

All college-bound students in Texas are required to take the Texas Success Initiative Assessment (TSIA) to determine if they are ready for college-level coursework. Approximately 25% of the students who enroll at Victoria College have TSIA scores that indicate they are not ready in reading or writing (or both), so they are required to take a course in Integrated Reading and Writing. The Victoria College teaching staff's incorporation of NROC English into the course increased the numbers of students who passed and decreased the attrition rate.

INSTITUTIONAL PROFILE

Victoria College is a public community college of about 4,000 students located in Victoria, Texas. Students can earn associate's degrees and certificates in fields such as business, industry, health care, and public service. Approximately 70% of VC students are enrolled part-time.

IMPLEMENTATION

In 2014, the Victoria College (VC) Integrated Reading and Writing (INRW) instructors moved away from the "one size fits all" lecture classes and toward a more technology-based class that could individualize instruction. In fall of that year, they piloted Cengage's Aplia, but found it didn't address their students' needs—the reading level was too high, the attrition rate for the class was too high, and the pass rate was too low. So in Spring 2015, they created their own curriculum using a textbook and materials they found on the internet. They continued to enhance and use that curriculum in Fall 2015 and Spring 2016, but still felt there was room for improvement.

In Summer 2016, VC's Curriculum & Instruction Design Specialist, Deborah Butler, discovered NROC English. "As soon as I saw it, I knew it was the curriculum piece we were missing," she says. "It let students work at their own pace and it had the diagnostic that we needed to judge what they knew."

The majority of VC's students are part-time students who juggle their studies with other obligations, including work. VC's Integrated Reading and Writing is therefore set up as an open-entry, emporium-style class that allows students scheduling flexibility to determine which days and times they attend the INRW course.

Students begin the INRW course by taking the NROC English diagnostic, which helps the instructors identify each student's knowledge gaps against the set curriculum. Then for each NROC English unit, the teachers repurposed one of the two



DETAILS

WHO WAS SERVED: Incoming freshmen

WHEN: Fall 2016

NUMBER OF STUDENTS: 281

IMPLEMENTATION: English remediation for students with low reading or writing subscores on the TSIA

RESULTS: The percentage of students earning an A, B, or C in the class rose from 41.6% to 62.1%. The attrition rate in the class dropped from 23% to 11%.

INSTRUCTIONAL APPLICATION: Open-entry, emporium-based course in a traditional community college setting


"As soon as I saw it, I knew it was the curriculum piece we were missing."

— Deborah Butler, Curriculum and Design Instruction Specialist, Victoria College

post-tests and used it as a pre-test. Students who scored 80% or better on the pre-test could immediately move on to the next unit. If they scored less than 80%, they worked through the unit and took the post-test. The post-test score then became their grade for that unit.

The classes were held in a computer lab and met for two hours per day twice a week (M/W or T/Th). Beginning in Fall 2016, students had to select a specific class to attend that fit into their schedule. If they missed a class or had to work, they could attend at any time during another scheduled class or during "off" times when the lab was open. While

**Unit 1: Introduction to College Reading and Writing
Checklist/Study Guide**

 **Beginning the Unit**

- Complete Pre-test for Unit 1.
- When you see your score, show it to an instructor for your next steps.
- Mark the topics below that correspond to the questions you missed on the pre-test.
 - Author/Audience/Purpose
 - Topic Sentences
 - Fact and Opinion
 - Using Context Clues/Word Parts
 - Subjects and Verbs (Worked Example 2)/Subject-Verb Agreement (Worked Example 1 in Unit 3)
 - End Punctuation (Worked Example 3)

FIGURE 1: A section of a page from the Unit 1 Study Guide Checklist created by the INRW instructors at Victoria College.

students worked independently, there was always a teacher and sometimes a tutor or other instructor available to offer assistance and keep students on track.

Instead of in-class lectures, the VC team used the short NROC English videos to teach core concepts in a consistent way across sections with different instructors. “It made it easier for instructors to grade,” says Butler, “We struggled before....the norming of the grading was an issue and the way it was taught was an issue.”

Some students had trouble grasping all the concepts the videos presented, so the VC team created “Study Guide Checklists” for each unit in the NROC English course to help students stay focused as they worked through the video lectures (Figure 1). This resource oriented students to the materials associated with each unit, after which they completed activities in a paper-and-pencil notebook. VC donated these study guides back to The NROC Project for other NROC English instructors to use with their students.

The instructors also found that, although their students were doing well in writing, they were struggling with exams, so the instructors held workshops and created review packets to help students with their summative test.

“The curriculum that’s provided by NROC, with videos and the scaffolding and breaking it all up, it made it more consistent,” says Butler, “I think the students feel successful, and for the most part, seem to like it,” she said.

RESULTS

In the three semesters prior to using NROC English, only 42.6% of the students (221 of 519) earned an A, B, or C for their Integrated Reading and Writing course grade. Once NROC English became a fundamental component of the class, the percentage of students earning an A, B, or C rose to 61.6% (173 of 281).

Not only did the students do better academically, but the attrition rate dropped significantly. In the three prior semesters, an average of 23% of students dropped or withdrew from the class (118 of 519 students). After NROC English was incorporated, only 11% of students dropped or withdrew from the class (31 of 281 students).

WHAT’S NEXT

Victoria College is continuing to use NROC English for their INRW course and making small refinements in the approach they are taking. Their Study Guide Checklists and end-of-unit Review Packets now also include a “pacing guide” to keep students on track.

Feedback from Fall 2016 students indicated that they felt like they had to wait a long time for assistance while the instructor helped another student, so in spring 2017 they are offering two instructors in every class with enrollment higher than 10 students.

Victoria College currently has 165 students in their Spring 2017 INRW courses and are expecting to continue to see positive outcomes. ■