

Success is Essential – Essential Skills for College Students

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Human Resources and
Skills Development Canada

Ressources humaines et
Développement des compétences Canada

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Summary

According to Statistics Canada, 25% of Canadian college students drop out of post-secondary training. Many instructors comment that college students are increasingly hard-pressed to keep up with assignments and readings. Would improving student performance through Essential Skills (ES) training enable students to become more effective, and therefore less likely to drop out? In January 2012, Douglas College recruited students into the National Framework for Essential Skills Research Project. In total, 143 students were tested using the Test of Workplace Essential Skills (TOWES) and Canadian Literacy Evaluation (CLE). Of these, almost two-thirds tested below the minimum Level 3 recommended for success in work, learning, and life. Since only those that scored a Level 2 in Document Use were eligible to participate in the project, 66 students were invited to take part in weekly study sessions. Of these, 37 students chose to participate. Following 10 weeks of study sessions, students were tested again. The results indicate that almost all the students moved positively within Level 2 and 75% moved from Level 2 to Level 3 or Level 2(3).

Business Case

According to Murray (2008), between 15% - 32% of students admitted to Canadian colleges have Essential Skills at Levels 1 and 2. Students at these levels do not possess the basic foundational skills necessary to learn new skills and adapt to new situations, which puts them at a significant disadvantage for learning at the college level. With approximately 25% of first year students dropping out, as per Statistics Canada 2005, 2008, this results in a substantial socio-economic impact for both the government and tax payers. Furthermore, the provincial government funds two-thirds of a student's tuition, thus the cost represents a considerable public investment in human capital.

With Douglas College's focus on developing and delivering more effective success strategies for students through initiatives such as the Students First! Plan which focuses on supporting students in achieving their individual educational goals by removing barriers, we approached the areas of Health Sciences and Commerce and Business Administration to pilot an ES approach with students. Both departments offer a variety of programs in high employability sectors including certificate, diploma, and bachelor degree programs in areas such as nursing, dental assisting, animal health technology, health care support, accounting, hotel management, and business management. Classes are held in two main campuses located in New Westminster and Coquitlam, BC.

The Training Group, the contracting department of Douglas College, has extensive experience in multiple areas of essential skills. Since 2005, we have delivered the Foundations Workplace Skills Program (FWSP) offering an innovative ES-focused intervention service designed to assist learners to increase their skill levels for success in training or the workplace. Using the ES construct approach, we ensure that learning is relative to the student's goals. The post assessment provides evidence that by targeting specific skill gaps related to the student's career goal, especially in Reading Text, Document Use and Numeracy, we are able to raise skill levels quickly and significantly. Learners benefit from "fast tracking" their way to success. Rather than taking a general upgrading or GED-type approach, students focus on only those skills required for success with their educational or career goals.

Partnerships

The National Framework for Essential Skills Research Project depends on successful relationships with a number of partners. Within Douglas College, this partnership consisted of Douglas College senior management, department heads, faculty, instructors, students from Health Sciences and Commerce and Business Administration, as well as the project team.

In order to move the project forward, the development of relationships with senior management, deans, and department heads was fundamental for accessing students in the Commerce and Business Administration and Health Sciences programs. We relied on the input of instructors to provide us with information on the needs of students in order to develop and deliver meaningful skills enhancement and developed a one page needs assessment questionnaire to circulate. An integral part of gaining support from department heads, faculty, and instructors was through the efforts of Peter Wilkins, a well-respected instructor in the English Department, who acted as a faculty liaison. Peter made the initial contact with department heads and made it possible for us to follow up with attendance at department meetings, information sessions for faculty and later, invitations to visit classes to deliver information sessions for students.

Students

Also vital to the project was the development of a favorable relationship with our learners. Their willingness to “buy in” to the project and to devote their time to participating in the assessment and intervention phase of the project was a key to the success of the project. Additionally, student feedback on their needs allowed us to create a program that met their needs effectively. Upon starting the intervention phase of the project, student feedback was extremely positive. Comments included, “I wish I had done this before I started studying in this program”; “Can I come twice a week? I feel more accountable if I come to the study sessions”; “I was struggling, I was always stressed and now I have a better way and it’s very helpful.” The overall impression was that students liked being involved in determining what is taught and when. They felt that their needs were being met and were more likely to apply the strategies being taught.

The Project Team

Our core project team was made up of a manager, faculty liaison, skills coach/instructor, marketing assistant/test invigilator and program support. The core team met on four occasions to review project progress and discuss next step activities. While each position had specific roles and responsibilities there was some overlap and the team was highly flexible, adjusting to meet the needs of the project at specific phases.

Awareness and Promotion

The success of this project relied entirely on the support of the college and the faculties involved: Health Sciences and Commerce and Business Administration. Initial discussions took place between the program manager and the Vice President of Academics where it was agreed that a well-respected ‘faculty liaison’ was needed in order to bridge the Training Group (contracting department) with the academic side of the college.

The faculty liaison introduced the project to the Dean of Health Sciences and Commerce and Business Administration, receiving a positive response that led to further communications with department heads and faculty instructors. Introductions were initially made with an announcement (letter) and followed by in-person contact. Requests were then made to conduct in-class student information sessions.

In December 2011, the project instructor and marketing assistant introduced the project to four classes (1 Dental Assistant, 3 Business) resulting in a total of 87 students indicating their potential interest to participate in the project. The majority of faculty instructors, however, asked that we visit classes in January as their students were busy with final exam preparations and class time was at a premium.

The Douglas College Communications and Marketing Department assisted with promotions placing announcements on Twitter, the college Omnivision screen and with production of a brochure. Additionally we created a student information sheet, Facebook page, Wiki for students and online assessment scheduler where students could sign up (Appendix A). It was recognized early on that providing prizes would assist with recruitment and we advertised the draws we were holding for Tim Horton's gift cards, iPads and free tuition. All of these methods proved to be a very effective means of generating interest in the project.

Essential Skills Interventions

The student body at Douglas College is made up of a diverse mix of students including students that have returned to school after an extended absence, students that are experiencing post-secondary education for the first time, learners with language barriers, and learners that have had limited success with traditional classroom learning in the past. In order to successfully develop the ES of these learners, we focused on adult education principles which recognize that adults not only bring a wealth of experience and have something to contribute, but they may also have something to lose; adults prefer to focus on real-life, relevant examples, and; adults prefer to be involved in the planning and implementing of learning activities.

