

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

McLennan Community College (MCC) in Waco, Texas, sits on a beautiful campus adjacent to the Bosque River in central Texas. The campus features wide open spaces with green lush grass and magnificently tall oaks dispersed all around, as well as a few ornamental trees, such as a Smoke Tree and a Japanese Plum. The Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) program at MCC has focused this year on developing three of the Texas Peer Mentor Network's (TX-PMN) five tenets: (1) Curriculum, (2) Student Services, and (3) Digital Capacity.

The TX-PMN site visit team from Amarillo College arrived on the MCC campus and soon found the AEL Program, which is housed in the Public Service Pathway. This Public Service Division is home to six academic programs, two federal grants, and an onsite childcare development program that includes teacher preparation and an alternative teacher certification in early childhood development. In addition to the project director, AEL program staff includes two full time and one part time data entry members, one career navigator, and one instructional coach.

MCC's AEL program serves a 6-county area covering Bosque, Falls, Freestone, Hill, Limestone, and McLennan Counties. In addition to the MCC campus, there are nine other service locations in Waco where classes are held and a total of four additional service locations in the other counties.

When the TX-PMN site visit team met with McLennan's AEL team, they learned that the most crucial current needs are (1) a standardized curriculum, (2) refinement of the current student orientation process, and (3) Google Suite implementation. The program has been utilizing a 100% paper-based system for all of their intake processes.

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Curriculum: The largest IETs in the AEL department are the Office Assistant & Cosmetology programs. These programs have seen positive growth over the past year. MCC is also seeking to find or create standardized curriculum materials for their HSE and ESL courses. Amarillo College shared its HSE curriculum that has been developed over the past two years by AC's AEL instructors.

Student Services: MCC is eager to refine its monthly AEL student orientation process. The TX-PMN team from Amarillo College shared information about how student orientation works at AC and about the 8-week block schedule that has been adopted by AC's AEL department. The two teams discussed the difficulties that could be encountered with implementing a standardized curriculum if MCC continues its open enrollment or rolling intake process.

Digital Capacity: MCC's AEL team is in the process of implementing Google Suite to enhance the program's digital capacity and better serve students at its multiple locations. The AC team described its AEL program's transition from (a) paper sign-in sheets and entering hours by hand into TEAMS to (b) its current process of having teachers enter student hours directly into a Google Docs attendance system and then uploading those hours into TEAMS. They discussed tactful ways to approach IT departments and Registrar's offices to request access to college systems such as Colleague and Blackboard. They further discussed the importance of selecting verbiage and phraseology that would help gain buy-in from those offices and their representatives, as well as the challenges and victories AC's AEL department encountered as they approached other AC departments in an effort to integrate into the College.



Parking options at MCC are impressive, with two underground parking garages providing ample room for students. In addition, the site visit team had the good fortune to meet Mr. Bugatti, who has been with the college for ten years and has the honor of driving a golf cart shuttle across campus, providing rides and invaluable knowledge to all who use his service. Mr. Bugatti is widely versed in the culture and history of McLennan Community College and makes a terrific tour guide.

One of the more transformational options that takes place at MCC is the provision for students to take junior and senior college level courses on the community college campus. The University Center houses college advisors from several collaborating 4-year universities, thus providing a true "one stop shop" for the community. Students can actually start in AEL and finish at MCC with a bachelor's degree.

For more information about McLennan Community College, see www.mclennan.edu