PROMISING PRACTICE

Mt. San Antonio College
English as a Second Language

Using ESL Student Portfolios
To Track Level Progress

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CASAS National Summer Institute 2011
MT. SAC ESL
PROGRAM OVERVIEW

- **Scope:** 3400 unduplicated Ss
- **Staff:** 55 – 60 all adjunct faculty and ~ 20 tutors
- **Program Structure:** 7 Levels of proficiency includes
  - “**Level**” classes: Integrated skills, portfolio-based assessment
  - “**Skill**” classes: Focus on R/W, L/S, TOEFL, Citizenship Prep …
  - **VESL Career Paths:** Advanced bridge program
- Portfolios have been used in all the ESL Levels since 2001

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OVERVIEW OF ESL STUDENT PORTFOLIOS

- Shared responsibility of teaching and learning
- Evidence-based approach to track level progress
- Cumulative history of progress gives a big-picture and holistic perspective
- “Progress Report” cover sheet minimizes bulk without loss of evidence

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OVERVIEW OF ESL STUDENT PORTFOLIOS

- Systematic approach – all instructors use the same form
- Level progress considers student’s entire portfolio, not just the final exam
- Final level (Level 6), students receive their portfolio along with certificate
WHY WE IMPLEMENTED ESL PORTFOLIOS

Reason #1

Majority of our students are adult learners with well-established self identities and life experiences who:

- Require an inclusive educational environments
- Are self-directed learners
- Want active engagement in the learning process
- Are lifelong learners who need English for work and personal needs
WHY WE IMPLEMENTED ESL PORTFOLIOS

Reason #2

All-adjunct faculty aspire for a balance between quality teaching and efficiency

- Streamlining the process allowed for dialog about course objectives
- Sharing lesson ideas and syllabi reduced work outside of class
- Standardizing and streamlining same-level syllabi
- Comparing student’s readiness for level progress and measuring student learning outcomes

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WHY WE IMPLEMENTED ESL PORTFOLIOS

Reason #3
Value of evidence-based data for internal and external accountability:

- Provides resource for level-transfer requests from students
- Verify student advancement through noncredit ESL program
LOGISTICS & RESOURCE NEEDS OF THE PORTFOLIO PROCESS

- Hard copies (vs. electronic versions) of portfolios still seem to work best for our highly mobile population and our all-adjunct faculty:
  1. Begin the process four weeks into the term to avoid the initial drops and no-shows
  2. Collect and redistribute the portfolio folders of dropped or transferred Ss
  3. Print and distribute the Progress Reports on 3-part NCR paper
  4. Utilize classroom aides in preparing the labels
  5. Instructional support staff conduct quality checks just after mid-term
COLLABORATIVE & STANDARDIZE PROCESSES BENEFIT STUDENTS

ESL Calendar of Events streamlines processes and syllabi of all-adjunct department
ASSESSING THE VALUE OF PORTFOLIOS

VESL Career Paths Student Focus Group (Spring, 2010)

- job advancement, transitioning to credit, and lifelong learning strategies.
- gained confidence in their abilities as English speakers and computer users
- were better prepared to apply for jobs and provide samples of their proficiencies (e.g., using Microsoft programs and writing coherent essays)
- shared the portfolio with family and friends to show their accomplishments in the program
- Planned ways to continue with English improvement as they exit the highest level of noncredit ESL
EVIDENCE OF QUALITY TEACHING & LEARNING

Mt. SAC ESL Persistence & Level Progress (June, 2011)

Student progress is consistently above the state average.

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IN SUMMARY
Mt. SAC’s ESL Portfolios...

- Benefit Students by
  - Allowing them to critically reflect on their own learning progress
  - Helping them to develop lifelong learning strategies for English and job advancement, beyond the ESL program.
IN SUMMARY
Mt. SAC’s ESL PORTFOLIOS...

- Benefit Instructors & Strengthen the Program by
  - Bringing a degree of standardization to the evaluation progress
  - Providing opportunities for teachers to discuss how to best measure their students’ learning – fine-tuning rubrics, norming their assessments, matching instruction to course objectives
  - Continuing to develop professionally and personally through collaboration with colleagues and cross-training workshops
THANK YOU!
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