Prior to beginning skill enhancement, learners were given a needs assessment. The goal was to identify which areas needed to be addressed while directly involving students in the planning phase of the 20 hour curriculum which spanned a period of ten weeks. Students expressed an interest in knowing what needs the instructors perceived as "student challenges" and instructors were interested in finding out what areas the students felt they needed help with. The results of the needs assessments were shared with both groups and it is worth noting that students and instructors identified similar challenges.

Due to the varying schedules of students and their limited availability, study sessions were scheduled at varying times and at both campuses. Students were asked to choose a time that was convenient for them and were told that if they needed to attend a study session other than their “chosen” day, they were free to do so. Likewise, students were promised that the study sessions would not add to their workloads, but rather, would allow them to streamline their study processes and complete their homework more efficiently. Students were asked to bring their class assignments to the study sessions to use these to practice their ES strategies on. In this way, they were able to apply their newly learned skills directly to the work they had been assigned in their credit courses.

Professional Practitioner Skills

In order to successfully test an ES framework, the practitioner delivering the ES intervention must have a solid foundation in ES methodology. Since 2000, the Training Group at Douglas College (TGDC) has been involved in a wide variety of ES initiatives, including research projects, assessment initiatives and testing, curriculum development, consulting and advising, workplace training, and test certification in the public and private sectors. The Training Group also developed and delivers the Essential Skills Practitioner Certification Program. Essential Skills practitioners at TGDC have many opportunities to develop ES knowledge and training methods through involvement in the above initiatives and all are certified TOWES Test Administrators. Other opportunities for staff include training sessions with learning experts such as Michael Hardt on topics such as controlling complexity, workshops from SkillPlan, Eskilon, and industry sector council workshops.

Testing sessions were invigilated by Cat Adler, Chris Perrin, Diana Dufour-Zand and David Bellamy. The curriculum and study sessions were developed and delivered by Cat Adler who has been involved in a number of ES projects including two years in the Foundations Workplace Skills Program (the goal of which was to assist individuals in acquiring the foundational skills required for success in work, learning, and life through ES -based learning methodology). In order to incorporate ES methodology, Cat Adler focused on teaching process rather than content. Therefore, the curriculum she developed focused on strategies (process) students could use and apply to their textbooks and the assignments they were working on in their courses. For example, students indicated that when they read their textbooks they cannot remember what they had read. The strategies they were taught focused on using the appropriate reading strategy for the type of text they needed to read. This included methods to identify key points, main ideas and how to manage the information being presented in the textbook effectively.

Types of Interventions

All students interested in participating in the research project were pre- and post-tested using either the TOWES or the CLE. In total, 143 students were given the first assessment. Of these, 61 were assessed at a Level 2 in Document Use which was the level used to screen participants into the project (Figure 1). Although all students that scored a Level 2 in Document Use were invited to take part in the weekly study sessions, only 37 chose to participate and 24 were able to attend for the full 10 weeks and to write the post-assessment needed for successful completion of the intervention. The distribution of students based on the area of study and the student levels can be seen in Figures 2 and 3.

The 13 students that dropped out over the course of the intervention all stated that they were unable to continue because of time constraints. It may be worth noting that the four Health Sciences students that dropped out did attend the majority of the study sessions but were unable to complete the post-assessment because of time constraints related to their course examination schedules, clinical practice, and travel plans.

Of the 37 students that started the intervention, 8 indicated that English was not their first language and they were also given the Versant Oral Communications Test (Figure 4).

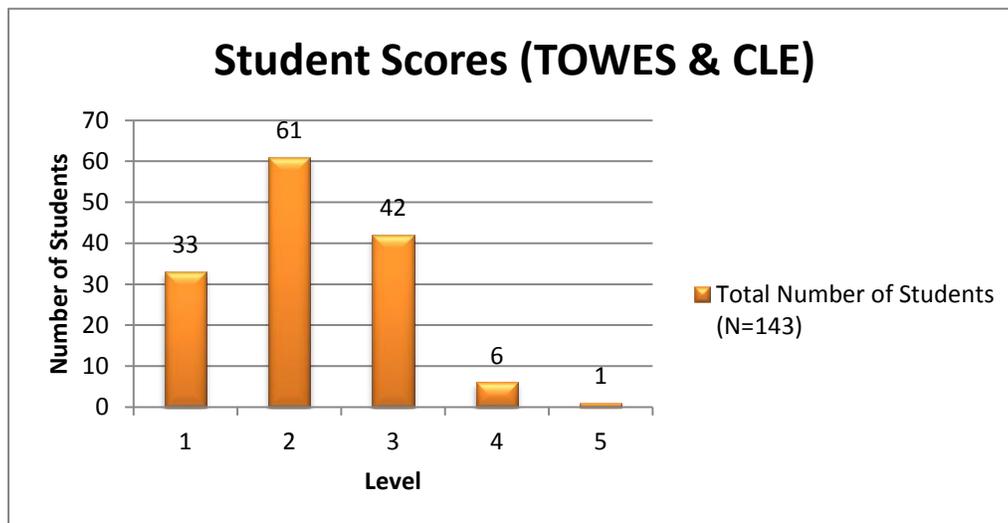


Figure 1: TOWES/CLE Assessment Results based on Document Use Level

In addition to TOWES and CLE scores which were used to screen students into the project, a needs assessment was conducted with faculty and participating students to identify areas which needed to be addressed (Appendix B). The needs assessments showed that students faced similar challenges, irrespective of the discipline in which they were studying. Similarly, the challenges instructors perceived and those that the

students felt were similar. The top three challenges instructors noted in their students' performance in class were: following directions on assignments, providing clear and logical written work, and the ability to study for exams. Students noted that their top three challenges were: studying for exams, remembering what has been read, and remembering new vocabulary or new concepts.

