CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES
AND
KERN
COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT

#92-0010
This proposal is a grant request. Bakersfield College proposes to establish an intensive one year staff development program known as Project BEST - Better Education through Strategic Teaching. Project BEST is designed to develop a cadre of well trained, experienced learning strategy instructors. In order to improve their skills and learn new approaches to teaching, teachers need certain conditions that are not common in most in-service settings. To be most effective, training must include theory, modeling, practice, feedback, classroom application, coaching and peer support teams.

Initially, Project BEST will serve the needs of instructional staff who have chosen to participate in Project BEST and need comprehensive training in specific learning strategies and the strategic instruction approach. Faculty and staff from various programs throughout the college have made a commitment to participate in Project BEST in order to develop their skills as strategic instructors, increase their effectiveness in preparing at-risk students for the rigors of college course work, and help multiply learning strategy opportunities for students throughout the college.
BEST: Better Education through Strategic Teaching

Bakersfield College proposes to establish an intensive one year staff development program known as Project BEST - Better Education through Strategic Teaching. Project BEST is designed to develop a cadre of well trained, experienced learning strategy instructors. In order to improve their skills and learn new approaches to teaching, teachers need certain conditions that are not common in most in-service settings. To be most effective, training must include theory, modeling, practice, feedback, classroom application, coaching and peer support teams. (Joyce and Showers, *Educational Leadership*, February 1980). In addition to these elements, the services of a certified Strategies Intervention Model trainer are required for this project. All of these elements are included in Project BEST. Funding for Project BEST will make it possible to obtain the services of a certified Strategies Intervention Model trainer and create the kind of staff development effort necessary to effectively train learning strategy instructors. At this point more and more students are being referred to learning strategy courses, and the demand for other kinds of strategies is multiplying. The increased demand for learning strategy instruction cannot be met without increasing the number of trained strategy instructors. This kind of staff development effort is crucial if Bakersfield College is to expand the opportunities for underprepared, at-risk students to benefit from learning strategy instruction.

Initially, Project BEST will serve the needs of instructional staff who have chosen to participate in Project BEST and need comprehensive training in specific learning strategies and the strategic instruction approach. Faculty and staff from various programs throughout the college have made a commitment to participate in Project BEST in order to develop their skills as strategic instructors, increase their effectiveness in preparing at-risk students for the rigors of college course work, and help multiply learning strategy opportunities for students throughout the college. Ultimately, however, it is the educationally disadvantaged students who will benefit most from Project BEST. The Student Services Division of Bakersfield College strives to provide support services to these students through a variety of programs, yet many remain underprepared and are at risk for failing or dropping out. It is these students for whom the outcomes of Project BEST will be most significant. As a result of Project BEST, many more students will have access to the non-traditional approach used in learning strategy instruction.

Project BEST will increase teacher effectiveness and inspire a more interdisciplinary approach to the problem of dealing with the needs of underprepared students which will in turn lead to increased enrollment and retention of at-risk students. Ultimately, there will be more
effective use of instructional time as well as more dynamic instructional and intervention programs.
BEST: Better Education through Strategic Teaching

1. Specific Educational Program Being Addressed

THE SPECIFIC EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM OR SERVICES THE PROPOSAL IS ADDRESSING

1.1 Non-traditional methods of instruction. Addressing special learning needs of educationally disadvantaged students. Programs for improving teaching abilities of faculty members. Over the past 3 years Bakersfield College has successfully begun the development of the Learning Strategies Program in order to more effectively serve at-risk, underprepared students. The program is based on the Strategies Intervention Model, an innovative intervention program for low achieving students, developed by the University of Kansas Institute for Research in Learning Disabilities (KU-IRLD). The program utilizes the direct instruction/mastery learning approach to teach students "how to learn", make them more independent learners, and empower them to successfully participate in the college mainstream courses of study. Though the learning strategies program at Bakersfield College is in its fledgling stages, its impact has been very positive and impressive. A clear and remarkable improvement of student skills and performance has been documented. The level of satisfaction among students who have participated in strategy programs is very high; they have reported improved academic performance and increased confidence in themselves as learners (Appendix: Figure 1). Demand for admission to the various strategy courses from students is growing, yet access is limited to a relatively small number of students.

Instructional staff and administrators feel that the initial experience with the Learning Strategies Program indicates that it can be a significant factor in effectively preparing underprepared students for the rigors of transfer level courses, improving academic performance, and increasing the retention rates of such students. Support for the program has been evidenced by the increased numbers of students being referred to the program, by the active participation of staff in the Teaching Routines workshops for developing strategic instruction, and by the increased number of requests for additional strategic instruction training.

