

FY2009 Staff Development Grant Report

Collaborative Employee Engagement using a Strengths-Based Approach Dakota County Technical College

Description: This project will train and establish a Strengths Advocate on our campus, to advance a strengths-based, staff development initiative at Dakota County Technical College.

Project Leader: Linda Foster, Director of Instructional Technology at Dakota County Technical College

Award: \$5000

Project Re-Cap

Dakota County Technical College identified Linda Foster as the trainer for Strengths Finder on our campus. Foster attended a three-day Strengths Advocate training seminar in Houston, Texas in October 2008. The training provided additional information and resources relating to creating a Strengths-based community on campus as well as information regarding implementing the StrengthsQuest survey with staff, faculty and students.

Following the training, Linda Foster returned to campus and developed a series of workshops for both the supervisors and staff of Dakota County Technical College. In addition she used the Q12 employee engagement survey to create a baseline measurement of employee engagement prior to the implementation of Strengths-based training on campus. We used grant monies to purchase StrengthsQuest survey access codes for the staff members of Dakota County Technical College.

Costs:

Strengths Advocate Training Seminar Fee	\$2000
Travel Expenses to Houston, TX	\$1200
Strengths Quest Survey Access Codes	\$1600
Workshop Supplies	\$ 200

Impact

This project introduced the Strengths-based philosophy to the Dakota County Technical College campus community. One of the goals of the project was to introduce the concept of positive strength-based staff development both campus and department wide. Through anecdotal feedback, many of the staff and supervisors who completed the Strength Finder survey and workshops appreciated the opportunity for self reflection and self development.

It is anticipated that the Strength-based philosophy and the StrengthsQuest staff development efforts will continue to expand on our campus. We hope to continue to build a positive culture shift by including faculty and students in the Strength-based development.

Formal follow up evaluations and the administration of the Q12 Employee Engagement survey are planned following the completion of the workshop series for all departments on campus.

Reflections

One of the main lessons learned from this project is that attempting to enact a culture shift to a Strength-based philosophy takes buy-in from all levels and time to be established and accepted. No matter how many times it was explained or reiterated that this project was established as a personal development tool, many of the staff were apprehensive to take the Q12 Engagement survey and to participate in the StrengthsQuest survey as they were concerned about how it would affect their performance or position review. We will continue to offer staff development workshops for individuals and at the departmental level to reinforce the Strengths-based personal development.