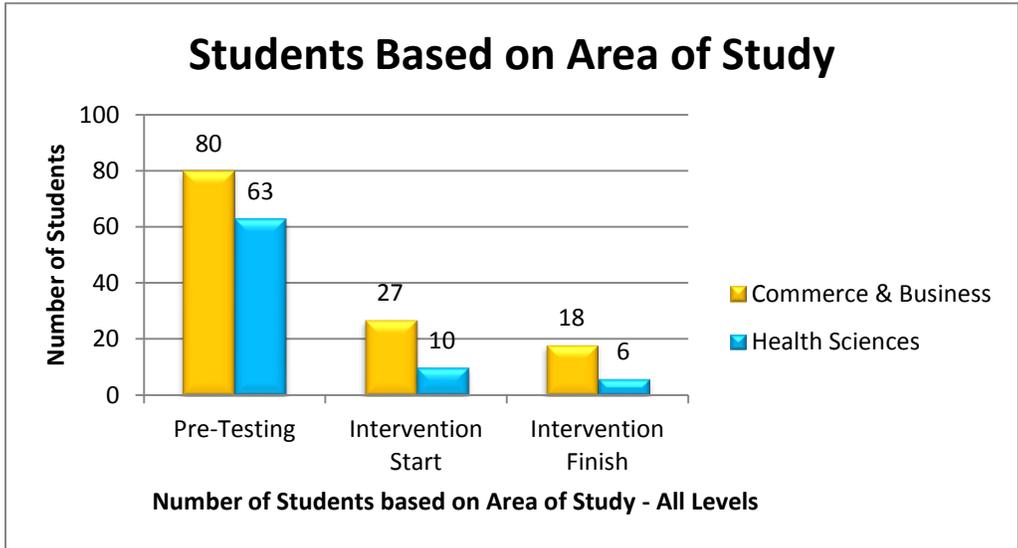


Figure 2: Number of Students Based on Area of Study

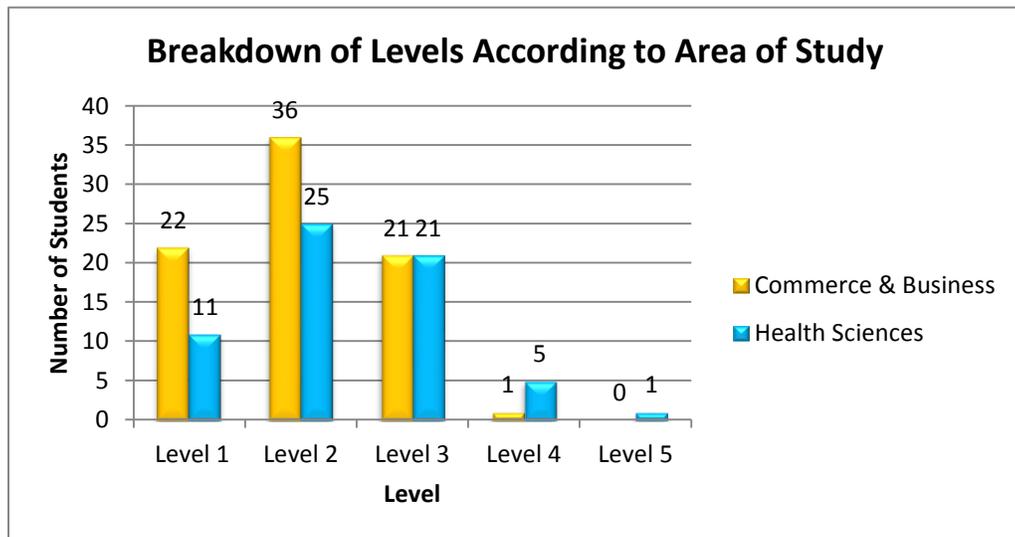


Figure 3: Breakdown of Document Use Levels Based on Area of Study

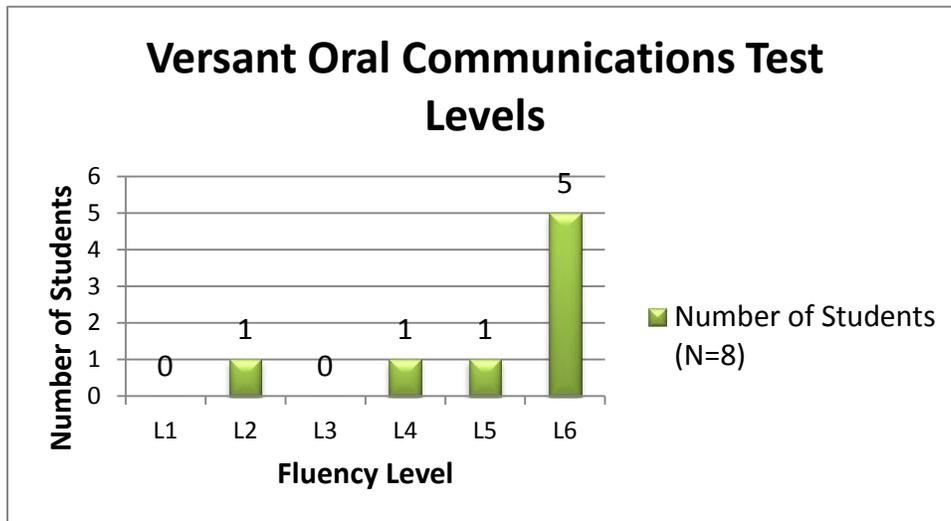


Figure 4: Versant Oral Communications Test Results

In addition to the skill gaps which needed to be addressed, scheduling was another challenge. Students have busy schedules and have little time to devote to extra-curricular activities such as these study sessions. Based on previous experience with moving learners from a Level 2 to a Level 3, including the challenges Level 2 learners typically face when working independently, students were invited to participate in weekly two hour long face-to-face study sessions. The sessions were scheduled daily and divided between both the Douglas College campuses. Students were encouraged to attend regularly but were told that if they could not attend their “regular” session, they were free to attend on another day or another campus. Students were also given access to a student Wiki with links to the handouts and additional practice materials. Students commented that they enjoyed this type of flexibility in the study session schedule. The study sessions were scheduled to take place for 10 weeks over the winter semester, finishing up at the same time as students started their final exams.

Each week, students were given a specific ES -based study strategy and asked to apply it to their coursework (Appendix C). For example, on the needs assessments, students and instructors indicated that one of the challenges students faced was identifying the main ideas of assignments. This issue can be viewed as a challenge with several ES, namely, Thinking Skills, Reading Text, and Document Use. To address the issue, an activity was developed to teach students how to identify given and requested information. After teaching the strategy, students were asked to practice using questions in their textbooks and on assignments they had received in their credit classes that week. The success of each week’s study session was measured by feedback from students.

Students were asked to apply each strategy for the full week following the study session to determine if it was helpful to them. The following week, students would report back if the strategy had helped them. Student feedback was positive and as students developed

more ES -based strategies, comments included that they were feeling more confident about their studies and that they were seeing an improvement in grades. One student commented that she had been failing her class but had seen her grade improve to a B+ as she gained the skills to keep up with her assignments and to complete them more accurately.

