

Porterville Adult School – Mid-Project Narrative Report

Porterville Adult School (PAS), located in Central California, serves a diverse population of students ranging from 18 to 75 years old, with the majority in their 30s. Many of our younger students transition from Porterville Unified's comprehensive high schools, and more than half of our student body is currently unemployed but actively seeking employment. We support their job readiness by partnering with community organizations that provide on-campus resources. A significant portion of our students arrive with prior educational experience, particularly those enrolling in Career Technical Education (CTE) programs. Additionally, our English Language Learner (ELL) population includes individuals who have completed formal education in their home countries, some even holding degrees.

Our DLAC team includes Jeff Bochat, Pedro Uribe, Valerie Craig, our Director, Dr. Larriann Torrez, and Assistant Director Denise Douglas. We work across a broad spectrum of adult education programs, including ESL, Civics, and Citizenship; High School Diploma and HiSET; Adult Basic Education; and a robust suite of CTE offerings such as Medical Assistant, Certified Nursing Assistant, Resident Care Technician, Phlebotomy, Pharmacy Technician, Surgical Technician, and Bus Driver Training.

Technology is deeply embedded in PAS instruction. Teachers communicate using email and Google Classroom, and students engage with platforms such as Aztec, Imagine/Edgenuity, and Burlington English. Classroom tools like Kami, Kahoot, EdPuzzle, Quizizz, and PearDeck are commonly used. However, while 95% of students report using email, many struggle to compose professional messages, and fewer than half have access to a laptop or desktop computer. Most rely heavily on smartphones, which creates limitations in accessing certain resources.

To support our focus on digital literacy, we began implementing Northstar Digital Literacy this year, starting with CTE program prerequisites. In the past, students completed a basic tech skills test and CASAS assessment. Now, Northstar provides a more structured and measurable standard. ESL students are also using Northstar to meet their COAAP requirements. Our long-term goal is to roll out Northstar across all instructional areas. With the full support of our administration, we purchased a school-wide license and integrated the program into our Google Classrooms for both in-class and at-home access.

The IDEAL 101 course and weekly DLAC assignments have been instrumental in shaping our direction. These resources provided structure and clarity, allowing our team to remain focused and collaborative. Northstar integration has been an ongoing topic in our Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings, where communication skills, team building, and recognition of individual strengths have been emphasized to enhance staff engagement. Currently, three ESL teachers have adopted Northstar in their classrooms. One of our most significant wins was seeing a teacher who had resisted using technology for three years begin implementing Northstar and other digital tools into his lesson planning. His students' engagement became the turning point for him.

To further encourage both students and staff, we are developing an incentive system to reward milestone achievements. This will boost motivation, particularly next school year. While our team has not encountered direct conflict, one challenge remains the need for broader staff buy-in. Our school is a busy place, and some see new programs as additional work. Still, we're optimistic that once more instructors observe the program's impact, adoption will grow.

Although we have not experienced internal team conflict, we remain prepared to address any challenges through open communication and consensus-building. As a team, we value transparency, shared leadership, and respectful discussion, which help ensure alignment in our implementation efforts.

Initially, our team planned to launch Northstar in all programs simultaneously. However, after identifying staff workload limitations and tech barriers, we phased the implementation, starting with ESL and CTE. We also revised our incentive plan timeline to ensure thoughtful rollout aligned with training opportunities.

We've faced several barriers. Chromebooks required additional hardware—mice—for some lessons, and multilingual accessibility was a concern until we discovered Northstar's Spanish support. Notably, one teacher who previously resisted technology has now fully integrated Northstar and other digital tools into his daily instruction.

Next steps include training all instructors at the beginning of the school year, expanding Northstar to Intermediate and Advanced classes, and including part-time evening staff in PLC meetings. We also plan to embed Northstar into COAAPs to better prepare students for employment. One of our major goals is increasing engagement among HSD students, who often focus solely on credit recovery.

Moving forward, we would benefit from additional professional development on integrating Northstar with COAAPs and using student data to inform instruction. We also welcome coaching on strategies to engage part-time staff and adapt digital tools for HSD classrooms.

This project has strengthened our belief that digital literacy is foundational to our students' success in school and beyond. The support from DLAC and the use of Northstar have helped our team build a more future-ready program. We are excited to expand this work in the coming school year and to share our outcomes with other adult education partners.