

Greenfield Community College

Profile of an Early Adopter of Career Ready 101

Overview

Starting the summer of 2014, Greenfield Community College began piloting Career Ready 101 in four settings. The piloting has been in manufacturing programs, a career skills course and literacy classes. The following are summaries from an interview given in January 2015 with Alyce Stiles, Director of Workforce Development and her colleagues Amber Ortiz and Sarah Wing.

Describe the setting, participants, programs, and tools used. What was your goal in using the tools?

Manufacturing

We started using Career Ready 101 as a pilot in our manufacturing programs (two Foundational Manufacturing classes over the summer and our Computer Numerical Control (CNC) Operations training this Fall. The participants were un- and under- employed workers interested in manufacturing or machining.

Our goals for the manufacturing programs were to make sure people had the skills for the career path they were interested in while simultaneously learning manufacturing-related content, such as blue-print reading, safety, etc.

Individual Tutoring

KeyTrain was used in a contracted literacy skills training for an employee in an area

manufacturing company. A highly-motivated native English speaker with excellent communication and social skills, this employee had learning disabilities and 4 GLE reading level.

The individual training also provided a chance for him to demonstrate learning gains and build confidence and literacy skills, helping him boost his academic skills in order to access further training and opportunities for advancement.

GED® Classes

Career Ready 101 was also integrated in Pre-GED and GED classes at The Literacy Project.

GED teachers in the The Literacy Project in Greenfield used Career Ready 101 in order to increase students' sense of career pathways, linking its use their classrooms to Greenfield Community College workforce programs.

How were the tools integrated into the program design?

Manufacturing

KeyTrain career skills tools were primarily used, but also some modules from the soft skills suite were used. A blended learning model was implemented that included proctored, structured lab time in conjunction with students working independently or in small groups. Sometimes it was integrated within workshops or other activities. In some cases students had assignments to complete between classes. Assignments with a particular deadline were created around some of the tasks. For example, everyone was required to do the resume component, but also to make individual progress on their own. For example, a teacher would say, "By next Tuesday, you're expected to complete the resume assignment."

Individual Tutoring

After the initial pre-testing, the student worked on the Applied Technology module. The tutor was present and worked on his reading



comprehension skills by asking and answering questions, the main focus being on developing key vocabulary. After module tests, in order to work on writing skills, there was an assignment that involved summarizing content helping to integrate vocabulary previously covered. The culminating assignment was an essay on what makes a good employee.

GED® Classes

Students started with taking Career Interest Survey in Career Ready 101. They were then assigned to a particular career cluster and specific modules with information about the cluster. The teacher developed a check list to track what students were working on. As the class moved forward, the work evolved from a group format to individual coaching with students using the tools independently.

What outcomes have you observed?

Manufacturing

Data collected showed the variation in how students used the tools and how much time they put in. As a result, we are moving towards mandating a certain amount of time, and holding students accountable. We have not set a mandated level yet.

The good news and one of the most salient outcomes is that across the board, students were exceeding the minimum level required for pathways. Students were motivated and did not want to settle for a 4 – they wanted to go further and differentiate themselves.

The program plans to further analyze data to see how students are doing and what keeps people moving forward. In the end, we believe useful information can be gathered as they reach out to employers.

Individual Tutoring

The student was not engaged or interested in the readings when pre-tested, using the TABE. The student's pre-testing in Career Ready 101 aligned with the minimum for manufacturing. The readings he found in KeyTrain, motivated him to make far better progress than we expected,

The learner had initially been uncomfortable participating in training offered at work. After working on Applied Technology in KeyTrain, the student was able to demonstrate learning gains and build confidence and skills to attend his workplace trainings.

GED® Classes

Students were assigned to career clusters and particular modules, depending on their results from the Career Interest Survey in Career Ready 101. The teacher created a checklist that enabled students to track what they had done and what was due, thereby encouraging the development of the skills of self-direction and initiative.

Students developed industry knowledge and language skills. They used applied math modules to help boost their confidence in math. The module on Health Careers helped a student decide that he was going to take a class to become a personal trainer. One ABE student did over 25 hours in Career Ready 101!

What are the strengths and limitations of the tools?

Manufacturing

We found that there are built-in motivators that distinguish these tools from others. A real strength of Career Ready 101 is its use of the levels and scores and the ability of users to keep improving, which distinguishes Career Ready 101 from other tools where you can

score 100% on the task, but not keep moving up levels.

Individual Tutoring

The audio options are valuable for lower-literacy and print-disabled students.

GED® Classes

There is no pre-test assessment or placement in the soft skills suite. You have to go through all of it, whether or not you need to learn the specific type of content or skill.

Options for larger font size or print do not appear to be readily available to users of the site.

Do you have any thoughts about how you might expand the use of the tools?

Manufacturing

Career Ready 101 was purchased to supplement our manufacturing program and to support a rapid response grant. Having the license for a year enabled piloting in different programs with plans to embed it even more.

Pilot of a Career Skills Course

KeyTrain was proposed to a business class as a for-credit course in career skills. By using some of the Career Ready 101 tools as assignments for the one-credit Career Skills course, the teacher hopes to reinforce core objectives. Selected KeyTrain assignments have been embedded into a course within a learning management system (Moodle). Students will have to complete assignments on their own. However, the class meets once a week and students will be able discuss the results of their experience with the instructor. Completion of assignments in KeyTrain will be mandatory and graded in the learning management system as pass/fail based upon completion. There is a

plan to expand the career skills course to be integrated into other courses.

There is also discussion proceeding with the college about how to work Career Ready 101 into pre-screening of training programs. Some investigation on cross-walking with other tools is in process, for example, the Self Directed Search and Career Decision Making System and how Career Ready 101 can supplement or replace those tools.

What sort of training or other assistance would you recommend for staff incorporating the tools into coaching and/or instruction?

It was not easy to figure out how to set up and administer the tools step-by-step and implement into a class.

Support is also needed on how to set up the classes, how to embed the tools in a program, how to look at the reports, what to look at, and how to use them (not just technically on how to access reports).

What suggestions do you have for other sites getting started?

There are a lot of webinars, but it is hard to streamline the information and pull it all together in a usable form. Initially any kind of student and teacher support is helpful, e.g. 1-2 page handouts, videos, etc. that would assist people in getting started. In most cases, hands-on training is preferable.

For more information, contact, Alyce Stiles at stilesa@gcc.mass.edu