The selection of learning materials and the order in which they were presented were based on the needs assessments, as well as student feedback. While still following standard teaching principles of scaffolding and skill progression, the curriculum remained flexible to accommodate student needs. For example, test taking strategies had initially been scheduled for the end of the semester when students were expected to prepare for their final exams. However, students indicated that they were concerned about mid-terms and requested that the strategies be taught sooner, to coincide with their mid-terms. This change was done and the lesson was taught in Week 5.

At the end of the semester, 24 students were given a post-assessment. In Document Use, the average point gain was almost 28 points with 75% of the learners moving from a Level 2 to a Level 3 or a Level 2(3), with the bracket indicating that the test taker had a score that was close to the cut-off point between two levels (Appendix D). Furthermore, although the focus was on Document Use pre- and post-scores, as Figure 5 indicates, of the six students that had been pre-assessed at a Level 2 in Reading Text, five moved to a Level 3. In Numeracy, five students had been pre-assessed at a Level 2 and all five moved to a Level 3, however; two students dropped from a Level 3 to a Level 2.

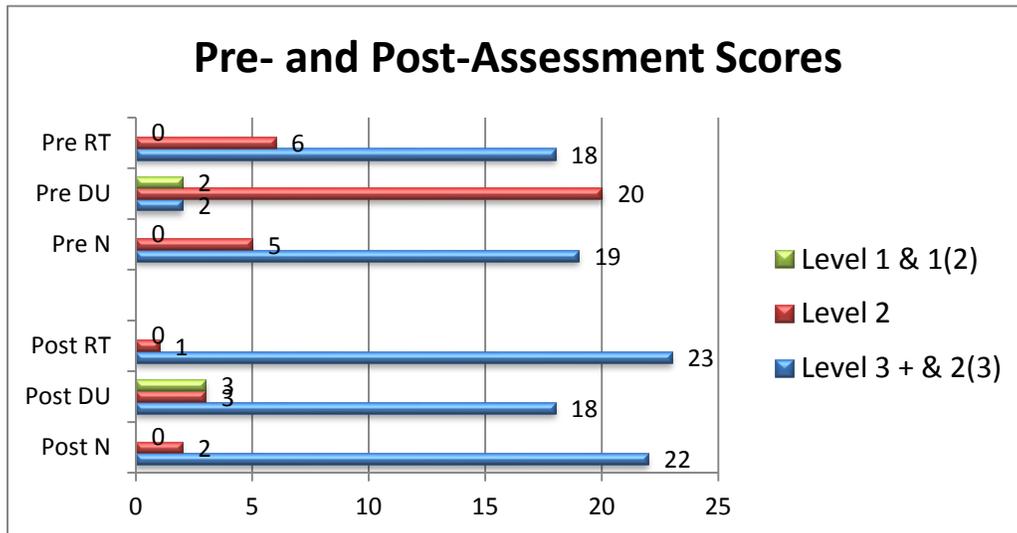


Figure 5: Pre- and Post-Assessment Scores (All Students)

Transition Pathways to Employability

The transition pathway described in the National Framework document that best described this project was college learners in need of higher skills, who are unemployed but moving towards post-secondary training. The business case is strong to increase the ES levels of this group as the socio-economic effects of student drop-out rates are substantial to government and tax payers. With students funding only one-third of their tuition, provincial government funding is substantive at two-thirds.¹ According to a recent Statistics Canada survey, 25% of college students drop out.² This represents a considerable public investment in human capital and a significant loss when students are unable to attain their educational goals. According to the HRSDC report, *Looking Ahead: 10-Year Outlook for the Canadian Labour Market (2006-2015)* (2006), two-thirds (65.9%) of job openings in Canada are expected to be in occupations usually requiring post-secondary education (university, college or apprenticeship training). By helping college students succeed in their studies, they are more likely to find employment, earn higher wages, and enjoy a better standard of living.³ Feedback from faculty and students through all phases of this project demonstrated an awareness of the need for increased skills to improve students' likelihood of successfully achieving their educational goals.

Personal Reflection

Working with college learners in Health Sciences and Commerce and Business provided a number of unique challenges and opportunities. Within these two departments, there is a diverse mix of students with unique needs. In order for this project to be successful, it needed to be worthwhile, flexible, and most importantly, the skill enhancement process needed to be efficient. Drawing on our experience with past essential skills skill enhancement projects, we were able to apply a number of best practices. We needed to bridge the connection between the Training Group, the contracting arm of the college, and the academic side of the college. Our faculty liaison, Peter Wilkins, proved to be a key element in our ability to access students and instructors and to gain buy-in from them.

Our next step was to conduct a needs assessment with instructors. Through conversations with instructors and a follow-up paper questionnaire, the needs

¹ Provincial funding for post-secondary institutions, students BC Newsroom, July 27, 2012 – Ministry of Advanced Education

² Postsecondary Education – Participation and Dropping Out: Differences Across University, College and Other Types of Postsecondary Institutions, Statistics Canada, 2008

³ TD Special Report, September 12, 2011
(http://www.td.com/document/PDF/economics/special/sf0911_education.pdf)

assessment served a dual purpose: instructors were able to provide insight into the challenges students experience in the classroom and instructors were given the opportunity to shape the content of the ES training their students would be receiving. A needs assessment with students served a similar purpose – students shared information about the areas that they were concerned about and they felt that their specific needs were being addressed.

This model of engagement ensured that the intervention phase of the project was viewed as worthwhile and that we could address the unique needs of our learners efficiently by targeting only those areas identified as needing work. Students also enjoyed the flexibility of the intervention. Students were able to change the days on which they attended study sessions and were able to access any materials they missed on the student Wiki. Students often commented that they liked that the content of the study sessions was adapted to their needs.

Although the response by all the students that participated in the study sessions was positive, a number of lessons were learned as well. Scheduling times that were convenient for students and at times when classroom space was available was a challenge. Likewise, Commerce and Business Administration students seemed more likely to drop out of study sessions sooner than their counterparts in Health Sciences. The students that left the program all commented that they enjoyed the course content but were unable to attend due to scheduling conflicts. For future success in an ES intervention of this type, programs such as Dental Assisting, Animal Health Technology, or Nursing where students all have the same schedule would probably be more suitable since the study sessions could be directly integrated into the program of study. It is worth noting that when asked at the college debriefing session held after the post-assessments were completed (Appendix D, E, F), students said they would have preferred to have the study sessions included as part of their regular program but at the same time, they would prefer to have someone other than their course instructor teach the ES -based strategies they had learned. Overall, however, the study sessions were viewed favorably and most of the students that participated asked if the program would continue in the future – perhaps the greatest indicator of the project's success.