Project BEST will fund a comprehensive staff development program to produce a cadre of well trained strategic instructors. This is the key to expanding the Learning Strategies Program with
an increased number of sections, experimentation with new strategies, and development of new strategy courses. The end result will 1) be increased opportunities for underprepared, at-risk students to benefit from learning strategy instruction, 2) increased teacher effectiveness for preparing ill-equipped students for college level work, and 3) a more effective and efficient use of instructional time.

1.2 Project BEST addresses the following priorities from the Board of Governors' Basic Agenda.

1.2.1 Transfer and General Education

1.2.1.1 As a result of Project BEST, Bakersfield College will be able to intensify efforts to increase the numbers and success of underprepared, underrepresented students in certificate, degree, and transfer programs by giving them a proven means to achieve success through the Learning Strategies Program.

1.2.1.2 As a result of Project BEST, more students will benefit from learning strategy instruction, and retention of underprepared and underrepresented students will be increased.

1.2.2 Student Services

1.2.2.1 Project BEST will facilitate a more productive working relationship and coordinated effort between student services personnel and instructional faculty to more effectively meet identified student needs.

1.2.2.2 Project BEST will help to cultivate a more supportive learning environment that facilitates the recruitment, retention and learning of underprepared, at-risk students.

1.2.3 Quality of Human Resources

1.2.3.1 This proposal represents the finest type of faculty/staff development program because it focuses on comprehensive application level training with positive peer support and coaching to effectively develop the skills of college personnel and improve instruction.
2. Specific Problems Being Addressed

THE SPECIFIC PROBLEMS BEING ADDRESSED IN THE PROPOSAL.

An intensive staff development effort which produces well trained strategic instructors is crucial if Bakersfield College is to increase opportunities for students to benefit from the strategic instruction approach. In order to improve their skills and learn a new approach to teaching such as the strategic instruction approach, teachers need certain conditions that are not common in most in-service settings. To be most effective, training must include theory, modeling, practice, feedback, classroom application, coaching and peer support teams (Joyce & Showers, Educational Leadership, February 1980). In addition to these elements, the services of a certified Strategies Intervention Model trainer are required. All of these elements will be combined in Project BEST trainings to promote each teacher's mastery of the strategic instruction approach. Funding for Project BEST will make it possible to obtain the services of a certified Strategies Intervention Model trainer and create the kind of staff development effort necessary to effectively train learning strategy instructors.

If Bakersfield College is to more effectively and efficiently meet the needs of a student population increasingly underprepared, it is imperative that the Learning Strategies Program be fully developed and expanded throughout the college. Demand for admission to the various strategy courses from students is growing and referrals from teachers are increasing, yet access is currently limited to a relatively small number of students. The Learning Strategies Program is vital to serving the needs of underprepared students at Bakersfield College because:

2.1 A sizeable number of students are denied access to courses of study for transfer, associate degrees or vocational/technical certification. These students are placed in alternative programs where the primary interventions are: a) the remediation of basic skills deficiencies; b) academic tutoring; and c) counseling. Little or no time is devoted to teaching students how to learn and succeed independently in college and cope effectively with the increasing demands of the college curriculum. Although many of these underprepared students experience success in these alternative programs, they remain underprepared for participation in the mainstream college curriculum. Moreover, a significant number of students become frustrated and discouraged; many eventually dropout.

In some cases, students may be placed in content classes but still experience functional exclusion from the education experiences offered there. In other words, despite mainstream placement, these students receive little benefit from the experience because of the mismatch between their proficiency as learners and the demands of the mainstream setting. Research conducted over the last decade related to student low achievement and failure in public schools has identified five major reasons for the exclusion of students from the mainstream. The effective
mainstreaming of underprepared students appears to be dependent on the design and implementation of a comprehensive instructional model that addresses all of these factors. The Learning Strategies Program addresses each of these five factors.

2.1.1 First, within the educational system, the students are not taught the necessary and appropriate skills and strategies that will enable them to cope effectively with the curricular demands of the college setting. The strategies for written expression and the Strategic Learning System directly address both the realities of students’ learning deficiencies and the realities of the requirements for successful performance in the college mainstream.

2.1.2 Second, when attempts are made to teach deficient students the skills needed for success in mainstream classes, attempts fall far short of their intended goals. Research has found that low-achieving students are unable to generalize skills and transfer them to content specific courses unless specifically taught to do so. These two steps, which are not directly taught in traditional study skills courses and remedial/tutorial approaches, are a vital part of the strategic instruction approach.

2.1.3 Third, low-achieving students’ functional exclusion from the mainstream reflects a failure by students to assume responsibility for mastering and using critical learning strategies that will enhance their ability to acquire, organize, and store information, as well as express themselves effectively. The elements of the Learning Strategies Program are designed to develop independent learners making a commitment to and assuming responsibility for their own learning while providing instruction in the specific strategies necessary to carry out that commitment and responsibility (Appendix: Figure 1).

