**Minutes of 3/2/15**

**Region 3 AVATAR Grant**

**Core and VAT meeting**

C & I Director Nan Gainer welcomed everyone to the ESC and expressed our delighted that this kind of collaboration was taking place. After everyone introduced themselves and told of their positions, Nan gave a brief overview of the AVATAR project and the ESC involvement in it. Next, Gayle Parenica presented a short ppt that highlighted the connection between Index 4, Postsecondary Readiness, and the College and Career Readiness Standards. Additionally, she presented data from the Region 3 Index 4 Accountability Report and the Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR) that illustrated the performance of Region 3 students compared to students around the state. She then helped facilitate the discussions around 4 questions related to vertical alignment and the implementation of standards during the VAT sessions.

We then broke into our Groups- Core, ELA VAT, and Math VAT. Below is a summary of the discussions that took place during these meetings.

*Core Summary by ESC representatives: Nan Gainer, Cheryl Shamburger and Mary Lea Pfenninger*

One district was under the impression that if their students could take the course earlier that it would be more advantageous to the student.

Students were able to pass the TSI but not the STAAR

Professional development is needed in late summer because it’s not until July that districts are working on their master schedule. VC did offer a 2 day training (preparing teachers to teach a college level course) in late summer.

Wharton CC offers a boot camp, academies and goes out to schools so that students will be able to recognize a college face once they start attending and also to let them know what to expect when attending college.

One reason that students might be failing in a two year college was because these students are not the ones taking dual credit courses in high school.

Dual seat credit was offered as an option for students. It was also noted that the math and ELA can be the 4th year of those subjects for qualified students.

We discussed why students were not taking the course even after the explanations from the counselors were given to the students and parents.

An informal survey that Cheryl conducted on CPC courses, degree plans etc. was reviewed discussed.

Our Workforce representative also expressed his view of career ready and what the expectation was in industry.

*ELA VAT Summary by ESC representatives: Sarah Woodring and Terri Smith-Chavira*

The ELAR team began by noting that there are not many schools in our region that are participating with our community colleges and offering the advanced English course. Industrial HS mentioned that they did not have enough students interested in the class, possibly because students do not understand the benefits of the course.

It was also mentioned that schools seem to be focused on teaching to the test rather than focusing on the teaching all of the required standards. We are noticing that in order for students to be successful on Index 4 ALL standards need to be taught and mastered. If we do not do this, our gap is going to continue to widen.

The VC representative mentioned that the colleges received new student outcomes in 2014, and they are working with their instructors to realign course content and methods to meet the needs of the new outcomes.

Representatives from all organizations concluded that many teachers/instructors are not changing their instruction to align with new standards. The ELAR standards changed in 2009, and many teachers still have not changed their instruction to meet the demands of the new standards. It was also mentioned that the colleges are having some of the same issues since they received the new student outcomes in 2014. We concluded that campus instruction is going to have to be monitored more closely than it has been in the past if we are going to close the gap on Index 4.

The WCJC representative mentioned that writing needs to be occurring across the curriculum. When students enter college, they are finding that students are not as familiar as they should be with writing assignments in classes other than ELAR. Writing shows critical thinking, and K-12 students need to be doing more writing in all subject areas.

We concluded that classroom instruction has to move away from backwards testing design in order for our students to be successful. In other words, instruction should not focus be focused around the passing of a test (STAAR/EOC/TSI). Instruction needs to be focused on student mastery of ALL standards. In order to move our teachers/instructors to focus on standard mastery, we need to spend time with them ensuring that they understand the standards and are “teaching” all of the standards. It was also mentioned that we need support from administrators to make K-16 vertical alignment possible.

*Math VAT Summary by ESC representatives: Pam Yosko & Cindy Marshall*

It was agreed the College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) are what colleges and universities are requiring for incoming students to be successful on the TSI and their first College Algebra class. It was agreed that the CCRS standards do not single out high school math courses, but also includes math concepts taught in the lower grades.

There was discussion about the gaps in math curriculum K-12, especially with the implementation of the new math standards (TEKS).

The cost of public school districts was mentioned as a concern for implanting foundational college math courses – textbook fees, online access fees. Another concern was scheduling and math staff to offer these foundational courses.

The effectiveness of offering these foundational math courses was discussed. The idea of a Pre-TSI and Post-TSI was mentioned to show student growth as well as effectiveness of foundational math courses being offered pre-college.

There has been confusion within Region 3 regarding the curriculum for college foundational math courses. The colleges agreed they do not offer a curriculum, only a textbook/software platform for public high schools to guide the foundational course. The colleges do provide the final.

The groups met together to debrief. Dates were set for the next meetings. The ELA and Math VAT would meet here at the ESC on May18th at 9:00 and the Core group would meet here at the ESC on June 24th at 9:00 With no further action needed, the group dismissed at 11:45 PM.

 Mary Lea

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