

East Bay Career Advancement Academy

A REGIONAL APPROACH TO WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT



Contra Costa
Community
College District
pathways to success

Academy Overview

The Peralta and Contra Costa Community College Districts received a grant from the Chancellor's Office of the California Community Colleges to establish a regional "Career Advancement Academy" that will establish economic and educational pipelines for under-educated, underemployed youth and young adults (ages 18 to 30).

Through the Academy, students have an opportunity to increase their performance levels in reading, writing and math, and obtain career technical training skills that will lead to careers and/or higher education opportunities.

One of three regional awards statewide, the grant provided \$1.67 million for FY 2007-08, with renewals for up to three years.

In addition to seven community college campuses, the East Bay Career Advancement Academy partnership also includes numerous community-based organizations, adult education providers, and industry and workforce development partners in Alameda and Contra Costa Counties.

The collaboration is the first of its kind for the East Bay. The Academy provides a unique opportunity to leverage educational, business, community and governmental resources to address the chronic economic and educational barriers facing youth and young adults in the East Bay.

COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Berkeley City College
College of Alameda
Contra Costa College
Diablo Valley College
Laney College
Los Medanos College
Merritt College

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Familias Unidas
North Richmond YouthBuild
Oakland Adult and Career
Education (OACE)
Oakland Metropolitan
Chamber of Commerce
Oakland Private Industry
Council, Inc.
Oakland Workforce
Investment Board
Pivotal Point Youth Services
RichmondWORKS –
Workforce Investment Board
Rubicon Programs Inc.
Street Tech
The Unity Council
West Contra Costa Adult
Education
Workforce Development
Board of Contra Costa County
Youth Employment
Partnership
Youth Uprising
YMCA of the East Bay

For more info:
(510) 587-7896

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PROGRAM FEATURES

The East Bay Career Advancement Academy project consists of four components designed to improve student educational and employment outcomes: (1) Industry-Driven Program Design; (2) Collaborative Curriculum Development and Instruction; (3) Professional Development for Faculty; and (4) Comprehensive Student Support Services.

INDUSTRY-DRIVEN PROGRAM DESIGN

The Academy provides educational and employment opportunities in high demand/high growth industry areas. To support the Academy's work, a Regional Advisory Council consisting of representatives from industry, the participating community colleges, other educational institutions (K-12, adult education), workforce development agencies, government agencies and community-based organizations was established. The council's industry members represent each of the four targeted industries: allied health and human services; automotive technology; construction and building trades; and biotechnology.

An Industry Alignment Subcommittee advises the colleges on curriculum for the basic skills and related occupational programs, and works with participating career and technical education staff to introduce and expand work-based learning opportunities, such as paid internships, job shadowing, job mentoring and site visits. Partner industries will also provide ongoing information on labor market trends and emerging workplace development and training needs for their sectors.

COLLABORATIVE CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AND INSTRUCTION

The Academy will be a prototype offering contextualized instruction and industry-driven occupational training in high growth and high demand industries. A curriculum planning and design team composed of English, math and career technical education instructors from both community college districts will work with the project director and the Regional Advisory Council to develop an accelerated, contextualized basic skills curriculum.



The Career Academy provides a unique opportunity to leverage educational, business, community and governmental resources to address the chronic economic and educational barriers facing youth and young adults in the East Bay.

Unlike traditional career development programs, the Academy's curriculum is structured in two distinct phases. Phase I emphasizes "contextualized basic skills" – strengthening students' basic skills by using specific industry content. In Phase II, students focus more on training in the skills sets of their selected industry (career choice) while continuing to strengthen their literacy and math skills. The Academy uses a cohort-based learning community model, which has been widely linked to better student retention and educational success.

To equip underachieving students with the skills and ability to enter college-level career technical education programs or entry-level jobs in just 18 weeks, the Academy will emphasize acceleration instead of remediation. Rather than "speeding" up the curriculum, accelerated learning uses the time on task more effectively to help low-skilled students build cognitive structures and routines to accept, process, and make sense of new information and knowledge using a contextualized approach. To achieve this, the Academy will use six, well-established strategies:

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1. Scaffold for Independent Learning.

Instructional scaffolding recognizes what students can do by themselves and the next level of learning that they can achieve with competent assistance. The scaffolds (learning support structures) are just beyond the level of what the student can do alone. Tools to aid scaffolding can take many forms: graphic organizers, questioning, planning worksheets, to name a few. This facilitates the student's ability to build on prior knowledge and internalize new information. Scaffolds are temporary structures and are gradually removed as the student learns to manage more and more of the task.

