

PROMISING PRACTICES EXCHANGE

Please send your completed forms to Joe Holliday: jholliday@sbctc.edu.

1. Which of the five areas of Strategic Enrollment does this practice address? (Check all that apply)

- Alignment with K-12
- Re-engaging Adult Students
- Onboarding New Students
- Retaining Students
- Responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic

2. Name of practice:

Breaking Down Barriers for Bellingham Technical College Students with Limited English Proficiency

3. Description of practice:

ELL was the resource I never knew I needed until I found myself struggling with testing repeatedly. I'm glad staff reached out and offered this resource that not only provided me with the confidence to comprehend different exam styles, but it gave me the necessary time I need to pass my exams. ELL was definitely one of the vital support systems that allowed me to finish nursing school successfully.

- BTC Nursing Student

In November 2018, BTC's Instruction Council approved a new process to provide support for students with Limited English Proficiency (LEP). The updated process and form were developed by BTC's Director of Accessibility Resources in collaboration with counseling and BTC Nursing staff, with the intent of reducing barriers for LEP students in BTC's health programs. The process involves students self-reporting their non-native English speaker status to either their instructors or advisors, and then filling out a simple, one-time request form that is recorded in the student's digital advising records and provides the student with access to additional support throughout their academic career at BTC. This process allows an LEP student to request one or more of the following options: 1) extended time (1.5x) on quizzes and tests, 2) quiet testing location, 3) extended time (1.5x) for in-class essays, 4) access to an English dictionary OR ability to ask questions about words on the test in the standard classroom testing environment, and 5) the ability to audio record lectures. This successful practice is now used across the BTC campus.

I strongly believe in the program because it gives students who process information in two different languages enough time to make an informed decision on their answer. In some cases, it can make the difference between failing exams and successfully completing the program. It is a very effective tool, specially with the current health climate and at [a] time when bilingual nurses are needed most.

- BTC Nursing Student

Students whose first language is not English may have strong cognitive skills, but need additional time to translate instructions, test questions, and in-class writing to and from their native language in order to understand and answer questions appropriately. Extended time reduces testing fatigue and other barriers, and allows the student to fully benefit from the program and the class. English Language Learners applying for this assistance work with members of the BTC Academic & Career Advising team and the Nursing Navigator to

complete the application form, develop their advocacy skills (communicating with faculty each quarter regarding the needs for these adjustments), and adopt strategies for testing and course success. Strategies discussed can range from how to use mindfulness and breathing practices to avoid testing fatigue to how to prioritize response focus to when to use an English dictionary during a test.

Extended time has been determined by the Office of Civil Rights in Washington, D.C.* to be a reasonable academic adjustment for students who are not native English speakers, provided that the college has a process for identifying a student as having Limited English Proficiency. Students are not considered to have Limited English Proficiency based solely on national origin or race. English must not be their native language, regardless of national origin or race.

*Title VI, 34 C.F.R. Appendix B to Part 100 – Guidelines for Eliminating Discrimination and Denial of Services on the Basis of Race, Color, National Origin, Sex, and Handicap in Vocational Education Programs

4. Results: What evidence do you have that this practice is achieving desired results?

BTC's Dean of Nursing and Allied Health reports that "as a result of the practice, we are seeing more confidence in our ELL students – they are building more confidence through the testing process and showing more confidence as they go into licensure testing. Before this practice, it often seemed that our ELL students were just scraping by, just barely making it - and now they are thriving in their studies."

BTC's Nursing Navigator observed that having the option of additional time "removes barriers of anxiety and stress, giving them time to read the questions critically." Students are now able to take the time to read a question, translate words or phrases into their native language, re-translate back into English, and then answer the question. The additional time also gives them enough time to use a non-medical dictionary to look up words not common in their native language.

Another nursing student noted that "I benefited from ELL services greatly because it gave me a peace of mind during exams. I had extended time and was able to read the sentences thoroughly without hurrying. I caught myself making mistakes prior due to English not being my first language. I misinterpreted words due to being in a tight time limit and not reading the information well. ELL helped me pass nursing school with all As and achieve my goals as a nurse."

5. Based on your review of the Excellent Practices Rubric, please indicate whether you believe this practice is emerging, promising, or excellent. (Select only one)

- Emerging
- Promising
- Excellent

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