2.1.4 Fourth, low-achieving students are functionally excluded from mainstream college curriculum partially because of the way content is delivered in those courses. The Learning Strategies Program helps students learn how to master content no matter how it is delivered.

2.1.5 Fifth, although many underprepared students experience success in alternative programs, they remain underprepared for participation in the mainstream college curriculum primarily because of the lack of an articulated effort to intervene on their behalf by Student Services and Instruction. What is needed is the coordination of interventions by Student Services and Instructional programs. The Learning Strategies Program has begun to inspire a more interdisciplinary approach to the problem of dealing with underprepared students and could eventually have far reaching effects on many programs at Bakersfield College, the result of which would be more effective use of instructional time and a more dynamic instructional program.
3. Population To Be Served

THE POPULATIONS TO BE SERVED BY THE PROJECT

3.1 Initially, Project BEST will serve the needs of instructional staff who have chosen to participate in Project BEST and need comprehensive training in specific learning strategies and the strategic instruction approach. Faculty and staff from various programs throughout the college have made a commitment to participate in Project BEST in order to develop their skills as strategic instructors, increase their effectiveness in preparing at-risk students for the rigors of college coursework, and help multiply learning strategy opportunities for students throughout the college.

3.2 Ultimately, however, it is educationally disadvantaged students who will benefit most from Project BEST. With the state now growing at a rate of 600,000 per year and the population becoming older and ethnically more diverse, the students served by Bakersfield College are often of an ethnic minority, increasingly older, more often working, and increasingly underprepared for academic pursuits and/or employment (Appendix: Figure 3). In the Bakersfield College Assessment/Data Report of November 10, 1989 it is reported that 55.1% of students assessed self-reported that they needed help with study skills; further, 51.5% were shown to need study skills based on their actual assessment scores. Bakersfield College strives to provide academic and supportive services to students through such programs as Chicano Cultural Center, Martin Luther King Jr. Center, Disabled Students Program and Services, International Students Center (ESL), Reentry Center, Learning Center, Single Parent Adults Choosing Education, Educational Advancement Program, EOPS/CARE, and Counseling Services. While students receive academic and support services from the various programs in the Student Services Division, many remain underprepared and at-risk for failing and/or dropping out, and many are denied access to or experience little success in the mainstream college curriculum. It is these students for whom the outcomes of Project BEST will be most significant, for many more of them will have access to learning strategy instruction.
4. Objectives

Proposal Objectives

To increase opportunities for underprepared, at-risk students, to benefit from learning strategy instruction and will be accomplished through the following objectives:

4.1 To develop learning strategy mini-course offerings through at least three programs of the Students Services Division by June 30, 1993.

4.2 To increase the number of qualified Sentence Writing Strategy (LRN 75) instructors from three to five or more by June 30, 1993.

4.3 To increase the number of qualified Strategic Learning System (LRN 196) instructors from three to six by June 30, 1993.

4.4 By June 30, 1993, develop an interdisciplinary team of strategic instructors who will advocate for the strategic learning approach throughout the college.
5. Workplan Narrative

[NO “WORKPLAN” ACCOMPANIES THIS DOCUMENT.]
6. Expected Outcomes

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

6.1 Outcomes in relation to Project BEST objectives.

6.1.1 A cadre of well trained strategic learning instructors will be developed.

6.1.2 Awareness and understanding of the strategic instruction approach will be greatly enhanced throughout the college.

6.1.3 The number of sections of the Sentence Writing Strategy (LRN S75) course will be increased.

6.1.4 The number of sections of the Strategic Learning System (LRN S196) in conjunction with Health 1 will be increased, and additional SLS companion courses from other academic disciplines (e.g. Biology 11, History 17, Psychology 1) can be developed.

6.1.5 There will a greater number of faculty available to develop and pilot new learning strategy offerings.

6.1.6 More underrepresented, underprepared, and at-risk students will have access to the non-traditional approach used in learning strategy instruction.

6.1.7 Enrollment, retention and academic performance of underrepresented, at-risk students in vocational and transfer education will be increased.

6.1.8 The classroom based research of the strategic instruction approach and its impact on teacher effectiveness with underprepared, at-risk students at the community college level will be expanded.