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September 12, 2011

List of Appendices

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Appendix E

- April 26, 2012 College Debrief PowerPoint
- Project Video

Appendix F

- The Other Press – student newspaper articles
- Prize Draw

Promotional tools for students

Essential Skills

For Health Science & Business students



Do you want to:

- improve your study skills?
- learn how to improve your grades?
- participate in a research project?
- win an iPad, free tuition, gift cards?

Research shows 43% of Canadians do not have the skills needed for consistent success at work and school (IALS, 2003).

We want you for the National Framework for Essential Skills Research Project!



What's in it for me?

Learning strategies resulting in:

- improved study skills
- improved grades
- effective and efficient learning

An opportunity to participate in fun, informal study sessions while completing your homework (no extra work)

What would I be asked to do?

- attend an information session
- complete an online assessment
- participate in weekly study sessions during the Winter 2012 term
- complete a post-assessment at the end of training and a follow-up assessment 6 months after training is complete

This HRSDC-funded research will include 12 colleges and 1600 students and workers from coast to coast!

Attend our next info session: _____

For more details, go to:

nfessentialskills.pbworks.com
Cat Adler at adlerc@douglascollege.ca
or tel: 604-777-6359



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VolunteerSpot
DOING GOOD Just Got Easier!

Give the gift of time!
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Activity Summary For Douglas College Research Project Testing

Click here when you're done **Close**

SIGN OUT

Message
Invite
Create a Link
Send Thank You
Reports
Export
Delete

Calendar Details Extra Info Organizer Volunteers Collect \$

Your Activity at a glance. Click on a date to plan it. Click on a clipboard to copy, change, delete, view details, or print.

January 2012

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6 0 / 40	7
8	9 6 / 40	10	11 3 / 80	12 0 / 40	13 3 / 80	14
15	16 2 / 40	17	18 0 / 40	19	20 3 / 40	21
22	23 0 / 40	24 0 / 40	25 0 / 40	26 0 / 40	27 0 / 40	28

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Thank you to all the students that participated in the study sessions! Your time and commitment is hugely appreciated. Please keep in touch and if you need any help with your study strategies, please do not hesitate to email me at adlerc@douglascollege.ca.

Don't forget, I will be contacting you in six months for the final assessment! Have a great summer!

Cat

Welcome to the Douglas College National Framework for Essential Skills Research Project page!

On this site, you can read about the research project, download handouts from study sessions, access additional learning materials, and communicate with your peers. If you have problems navigating this site, please email Cat at adlerc@douglascollege.ca.

- Week 1 - [Using Strategies to Answer Questions](#)
- Week 2 - [Interpreting Charts, Tables, Graphs, and Other Documents](#)
- Week 3 - [Building Vocabulary](#)
- Week 4 - [Reading in Post-Secondary Education](#)
- Week 5 - [Strategies for Taking Tests](#)
- Week 6 - [Strategies for Better Time Management](#)
- Week 7 - [Strategies for Effective Note-Taking](#)
- Week 8 - [Organizing Your Writing](#)
- Week 9 - [Strategies for Improving Your Memory](#)

Draw for iPads and free tuition

And the winners are.....

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Put this page in a folder

Add Tags

Control access to this page

Copy this page

Navigator

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December 14, 2011

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participate in an exciting research project?

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Joined Facebook
November 25, 2011

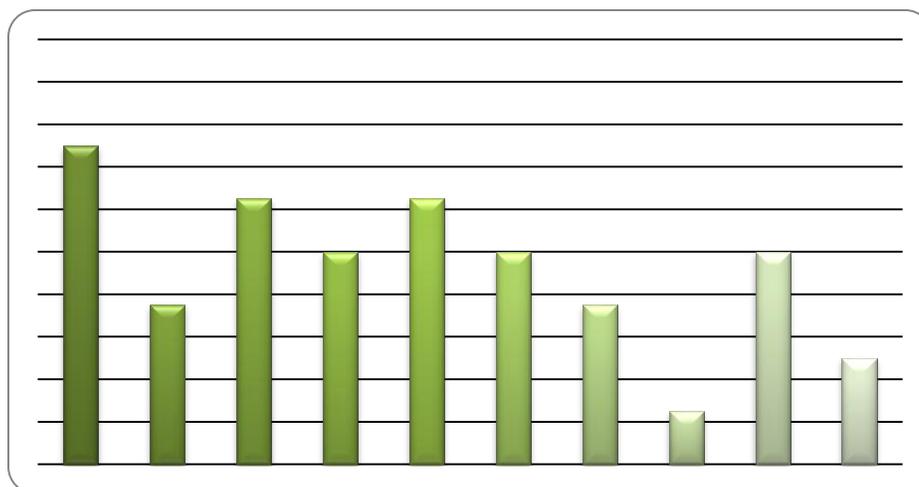


Training Needs Assessment Worksheet

Instructor Needs Assessment

Type of information needed	Types of Challenges
<p>What concerns do you have (if any) about students' performance on coursework?</p>	<p>identifying the main idea of an assignment (following directions) sentence structure (students answer questions using point form rather than giving short answers) studying for exams keeping up with/completing reading assignments completing assignments on time filling in tables/charts correctly giving "low level" answers (answers are not in-depth enough) other</p>
<p>How are students evaluated in your classes?</p>	<p>multiple choice exams short answer exams essays presentations group assignments other</p>

Instructor Needs Assessment Results



Out of 22 surveys sent out, 8 were returned.

The top three issues reported:

1. Following directions on assignments
2. Providing clear and logical written work
3. Ability to study for exams

Other problems reported:

- can memorize but have difficulty applying knowledge
- lack of time management skills
- very low foundational numeracy skills (lose marks to unreasonable calculator errors)
- weak note-taking skills (few students actually take notes, those that do take too many)
- appear to be placed inappropriately in the program
- students lack motivation (don't seem to care)
- lack pride in their work, not excited about learning, aren't concerned with missing classes
- need a lot of guidance and need to be "spoon-fed"

Student Needs Assessment

Training Needs Assessment Worksheet

Dear Student:

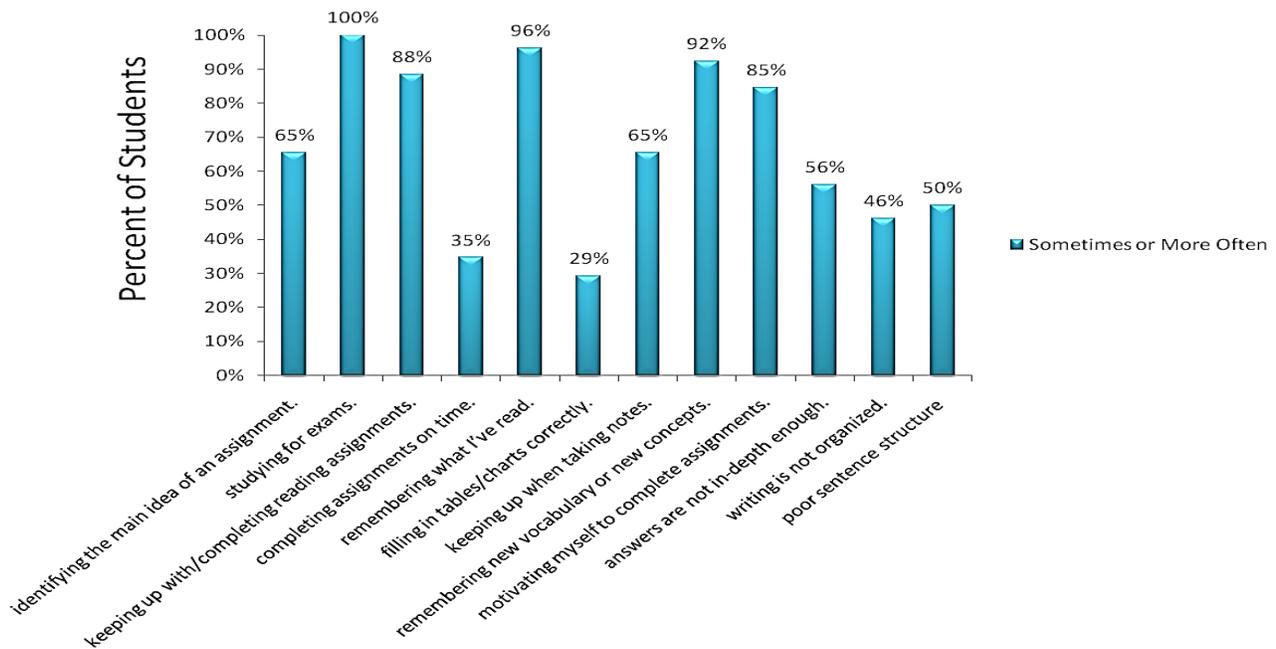
The first step to successfully improving your Essential Skills is to identify areas to focus on. This needs assessment will allow me to develop a curriculum that has been customized for *you* and that addresses the needs *you* have. If you have any questions about the National Framework for Essential Skills Research Project, please do not hesitate to email me at adlerc@douglascollege.ca or call me at 604-777-6359. Thank you.

Types of Challenges	Indicate the answer that best describes your situation				
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	All the time
I have trouble identifying the main idea of an assignment.					
I have trouble studying for exams.					
I have trouble keeping up with/completing reading assignments.					
I have trouble completing assignments on time.					
I have trouble remembering what I've read.					
I have difficulties filling in tables/charts correctly.					
I have difficulty keeping up when taking notes.					
I have trouble remembering new vocabulary or new concepts.					
I have trouble motivating myself to complete assignments.					
Instructors have commented that my answers are not in-depth enough.					
Instructors have commented that my writing is not organized.					
My instructors have commented on my sentence structure (I use point form rather than giving short answers).					
Other:					

TOPICS I'M INTERESTED IN STUDYING

- Remembering what I've read
- Studying for exams
- Organizing my study time
- Improving my vocabulary (remembering vocabulary from class)
- Using charts/graphs
- Note-taking
- Writing/providing good written answers
- Organizing my writing
- Other:

Student Needs Assessment Results



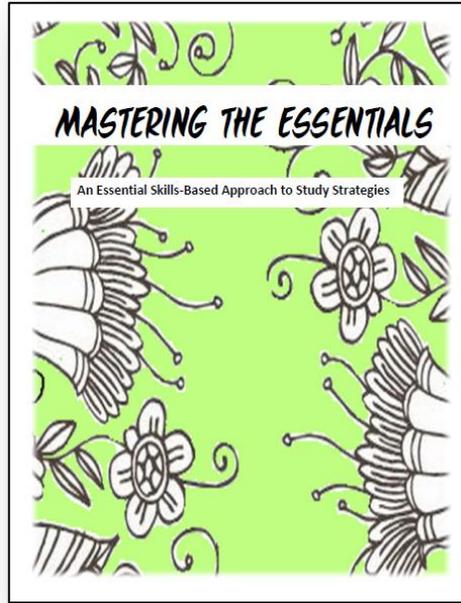
I have trouble with:

Appendix C

Curriculum Outline

	Module	Lesson	Issue Addressed	Essential Skill
1	Using Strategies to Answer Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Snapping the Question (given and requested information) 	Following directions; identifying key concepts/main ideas	All 9 Essential Skills
2	Interpreting Chart Tables, Graphs and Other Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding lists & tables 	Filling in tables/charts; providing clear & logical work	Document Use
3	Building a Better Vocabulary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using strategies for building a better technical vocabulary 	Identifying key concepts/main ideas; Keeping up with reading; giving “low level” answers	Reading Text Thinking Skills
4	Strategies for Reading in Post-Secondary Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction to technical reading skills 	Keeping up with/completing reading assignments; studying for exams	Reading Text
5	Strategies for Taking Tests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying strategies for success on tests and exams 	Ability to study for exams; providing clear and logical work	Thinking Skills
6	Strategies for Better Time Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Managing time and developing better study strategies 	Ability to study for exams; completing assignments on time	Numeracy, Document Use, Thinking Skills
7	Strategies for Effective Note-Taking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing strategies for effective note-taking 	Identifying key concepts/main ideas; listening	Writing, Thinking Skills
8	Organizing Your Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizing writing by using list structure 	Improving sentence structure; giving low level answers; providing clear & logical work	Document Use, Writing
9	Techniques for Improving Memory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Techniques for improving memory and applying knowledge 	Ability to study for exams; identifying and understanding key concepts/main ideas	Thinking Skills, Document Use, Continuous Learning
10	Putting it All Together	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of strategies 	Using strategies together to make learning more efficient and effective	All 9 Essential Skills

Sample Workbook Pages Developed for Use in Study Sessions



Mastering the Essentials -
An Essential Skills-Based Approach to Study Strategies

Foreword

Purpose and Outcomes

Mastering the Essentials – An Essential Skills-Based Approach to Study Strategies provides a systematic approach for integrating Essential Skills methodology into the academic coursework of students studying in post-secondary institutions. By developing their Essential Skills, students will be able to complete class assignments more effectively and more efficiently.

