

# Notre Dame Adult Education Center

Profile of an Early Adopter of Career Ready 101

## Overview

Director, Sister Eileen Burns and Ellie Hendrie of the Notre Dame Adult Education Center in Lawrence, spoke about their use of KeyTrain and WorkKeys with adult learners.

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

We have been offering KeyTrain as part of our Certified Nursing Assistant job training program. In KeyTrain we use: Reading for Information, Locating Information and Applied Math. Working through the remediation tools will prepare our students for the National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) provided through the ACT WorkKeys® Assessments. (Notre Dame Adult Education program is an NCRC test site.)

Our program intake assessment process includes a teacher-created writing assignment and KeyTrain Applied Math and Locating Information pretests. Students must score at least a Level 3 on the KeyTrain® pretests. The tests become the technology assessment, by default. Generally, we don't find that people have trouble with the technology as the pretests only call for the use of very basic technological skills.

Most of our students enter KeyTrain studying on levels 2 to 4. As students work through the program, one of their goals is to move up at

least one KeyTrain level in the 8 weeks of the CNA program. It takes between 8-20 hours per level. We have found that students need to have worked through Level 4 in KeyTrain to ensure passing the ACT test with at least a grade of three. This is the minimum passing grade for a Work Readiness Certificate. So if the students enter the program at a lower level, they will have to do extra work at home or at the library in KeyTrain.

Our experience with the slower progress could be due in part to the fact that many of our nursing assistant students are non-native speakers. (We provide them with supplemental learning opportunities via Rosetta Stone English language learning software.)

To earn a certificate of completion in our CNA program, students must also sit for the WorkKeys® exams in Reading for Information, Applied Math and Locating Information and earn a minimum grade of 3 in all the areas to receive a National Career Readiness Certificate. When our students graduate from the program, they will have attained the Certified Nursing Assistant certificate along with a nationally recognized Work Readiness certificate.

How were the tools integrated into the program design?

Students have four hours of Certified Nursing Assistant instruction four days per week, plus an hour per day for KeyTrain. On the fifth day (Friday) they have Job Readiness Class which covers resume writing, mock interviews, etc.

Often, more advanced students help those students who are working on lower levels of KeyTrain. There is always a KeyTrain® coach available to help students if they are struggling with certain concepts or problems.



Rather than waiting till the end of the program to take the WorkKeys® test, we have students take it one subject at a time (Reading for Information, Locating information and Applied Math), starting a few weeks into the program with the Reading for Information assessment. Students usually have an easier time with reading, so taking this test first tends to build confidence.

Students put the National Career Readiness Certificate on their resume and are proud to share with potential employers the problem solving skills and motivation it reflects. Recognition of having a certain level of basic workplace skills is becoming more important and employers are beginning to give preference to applicants with National Career Readiness Certificates.

We also use KeyTrain Applied Math in our ESOL (SPL 5 and above) class as a supplement for building math skills, improving critical thinking, and helping to problem solve in the workplace.

#### What outcomes have you observed?

Students are really excited using KeyTrain in the beginning, but they sometimes get anxious about the approaching tests. Preparing for the WorkKeys® test is different than the CNA exam because the CNA exam tests a finite content. In contrast, KeyTrain content progresses and gets harder as students go forward. We find that if they breeze through the early levels without learning the material well, it catches up to them later. They think they're cruising through and then it gets really tough and they hit a wall.

We have sometimes been challenged by students who ask why they have to work on KeyTrain and what it has to do with their training to be CNAs. We explain that it provides

them with better communication and employability skills. But we will be able to better make this connection once we have the full Career Readiness 101 tools and can contextualize their work to a health care setting.

We have seen that some ESOL students have a hard time passing the *timed* Work-Keys® exam. We are still trying to figure out strategies, for overcoming this challenge.

We have a Wall of Honor for those who have passed the Bronze, Silver and Gold levels in the WorkKeys® tests and received a National Career Readiness Certificate.

At first teachers were somewhat wary of KeyTrain, but then came to like it. Being a learning coach was a different role than being a classroom teacher. The benefits of distance learning for the students became apparent much like the concept of using a flipped classroom approach.

#### What are the strengths and limitations of the tools?

Most students find KeyTrain easy to use and like it at first. They work hard to move up levels. But not everyone has the computer and internet connection to work from home and advance independently. They can, of course, try to do it with a smart phone mobile browser, but it is not easy.

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

We recommend that the training for instructors include strategies running a flipped classroom and the role of a learning coach, versus direct instruction.

What suggestions do you have for other sites getting started?

Our experience has been that students are better motivated to continue when they are working on the tools as a cohort with the help of the coach. However, it can be challenging to give close individual attention to classes that reach 18-20 students. A group that is 10-12 students works best.

We also have found close monitoring of the records is important. An example is that we check to see if the practice quiz results that students have taken at home, tend to match results of quizzes taken in class. We want to ensure students are doing the work themselves when they are not in class.

Education Center **NAP KeyTrain Class Roster**  
Instructor: [redacted] Start: 9 - 9 - 2013  
Fri of 1<sup>st</sup> week : 9-23-13 (pre-test + 9 class hours)

| Reading          | Math | Locating Information | Time Spent |
|------------------|------|----------------------|------------|
| $5$<br>$4+(F3x)$ | 3    | 4                    | 9.38       |
| $4+$             | 3+   | 3+                   | 14.58      |
| $4+$             | 3+   | 3+                   | 21.44      |
| $4$<br>$3+(F1x)$ | 4+   | 4+(F1x)              | 10.12      |
| 6+               | 5    | 4                    | 8.27       |
| 6                | 5    | 5+                   | 23.29      |
| 5                | 4    | 4+                   | 11.39      |

To capture an overall picture of how the entire class is doing, our teacher creates an at-a-glance grid of students' scores and goes over it with the CNA instructor. This format gives the CNA team a complete picture of each student's progress.

KeyTrain coaches also have individual conferences every couple of weeks with KeyTrain students. We check the learning and practice activity records along with the quiz scores, we identify which topics students are struggling with, and we verify the total time the students have spent online working.

For more information, contact, Sister Eileen Burns, [executivedirector@ndeclare.com](mailto:executivedirector@ndeclare.com)