2. Engage in Instructional Conversation.

Instructional conversation is defined as talk in which ideas are explored through student-to-student dialogue rather than teacher directed talk. Instructional conversation is less about the correct answers students give and more about helping students build internal mental models or schema (the network of concepts, beliefs, processes, scripts, and expectations that integrate past experience with new information and knowledge). This process helps to build intellectual capacity. Yet, low-skilled students who struggle with basic skills are often denied the opportunity to engage in this type of talk, nor are they guided on how to develop strategies for having a generative conversation – the rules, norms, sentence stems to help structure responses, etc. Regularly engaging students in generative, relevant instructional conversation builds their capacity for critical and creative thinking and problem-solving.

3. Use Reciprocal Teaching to Build Comprehension Skills. Students will be taught to use the four Reciprocal Teaching comprehension strategies: predicting, question generating, clarifying and summarizing. Summarizing teaches the student to identify and integrate the most important information from the text. Questioning reinforces the summarizing strategy and carries the learner one more step along in the comprehension activity. Clarifying is an activity that is particularly important when working with students who have a history of comprehension difficulty. When the students are asked to clarify, their attention is called to the fact that there may be many reasons why text is difficult to understand (e.g., new vocabulary, unclear



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reference words, and unfamiliar and perhaps difficult concepts. Predicting occurs when students hypothesize what the author will discuss next in the text based on textual cues or inference. To do this successfully, students must activate the relevant background knowledge that they already possess regarding the topic. The students have a purpose for reading: to confirm or disprove their hypotheses.

4. Aid the Building of Information Processing Systems (memory retention and retrieval). Many low-skilled students struggle with the memory load imposed by math, which is one of the most cumulative subjects an individual faces in education. Developing automaticity in reading also requires a well-developed memory. Techniques based on current brain research and learning theory will help instructors support students in developing memory retention and retrieval systems.

5. Support Meta-cognition and Self-Regulation. Metacognitive experiences involve a student's use of explicit strategies to regulate his attention, mood, and emotion during the learning process in an effort to stay on task and ensure understanding. These processes help to reduce frustration and increase recognition of

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when learning is actually happening. Meta-cognition allows one to plan and monitor how to use particular learning strategies or which steps to use to solve a problem. This is an essential part of becoming an independent learner.

6. Develop Cultural Competency of Instructors to help diverse students integrate learning. Cultural competence refers to the teacher's understanding of how the student makes meaning in his world. An instructor's cultural competence aids in the design and delivery of a lesson or unit of study because lessons are then built on an understanding of students' general schema or current understanding of a topic (language, images or actions that an individual from a particular group would recognize as being associated with that topic). Students will be able to more readily understand new concepts or content if they are linked to what they already know and understand.

Prior to selection and enrollment in the Basic Skills curriculum, the colleges will conduct an assessment of each participant to determine his/her level of reading, writing and mathematics skills. The first set of Academy students was enrolled in the 18-week Basic Skills Program in August 2007. Students moved through the program as a cohort, taking Academy reading, writing and math classes and a College Success course. Each cohort consists of no more than 25 students to assure individualized attention. Upon completion of the basic skills curriculum, students will be able to seek educational or training opportunities available at any of the seven participating community colleges. Over the one-year grant period, the collaborative expects to serve as many as 650 students through 26 separate cohorts.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR ACADEMY FACULTY

To prepare students with the skills for today's economy, we need to equip faculty with the professional development and assessment tools they need to provide quality instruction. There will be ongoing professional development opportunities for faculty, and Academy faculty will be required to participate in regular professional development, active collaborative planning, and

reflective inquiry to coordinate and improve instructional delivery.

Criteria for selecting faculty will include extensive experience teaching basic skills to underserved populations and willingness to participate in all aspects of the program model – including the mandatory professional development component.

COMPREHENSIVE STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

A central aspect of the project is the provision of intensive up-front and ongoing support services for Academy students to help them reach their academic, professional, and personal goals. Over a dozen community organizations and workforce partners are collaborating in the Academy and provide outreach, recruitment, screening and placement, as well as ongoing case management for students as they move through the Academy's 18-week Basic Skills Program and the industry-related occupational training programs at the participating colleges.

Through their youth outreach, family resource and one stop centers, these partners already have access to the targeted population for the grant and the staff and systems to connect Academy students to a wide network of social services, career assessment and job skills services, life skills courses, GED programs, and financial support resources, such as the WIA program.

This extensive non-academic support network will be complemented by an intensive academic support network provided by the colleges. The program will feature designated academic counselors who will conduct initial academic assessment tests for Academy candidates, enroll eligible applicants in the Academy's college courses and link them to additional college-based resources (CalWORKS, EOPS, financial aid), and meet with Academy students during the 18-week program to provide academic advising. Tutors will also be available to assist students with academic assignments both inside and outside of class. Students will also be matched with a community mentor to provide access to strong community social networks.