Structure

The structure of the course can (and should) be adjusted based on student needs and instructor availability. It is recommended that students spend a minimum of 8-10 weeks covering course material. This amount of time will allow students to put into practice what they have learned at study sessions.

Materials You Will Need

- Instructor's Guide
- Photocopies of handouts
- Meeting space that is conducive to group presentations and discussions

Mastering the Essentials - An Essential Skills-Based Approach to Study Strategies

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Mastering the Essentials -
An Essential Skills-Based Approach to Study Strategies

BOOK OVERVIEW

MODULE	LESSON	Issue Addressed	Essential Skill
1	Needs Assessments and Curriculum Development	Developing a needs assessment Developing curriculum based on needs assessment	Identifying areas for skill development using Essential Skills methodology
2	Using Strategies to Answer Questions	Snapping the Question (key words & needed info)	Following directions; identifying key concepts/main ideas
3	Interpreting Chart Tables, Graphs and Other Documents	Understanding lists & tables	Filling in tables/charts; providing clear & logical work
4	Building a Better Vocabulary	Using strategies for building a better technical vocabulary	Identifying key concepts/main ideas; Keeping up with reading; giving "low level" answers
5	Strategies for Reading in Post-Secondary Education	Introduction to technical reading skills	Keeping up with/completing reading assignments; studying for exams
6	Strategies for Taking Tests	Identifying strategies for success on tests and exams	Ability to study for exams; providing clear and logical work
7	Strategies for Better Time Management	Managing time and developing better study strategies	Ability to study for exams; completing assignments on time
8	Strategies for Effective Note-Taking	Developing strategies for effective note-taking	Identifying key concepts/main ideas; listening
9	Organizing Your Writing	Organizing writing by using list structure	Improving sentence structure; giving low level answers; providing clear & logical work
10	Techniques for Improving Memory	Techniques for improving memory and applying knowledge	Ability to study for exams; identifying and understanding key concepts/main ideas

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Appendix D

Pre- and Post-Assessment Scores

	Name	Discipline	Pre-RT	Post-RT	Difference	Pre-DU	Post-DU	Difference	Pre-NU	Post-NU	Difference
1	R.G.	Business	339	339	0	257	305	48	292	354	62
2	V.M.	Business	296	278	-18	235	309	74	311	313	2
3	K.L.	Business	339	313	-26	275	295	20	354	354	0
4	E.T.	Business	246	280	34	241	225	-16	266	254	-12
5	S.J.	Business	264	291	27	204	221	17	276	285	9
6	J.T.	Business	339	315	-24	232	275	43	315	320	5
7	D.D.	Business	286	292	6	238	251	13	315	341	26
8	M.O.	Business	269	272	3	252	282	30	253	295	42
9	K.W.	Business	311	339	28	234	273	39	315	312	-3
10	K.C.	Business	313	315	2	253	291	38	292	318	26
11	S.M.	Business	232	294	62	233	272	39	242	292	50
12	E.F.	Business	339	316	-23	252	292	40	300	333	33
13	D.S.	Business	252	279	27	245	273	28	251	354	103
14	M.F.	Business	313	279	-34	273	326	53	334	297	-37
15	J.D.	Business	244	315	71	229	232	3	253	316	63
16	R.B.	Business	251	248	-3	240	225	-15	271	301	30
17	N.A.	Business	278	294	16	216	245	29	271	281	10
18	D.W.	Business	316	339	23	248	279	31	311	307	-4
19	M.T.	Health	315	315	0	256	287	31	354	308	-46
20	M.M.	Health	311	339	28	268	281	13	256	272	16
21	J.B.	Health	285	345	60	255	295	40	275	295	20
22	C.S.	Health	339	339	0	256	267	11	292	329	37
23	I.M.	Health	270	278	8	242	278	36	292	241	-51
24	B.M.	Health	311	311	0	263	289	26	354	341	-13
		AVERAGE:			11.125			27.958			15.33

RT=Reading Text
DU = Document Use
NU = Numeracy

April 26, 2012 College Debrief PowerPoint



DOUGLAS COLLEGE
Douglas College
presents the

**ACCC Project:
*Developing a National Framework
for Essential Skills:
Seeking Harmony While Respecting
Diversity***

April 26, 2012
Pilot Project Debriefing Session



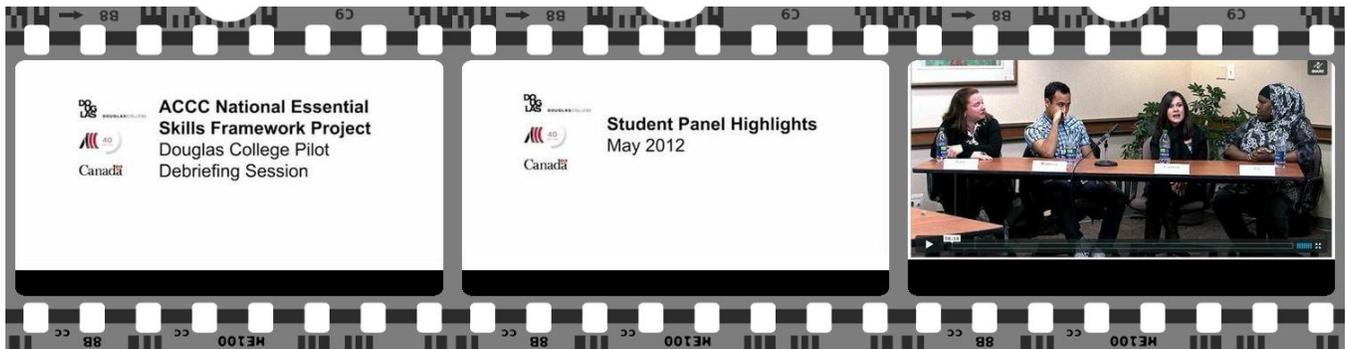
Agenda

- Purpose
- Process
- Outcomes
- Student Panel
- Project Strengths & Challenges



Project Video

A panel of 4 students was invited to share their thoughts on the National Framework Research Project at the Douglas College Project Debriefing Session held on April 26, 2012.



<http://vimeo.com/alldirectionsmedia>

Appendix F

Student newspaper articles

From: <http://theotherpress.ca/douglas-college-students-participate-in-essential-skills-education-pilot-project/>

The Other Press.

