**Transition to College and Careers Program Adopts Trauma-Sensitive Approach**

Many community colleges and other institutions offer pre-college transition classes to prepare learners for college study. Most focus on providing career advising and academic skill development (math, grammar, writing, computer literacy). While students who complete transition classes often do go on to enroll in college, recent research found that 30% of students do not enroll in college after transition classes, and another 30% enroll, but stop or drop out within a year or so. The reasons for this are many and complex.

After hearing me present my research, Marie, the program director told me that she felt her program was “not doing enough to draw out students’ experiential knowledge.” She believed that moving toward a more trauma-aware, strengths-oriented culture (program-wide) would be more supportive and encouraging for adults who had been out of school for many years and often came with a history of trauma or adversity. After interviewing Marie and her staff, we decided on the actions described below.

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| **Problem** | **Solution** |
| The intake process was lengthy and difficult for staff and prospective students, and it, along with the college placement tests, tended to focus more on learners’ skill deficiencies than on validating their existing knowledge. There was also a concern that students were not receiving consistent messages about the process of becoming a college student. | * I redesigned the intake interview, including alterations to the academic skill assessments. The new process focuses on developing a relationship between the prospective student and the interviewer, while providing program staff and instructors with a more holistic understanding of students.
* I created approximately six hours of supplemental material in six detailed lesson plans for instructors. The lessons are designed to provide students with consistent messages about learning, build trust, and raise students’ confidence about their ability to learn at the college level.
* I conducted professional development workshops to model some of the lessons in the new curriculum and provide a forum to discuss overall program development as a group.
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*“Working with you renewed the energy of the entire team. The intake process is much more comfortable and useful now, for the student and for the staff”. – Marie Troppe*

*Quote from teacher, if possible.*