

# Highlighting a S.T.A.R.—System with Targeted Actions and Results

Midland College and Howard College Concho Valley sent site visitors to the Temple College —*Land of the Leopards*— Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) program on February 27-28, 2019, as representatives of the Texas Peer Mentor Network (TX-PMN). They were pleasantly surprised by the size and aesthetics of the college, finding gratitude in the large campus “You Are Here” maps in the various parking lots as they found themselves driving around in limbo. Temple College is focused on developing three of the TX-PMN five tenets: (1) Curriculum, (2) Structure, and (3) Student Services.

Despite cold, wet weather, the Temple campus was welcoming and friendly. Hallways were well marked for easy navigation, and most rooms in a portion of one large building were dedicated for AEL use. There were several rooms for classes, tutoring, testing, and orientation, and even one for an AEL Records Vault. AEL is obviously considered a major factor in Temple College’s student pathways to success. The approximately 1,120 AEL students are considered part of Temple’s 5,500 students.

Cheryl Smith and Nicole Stevens from Howard College met with AEL Director Stephanie Perkins and Associate Director Javier Ruiz one evening while Integrated Education and Training (IET) courses were in session. They discussed Temple’s main IET courses as well as their Academies. The site visitors observed two of the IET classes: Entrepreneurship and Allied Health Onboarding. They also reviewed the Curriculum for these classes and the methodology used for moving students rapidly through courses from the beginning of the year. AEL obviously has come a long way in a short amount of time.

Lynda Webb from Midland College joined the Howard site visitors on the next day to meet with the AEL team and Temple College’s high leadership. Aside from AEL members, attendees included Christy Ponce, President Temple College; Carey Rose, Division Director of Student Services; Ava Knauls, AEL Instructor; and Sara Solis, Recruit & Retention Specialist.

They discussed the Structural process of integrating AEL on all participating campuses, sharing both the successes and challenges related to implementation of the AEL program, as well as progress toward full college integration. Admittedly, all TX-PMN members still have a lot of ground to cover, so Temple, Howard, and Midland Colleges were all able to share areas of success and growth, including what it took to achieve those successes. President Ponce was very attentive throughout the morning meeting and noted that she had worked directly with Adult Education earlier in her career. She is the newly appointed president for Temple College and seems interested in being a great support for AEL.

Temple provides Student Services support through their former Recruit & Retention Specialist turned Coordinator of Enrollment Management, Ms. Solis. She is responsible for pre-registering all students prior to orientation, which she now manages.

Ms. Solis calls herself the Customer Service Advocate for students because they come to her when issues arise, and she follows up with them if they go missing. She works closely both with TEAMS data management personnel and with the Career Navigator. Along with Ms. Solis, Ms. Rose keeps a close eye on AEL and helps the Director when needs arise. Ms. Rose is often working behind the scenes to help Ms. Perkins elevate the issues, objectives, and goals of AEL to top administration. She is a vital link between AEL and Temple College.

Currently, each AEL student is entered into the Temple College online system. AEL classes are now built through the AEL student database, but they will soon begin registering them through the Temple College online system. Orientations for the following courses happen in different intervals:

- High School Equivalency – every two weeks
- English as a Second Language – once per semester
- IETs – once per cycle of Business & Continuing Education (BCE) classes for Allied Health and once every eight weeks for Entrepreneurship

AEL has built a phenomenal relationship with the BCE Department. Ms. Perkins and Mr. Ruiz identified programs in BCE that potentially could be established as IETs to align with the new academies recently created: Certified Medical Aide (CMA), Medical Billing & Coding, EKG, and Pharmacy Technician.

The BCE agreed to work with AEL and refer all applicants to determine whether they would qualify for AEL services. The incentive included with this offer was that AEL would pay tuition and fees for the training course, including books, immunizations (if required), scrubs, basic life support certification, and certification testing. These costs are now covered by AEL if no other resources are available. In exchange for the benefit of AEL funds, eligible students are required to successfully complete either the Allied Health Academy or the new Allied Health Onboarding. There is a 100% attendance requirement, and new participants are required to pay a deposit with BCE to reserve their seats. This deposit can be refunded through sponsorship, or with TPEG funds, if applicable.

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Approximately 200 people competed for the 50 seats AEL offered for the first Allied Health Onboarding/AEL Orientation and Registration. AEL conducted interviews with these eligible students and filled every seat in the BCE classes. BCE further recognized the value of AEL when they saw the contextualized curriculum and accountability measures for students in these IET courses. Based on the successes with their first partnership, AEL and BCE are now exploring how to build on it.

TX-PMN visitors also observed (a) the Allied Health Onboarding course, which includes both ESL and native English speakers and allows students to follow the instructor on interactive medical terminology software, and (b) the Entrepreneurship IET for ESL, which is taught through a curriculum from Certiport, a Pearson Vue curriculum that provides tests proctored online through Certiport. Most of the curricula used comes from third party vendors and has been organized into easy-to-use binders. They include teaching modules and weekly lesson plans with objectives that align with current content standards.

Stephanie Perkins and Javier Ruiz have taken the Temple College AEL program and flipped it into a model worth admiration. They have leveraged other programs and funding to provide new opportunities for the under-skilled population in Temple, Texas. Temple captured TWC's mission and vision and catapulted them to the next level, elevating their students with them. Network visitors had the privilege of seeing the fantastic things Temple AEL is doing and learned a great deal from their tenacity and can-do attitude. Howard College was inspired to move forward with plans to restructure current program and course offerings. The site visit was further enriched by having Lynda Webb from Midland College present to talk about all that Midland AEL is doing for their students.