NEWS ARTS LIFE & STYLE OPINIONS SPORTS HUMOUR FEATURE LETTITOR

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Douglas College students participate in Essential Skills education pilot project

By Naomi Ambrose, Contributor

Over 100 Douglas College students participated in a nationwide pilot project that could help college students to increase their Essential Skills levels—skills valuable to many careers that Douglas trains students in.

These essential skills, according to HRSDC (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada), are nine essential skills that are necessary for work, life, and learning. They include document use, reading text, numeracy, writing, computer use, working with others, oral communication, thinking skills, and continuous learning. These essential skills are measured on a five-point scale in which Level 3 is the recommended minimum level needed to meet the challenges of today’s world—challenges that many college students may have difficulty overcoming.

Research from T. Scott Murray, the senior Advisor, Human Resources in Science and Technology at Statistics Canada reveals that between 15–32 per cent of students admitted to Canadian Colleges have Essential Skills at Level 1 and 2. Students at these levels do not have the foundational skills necessary to learn new skills and adapt to situations. This puts them at a significant disadvantage for learning at the college level. They are more likely to have challenges when it comes to meeting deadlines and completing assignments successfully.

Since many of these students were more likely to encounter these challenges, the ACCC (Association for Canadian Community Colleges), funded by HRSDC, embarked on a project entitled “Developing a National Framework for Essential Skills: Seeking Harmony While Respecting Diversity.” The program is conducted with participation from eight colleges across Canada, with Douglas College as the lead institution.

...essential skills are measured on a five-point scale in which Level 3 is the recommended minimum level needed to meet the challenges of today's world—challenges that many college students may have difficulty overcoming.

At Douglas College, the Training Group spearheaded the Douglas College leg of the project. "The Training Group at Douglas College has extensive experience in Essential Skills training and has been involved in numerous Essential Skills projects so when the opportunity arose to participate in this project, we were happy to do so," said Cat Adler, the Skills Coach from the Training Group and student recruiter for the project.

Adler further stated that "we focused on students studying in Health Sciences and Business since these are the areas with high employability rates." These students participated in weekly study sessions from February to April whereby they received free tutoring on study skills techniques. They also got a chance to win Tim Horton gift cards, tuition, and iPads. To qualify for the study sessions, students had to score a level 2 in Document Use.

To assess the students' level, Adler stated that "the TOWES (Test of Workplace Essential Skills) or the CLE (Canadian Literacy Evaluation) methods were used. These assessments focused on reading text, document use, and numeracy."

When asked about the improvement in the students' scores from the post assessment test, Adler replied "So far, out of 21 students that scored a Level 2 in Document use, 17 had gone up to Level 3. Out of six students that scored a Level 2 in Reading Text, all six had gone up to Level 3 and out of seven students that scored a level 2 in numeracy, all seven had gone up to Level 3, while two students that had been at Level 3 dropped to Level 2."

Adler further stated that "Our primary goal is to show that with a relatively short term intervention, we can help students to be more successful at school (which should later on translate to increased success at work), by increasing their Essential Skills Level from a Level 2 to a Level 3."

News

Adult Basic Education program facing budget trim

By Dylan Harkett, News Editor

...essential skills are measured on a five-point scale in which Level 3 is the recommended minimum level needed to meet the challenges of today's world—challenges that many college students may have difficulty overcoming.

Urgent: June 14 tuition deadline for credit card payments

New policy regarding tuition payment effective this month

ReStart settles in at DSU offices

By Dylan Harkett, News Editor

...essential skills are measured on a five-point scale in which Level 3 is the recommended minimum level needed to meet the challenges of today's world—challenges that many college students may have difficulty overcoming.

Anti-Enbridge outrage

Protest group rallies outside of energy conference

Douglas College students participate in Essential Skills education pilot project

By Niamh Anthonio, Contributor

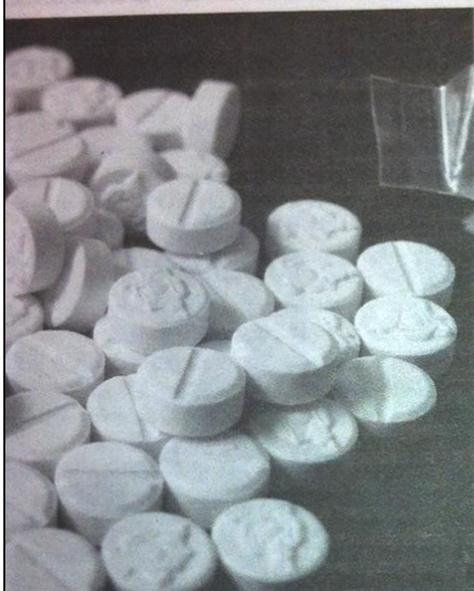
...essential skills are measured on a five-point scale in which Level 3 is the recommended minimum level needed to meet the challenges of today's world—challenges that many college students may have difficulty overcoming.





News

to bad ecstasy ers a concern



Simon Fraser University criminologist Rob Adson has suggested that the new insertion of PMMA into ecstasy pills was probably inserted either to prolong the high or lower the cost; he asserted that the drug producers probably didn't intend for the drug to kill and have likely pulled the pills off the black market at this point.

Whether or not the bad batch has been pulled off the market now is little consolation to the parents and families of the current victims. Burgess' best friend at school, Matt Delaney, said he had noticed his friend's heavy partying and was worried. "I wanted to save him, but I didn't know how to do it. Now, it's too late."

According to the BC government, lack of funding will prohibit an investigation into all 16 ecstasy-related deaths in the last year—so it is unknown if they are a result of PMMA—but all future drug deaths will be tested for PMMA.

The RCMP has been actively looking for, and shutting down, drug manufacturing labs. In the last year they have closed down more than 20 labs in BC.

RESEARCH PROJECT

Health Sciences and Business students at Douglas College have been chosen to participate in an exciting educational research project!

The Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC) is working with 12 colleges and 1600 students and workers across Canada to test the newly identified National Framework for Essential Skills to determine if improving essential skills helps students and/or workers to become more successful at school or work. Essential skills are the skills needed for work, learning and life; check out www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/workplaceskills/LES for more information.

We have one final week of testing remaining. All Health Sciences and Business students are invited to come get their skills assessed—free! The assessment will help determine your eligibility to participate in our research project and will qualify you to enter our draw for fabulous prizes (iPads, free tuition, Tim Horton's gift cards). For more information or to check our assessment schedule please go to: essentialskills.pbworks.com or e-mail Cat Adler at adlerc@douglascollege.ca.



Prize Draw

Every time students attended a study session, they were given one entry form to be entered into a draw for iPads, free tuition and coffee cards.