6.1.9 A model for quality staff development that is comprehensive and focused will be implemented.

6.2 Impact of the project.

6.2.1 Project BEST will have far reaching effects on many programs at Bakersfield College. As a result of this project being funded, more of the faculty will be afforded the opportunity to develop their strategic instructions skills, and thus the strategic instruction approach can be infused into teaching and programs throughout the college. The result of this infusion will be more dynamic interventions that meet the educational needs of underprepared, at-risk, and
underrepresented students. It will increase opportunities for student participation and success in vocational/transfer programs. Without this project this infusion will likely not occur and the power of the strategic instruction approach will remain invested in a small group of instructors serving a limited number of students.

6.3 Potential for continued support after the expiration of the grant.

6.3.1 The strategic learning approach began as an experiment in the learning disabilities program with a very small number of students in 1988 and has grown into the fledgling Learning Strategies Program. Keen administrative and faculty support have sustained the program from the very beginning. At this point more and more students are being referred to learning strategy courses and the demand for other kinds of strategies is multiplying. The needs of these students and the demand for expansion cannot be met without increasing the number of trained strategy instructors. With limited resources innovative courses using non-traditional methods have been developed and successfully implemented. Plans to add more sections, experiment with new strategies, and develop new strategy courses is severely limited by the number of instructors currently trained in this approach. The Project BEST will provide for a concerted, focused effort to develop a cadre of well trained strategic learning instructors. Considering that Bakersfield College has forged ahead in the development of its Learning Strategies Program even when denied grant money, the potential for continued support beyond Project BEST seems unquestionable.

6.4 Potential for adaptation to other institutions or programs.

6.4.1 The potential for adaptation to other institutions of Project BEST as a model for effective staff development is significant. However, for other institutions to develop a Strategies Intervention Model based learning strategies program similar to the Bakersfield College program requires a comprehensive plan of staff development, the services of a certified Strategies Intervention Model trainer, and a commitment of time, resources, and personnel.
7. Evaluation Plan

EVALUATION PLAN

7.1 All participating faculty members in Project BEST will submit an evaluation report to the project coordinator for each course offering of a learning strategy. Demographic information will be collected and analyzed. The effectiveness of learning strategy instruction will be evaluated by using appropriate surveys and by measuring the individual performance and academic growth of the students.

7.1.1 A pre and post test for each strategy taught will be administered to participating students (Appendix: Figures 4 & 5).

7.1.2 Student work samples of grades will be collected to document application and generalization of learning (Appendix: Figure 6, Table 1).

7.1.3 Completion rates will be calculated for each offering (Appendix: Figure 6, Table 1).

7.1.4 The level of student satisfaction with learning strategies will be assessed with a student satisfaction survey (Appendix: Figure 6, Table 2).

7.2 All staff development workshops/trains will be evaluated by participating staff.

7.3 The project team, which will be composed of all strategy teams involved in Project BEST, will meet periodically to discuss the progress of individual teams and the overall project, identify and solve common problems, and share experiences. At the conclusion of the project, the Project BEST team will create a tactical plan for developing continued support and growth of the learning strategies program at Bakersfield College.

7.3.1 Each strategy team will meet periodically to plan implementation activities, discuss progress, solve problems and share experiences.
8. Dissemination Plan

DISSEMINATION

8.1  Bakersfield College will sponsor a Strategic Learning Instruction Conference during the Fall of 1992. Presentations about Project BEST and the Bakersfield College Learning Strategies program will be made at that time.

8.2  Staff from other California community colleges who attended the Bakersfield College Learning Strategies Conference in the spring of 1991 will be invited to participate in the Sentence Writing Strategy trainings of Project BEST. Their participation will be subject to space availability.

8.2.1  Special consideration will be given to Porterville College and Cerro Coso College, Kern Community College district sister colleges.

8.3  Information about the project will be shared with other community colleges, local high schools, and other educational groups. Nationally, information will be submitted for dissemination through the University of Kansas Institute for Research in Learning Disabilities and their STRATEGRAM newsletter, and JOTTINGS, the newsletter of the League for Innovation in Community Colleges of which Bakersfield College is a charter member.

8.4  The final report of Project BEST will be made available to other California community colleges. Additional information about the learning strategies program will be included.
THE PROJECT BUDGET

9.1 The success of Project BEST is primarily dependent on the skills of the project director who must be a qualified Strategies Intervention Model trainer. Approximately fifty percent of the budget will be expended to the project director who will organize and conduct workshops, train instructors, and monitor implementation of learning strategies, coordinate Project BEST activities, and facilitate team meetings.

9.2 Small stipends will be given to those instructors who participate in Project BEST. While providing minimal compensation, the stipend will offer the instructional motivation necessary to infiltrate academic disciplines with new learning strategy techniques.

9.3 Small stipends will be available to compensate instructional assistants being trained to support learning strategy instructors.

9.4 Project BEST will provide necessary media materials and supplies for workshops and trains.

9.5 Travel funds will be used to allow participation at appropriate conferences/workshops.