Elgin Community College – Hybrid Course Development Project

In late April, the adult education department at Elgin Community College decided to develop all of our primary ESL, ABE, and ASE classes for online delivery for fall. After discussion with faculty and staff, a hybrid model was selected wherein the students would be taught 50% synchronously through a web conferencing tool and 50% asynchronously through our course learning management system (D2L). We selected this model for a variety of reasons: 1) adult education students benefit from direct contact with their instructor, 2) adult education students benefit from interaction with their peers, 3) the developed courses would be easily transitioned to a hybrid format once in-person classes were again possible, and 4) D2L is supported by our distance learning staff, so we would have assistance if problems arose. We wanted to create classes that met the needs of the students and could be duplicated for long-term program improvement (future hybrid/ distance learning options), so we decided to have key developers design course shells that could be copied and revised as needed.

Since this was going to be a large project (20 classes developed), and we wanted to maintain consistency between classes/levels, we decided to use a team approach to course development. Individual developers or co-developers (1-2 faculty members) were assigned a specific course to develop, but then they met with other faculty once a week to touch base to discuss different aspects of development. These weekly meetings were led by ABEC staff/ fulltime faculty. Before starting the project, we had faculty go through a training with our distance learning/ disabilities staff to discuss making the material accessible. Course developers were also registered as a cohort into two D2L trainings (Managing an Enhanced Classroom and Online Instruction and Assessment – both were 4-6 weeks), which they took in tandem with course development due to the limited timeframe.

We started the project with a large group meeting where the general framework of the project was discussed. After that, weekly meetings between teams occurred. The faculty were broken up into ABE/ASE math (5 classes, including Spanish), ABE/ASE reading/writing (5 classes, including Spanish), beginning ESL (4 classes), intermediate ESL (3 classes), and advanced ESL teams (3 classes).

The first couple of weeks, we focused on course outcomes and objectives to make sure all developed classes matched course outlines and state content standards. We then focused on resources. We wanted to make sure that the resources selected were accessible and licensed to be shared (creative commons license) so we did not violate any copyright regulations. These resources also needed to be limited in number for simplicity. Faculty selected resources such as USA Learns (beginning ESL), ReadWorks, CommonLit, and CK-12 as primary outside resources for students. We then discussed structure. We wanted to maintain a consistent, simple structure that would be easy for our learners to use. Once these were established, content and assessment were discussed in following meetings. Alternative assessments (not just tests) were discussed and many faculty selected projects versus formal tests. We created a shared folder in Google docs so that faculty could share access to material and assignments. This also allowed for peer review of courses as they were being developed. Faculty teams also were given access to each other's D2L sandbox courses. This was helpful as courses started to be entered into D2L; faculty were able to see how other faculty structured lessons. A uniform introductory unit was developed by ABEC staff that included basic D2L training (including simplified "how to" videos) and time management lessons for students. All materials and resources (including lesson plans, synchronous lesson materials, asynchronous lesson materials) for the classes are housed within D2L in its files tool.

While the team structure was overall successful, there was some conflict due to different ideologies and teaching methodologies that had to be resolved by team leaders. Social-emotional support for faculty was provided as well. Faculty also received support in entering the classes into D2L as many had used the system in only a limited fashion prior to the project. Once courses were reported to be finished, ABEC staff went through and reviewed the courses for content and to make sure that all of the links worked. The courses were submitted to ICCB, ECC's distance learning department, and the adult education dean for approval.

There has also been a lot of support given to all faculty to prepare for this fall semester. All ABEC staff have been going through college-provided D2L training as well as

departmental trainings to help prepare them for the semester. As the semester begins, we will be providing additional supports for faculty. We will have a forum for open discussion between faculty, online teaching support office hours, and a suggestion box for improvements/changes that may need to be made to the developed courses. We will continue to modify and improve the courses as time progresses.