

SHOP TALK # 16:

Austin Community College Launches an Initiative to Bridge the Gap Between ESL and Occupational Training

A new and promising initiative at Austin Community College combines Adult Education ESL instruction with Certified Nurse's Assistant (CNA) training through Continuing Education. This concurrent model enables adult learners to simultaneously enroll in contextualized English language instruction and vocational/occupational training, allowing higher level English language learners to get a jump start on occupational training. The ESL instructor and CNA instructor plan together and share feedback on student progress and needs. This coordination shortens the overall time learners need to reach their job goals. Other bonuses include better retention, completion, certification, job placement, and transition to further post secondary studies.

Through a mini innovation grant from the College, the ABE instructor was compensated for the time spent in instructional development. Six ABE/ESL students completed the first 120 hour instructional program. Instruction included 56 hours of ESL instruction and 56 hours of CNA classroom instruction. CNA instruction was in English (learners were Persian, Hispanic, Chinese, Japanese, and Indian).

Bridges, Choices, Transitions. Among the students were two nurses with credentials from their native countries. Learners' choices at the completion of the training illustrate the diversity in needs and interests and the opportunities such an initiative can provide:

- ✓ Two found employment immediately.
- ✓ Two have just completed the clinical course with other "regular" college students and will soon be taking the state test for certification; both hope to pursue related professions in healthcare (pharmacy technician and nursing).
- ✓ Two have chosen to pursue other academic fields of study.

A second round of instruction has begun, and third and fourth rounds are planned for fall 2007 and spring 2008. Students who have expressed interest in pursuing post secondary studies are recruited from ACC's adult basic education ESL classes. These students pay the course fees for Continuing Education only, and may apply for tuition assistance.

Austin Community College is also exploring opportunities to initiate administrative assistant and dental assistant training programs for adult learners with limited English language skills.

For additional information about ACC's initiative, contact David Borden, ESL Coordinator, at (512) 223-7799 dborden@austincc.edu or Elizabeth Huss, Coordinator for Health Professions Continuing Education at (512) 223-7271 eahuss@austincc.edu.

Do you have a promising Workplace ESL initiative in the works? Care to have it featured in SHOP TALK? See contact information below.