finance your post-secondary training? What funding options are you aware of?

- 21 students were able to list at least one source of funding for post-secondary training
- 14 students responded that did not know how they would finance post-secondary training and were not aware of funding options

9. Is your family supportive of your plan? Please explain.

- 32 students responded that their family is supportive of educational goals
- 1 student responded that they do not have any family supports
- 1 student did not respond to the question

Post-Survey Results:

Number of completed surveys - 26 (18 females, 9 males)

1. Do you plan to continue with post-secondary training after Adult 12?

Yes (25) No (1) Unsure (0)

If yes, what specific programs are you pursuing?

Commerce Program – 1

Primary Care Paramedics - 2

Firefighting/Paramedic Program – 1

Addictions Counsellor – 1

Social Work – 1

X-Ray Technician – 1

Environmental Radiation Monitoring Technician – 1

Music Business Administration – 1

Electrician – 2

Early Childhood Education – 1

Nursing – 3

Continuing Care Assistant – 1

Heavy Duty Equipment/Truck and Transport Mechanic – 1

Horticultural Science – 1

Resource and Environmental Law – 1
Computer Science – 1
Business Certificate/Diploma – 3 6
Information Technology – 1
Emergency Dispatch - 1

2. Do you plan to work after you complete Adult 12 for the summer or full-time?

Yes – 21
No - 3
Unsure – 0
Currently Employed - 2

**2. Have you applied to a post-secondary school? Yes No
If so, where?**

Yes 17
No 9

3. Do you feel you need help to decide what you want for your future?

Yes (4) No 17 Unsure (5)

4. What types of jobs and careers interest you?

24 students provided various responses
2 did not provide a response to the question

5. Have you investigated opportunities of learning and work that match your interests? What information do you have to help you explore careers?

3 students responded they had not investigated career opportunities
23 students responded they had investigated career opportunities
0 students did not complete the question

The various responses to what sources of information student obtained to explore careers are:
Family, SIAST Career Counsellors, Cansask, Sask Jobs, Personal Work Experience, Employers, Personal Inventory tests, Phone Interviews with Employers, Online Information, SIAST Website

6. How did the *Mapping the Landscape of Post-Secondary Education* workshop help you?

16 Students responded that this workshop provided the following information:

- various funding options
- Motivation to complete current program and move towards future goals
- Learned what programs are available at SIAST
- Inspired students to want more for their future
- Application processes

7 surveys showed no response to this question

3 students felt this was not a helpful workshop

7. How do you feel about moving on to post-secondary? What makes you feel excited about continuing your education? What concerns or worries you about school?

24 students provided various responses. Most students answered they were excited to move on to post-secondary. The most common overall concern was financial stability while in post-secondary. Some expressed concerns of not securing funding for school. Other concerns were: moving to a new place, transportation, childcare, workload of program, doubting personal abilities.

2 students did not respond to the question

8. How will you finance your post-secondary training? What funding options are you aware of?

24 students responded that they were aware of funding options and/or had already made inquiries with various funding agencies.

2 students did not respond to the question

9. Please provide your feedback on the panel presentation in the dining room. Did you enjoy or dislike it? Would you recommend we offer this event to the students next year?

20 students felt the presentation was inspiring and would recommend it be offered next year.

5 students did not respond to the question

1 student would not recommend the presentation (The student explained that the presentation seemed to motivate other students, but found the personal stories shared by the guest presenters to be triggering this own student's emotional level. This student described themselves as feeling down (assuming due to personal circumstances which are unknown) and the presentation brought negative emotions.

Discussion and Recommendations:

- **Overall, we are satisfied with the outcome of our project. We reached and exceeded our goal to increase retention in the final months of school by 5%. The feedback statement that the events helped with “Motivation to complete current program and move towards future goals” and the positive feedback from the clear majority suggests this was a valuable set of activities.**
- **We plan to host the Graduate Student Panel Presentation again next year. This event was very well received and found to be very inspirational by all who attended. This panel is recommended to come earlier in the year (see below) we would recommend the panel take place in the months of November and May due to the fact our program has four intakes per academic year and many students are done the program by then end of January.**
- **We hope to offer the Mapping the Landscape of Post-Secondary Education workshop again next year in the same time frame.**
- **Students commented that this information needs to be given earlier in the school year. Students would benefit from this workshop in the fall rather than in the spring. This would allow for a more timely delivery of information in terms of accessing funding options and exploring program options.**
- **It would be helpful to conduct a follow-up study to see how many not only complete grade 12, but actually do either continue with further study and/or obtain work...and if their follow up post-secondary study and/or work were the same as the learners had initially planned. This follow-up should be compared with a control group which had no intervention. Knowing how effective the intervention was would be most informative.**

