

Torrance Adult School (TAS) - DLAC Final Project Report

May 13, 2024

Torrance Adult School's participation in DLAC has provided valuable professional development for staff, access to OTAN expertise and resources, and a supportive framework for setting and meeting goals. Over the two years of DLAC (2022- 2024), the TAS DLAC Team has focused on promoting school wide digital skills through Northstar Digital Literacy, moving toward CANVAS integration and maintaining hyflex classes. We have also explored strategies for AI integration.

TAS & the DLAC Team

Torrance Adult School (TAS) serves approximately 3,000 students on three campuses in Torrance, southwestern Los Angeles County. The TAS DLAC project primarily focuses on the English as a Second Language (ESL) and Adult Basic Education and Adult Secondary Education (ABE/ASE) departments. TAS also has Career Technical Education (CTE) and Community Education departments.

The primary DLAC Team is comprised of:

- Ryan Whetstone, Principal
- Meredith Tait, TOSA and Teacher (ESL)
- Hilary Estes, TOSA and Teacher (ABE/ASE)

The extended team includes:

- Ryan De La Vega, ESL Resource Teacher
- Armando Chavez, ABE/ASE Resource Teacher
- Dr. Wayne Diulio, The TAS Director; gives input, approval, and overall support
- Susan Coulter, OTAN DLAC Team Coach

How IDEAL 101 and 102 development and completion helped meet your program and DLAC goals

The IDEAL 101 course materials and activities deepened our understanding of distance education options. The course itself modeled an effective blended learning class, managed through CANVAS. In the process of completing the regular assignments, the DLAC team evaluated all aspects of the current digital environment at TAS. This helped clarify the schoolwide digital integration plan and timeline. The resulting DLAC goals were to:

- Promote digital integration in all ESL classes: maintain online & distance learning (DL) classes; aim to implement 1 Hyflex ESL class by the end of 2023-24
- Develop & implement HyFlex professional development for all ABE/ASE & pilot in 1 or 2 ESL classes (Teacher volunteer)
- Implement Northstar Digital Literacy in all school classes (Fall 2023, at least one lesson and one assessment)
- Use CANVAS at TAS; goal of completing one CANVAS course by the end of 2023-24

These goals continued to evolve during the course of the two years.

In developing the site plan, the DLAC team engaged the Leadership Team in focused discussions about staff and student digital skills, as well as related professional development needs. We also clarified what we would like TAS to achieve in year two and how to engage relevant stakeholders in implementing the plan.

In the IDEAL 102 course we were able to share our experience with implementing Northstar Digital Literacy with other schools. Additionally, we received helpful, detailed advice from colleagues who were further along in the process of implementing Canvas.

Accomplishments to Date

Overall, we met or modified our goals, and in the process, reprioritized them.

- Continued schoolwide digital integration
 - All staff have had opportunities for paid digital skills training
 - Spring 23 and Spring 24 - Tech Cafes with regular 2 - hour Friday afternoon sessions
 - On-site training from OTAN: (Northstar - Summer 23, Canvas - Fall 23 & Winter 24 and Hyflex in Fall 23
 - Conferences - staff groups have regularly attended TDLS, CAEP Summit, CUE, CCAE, CASAS Summer Institute
 - All students have regular access to Chromebooks; with regularly scheduled Instructional Aide (IA) assistance
 - TAS has maintained a successful loaner laptop program since 2020
 - 74 laptops/chromebooks lent in 2023-24

Northstar Digital Literacy Integration

Strengthened schoolwide foundational digital literacy skills through the 2-year Northstar pilot program, sponsored by OTAN

- 2022-23 Focus: Schoolwide staff digital skills training
 - TAS became a Northstar Agency, with OTAN's support
 - 48/48 (100%) staff completed Basic Computer Skills
 - 45/48 (94%) staff completed the 4 required units
 - 31/48 (54%) completed proctor training - useful for IA help
- 2023-24 Focus: Building ESL students' digital literacy skills
 - 830 ESL students registered in Northstar over the 2023-24 school year
 - Focus on Level 3-6 ESL for assessments
 - Fall 23: Basic Computer Skills: 83% of all Level 3-6 students passed the assessment
 - Winter 24: Internet Basics: 82% of all Level 3-6 students passed the assessment
 - Spring 24: Email - in progress (88% overall so far)
 - Student quote that reflects the positive student response:
 - Esmeralda, ESL 5: "When I started taking Northstar lessons, I feel scared and nervous... Every practice ... makes me feel more confident. Thank you Northstar for giving me the opportunity to learn about computers because it is very important to know how to pay bills and ... everything. Thank you."
- Canvas Use at TAS
 - Since Spring 2022, TAS has had a Canvas instance, with OTAN and school district support; extended into 2024-25,
 - Canvas training from OTAN: Fall 23 and Winter 24
 - Implementation of pilots in 2 programs:
 - ESL - In Spring 24, 1 ESL class operated in Canvas
 - The Class Google Site content fully moved to Canvas
 - Students access core curricular materials, completed some Ventures shell assignments and related writing assignments
 - ABE/ASE
 - English & Social Studies - UC Scout pilot for 2022-23
 - Math - Algebra 1A & 1B, Math A & B courses in Canvas are underway; plan to use them in Fall 24
- HyFlex modality maintained
 - OTAN HyFlex training early Fall 23
 - In all ABE/ASE direct instruction classes and the Child Development IET class

- Embracing AI - New focus that developed over the last year.
 - District Tech/AI group provided overview presentations and some training
 - Winter/Spring 24, staff attended conferences and led Tech Cafes, with focus on tools such as Chat GPT, Claude, Twee, Diffit, Flipgrid, Brisk
 - 2 ESL classes piloted Pace AI application for customized reading, vocabulary and pronunciation.

Leadership Training

Digital leadership training introduced the DLAC Team to valuable insights about team building, conflict resolution, communication skills, and using and encouraging strengths.

- Gained awareness of the individual and combined strengths of the core members, and how we could leverage our similarities and differences to work well together and with staff
- Incorporated strategies shared in our leadership training as we created a cohesive plan for communicating with staff, creating buy-in and supporting staff members one-on-one.
- Planned for 2 years of DLAC and beyond, built the extended team, included staff from different departments and sites, and took important steps toward meeting our goals.
- Maintained regular formal and informal communication among ourselves, our Director, and our OTAN coach has been an important part of the process.
- Revised our DLAC goals when necessary

Challenges we have faced include:

The main challenges involved time, resources and staffing for training and supporting teachers and IAs and managing complex Northstar and Canvas programs, while simultaneously maintaining Hyflex and accommodating the new kid on the block: AI applications for everything.

Other major challenges included:

- Managing communication with staff around which elements of the project are required for all teachers and which are optional tools.
- Finding a balance between fostering the skills and enthusiasm of staff members who are excited about technology integration and overwhelming staff members who are more reluctant.

Changes TAS Has Made

- Became a Northstar Agency and will continue to support it, on a year-by-year basis
- Prioritized Northstar implementation mainly for ESL while continuing CANVAS pilots
- Prioritized AI training and implementation over Hyflex training for ABE/ASE and implementing Hyflex in ESL classes
- Reintroduced Tech Cafes - regular paid Friday sessions for staff sharing of technology tips and tools (Northstar focus Spring 23, AI focus Spring 24)

Planned Next Steps & Sustainable Long-Term Plan

Over the next five years we plan to continue building a culture of digital integration and resilience incorporating Northstar Digital Literacy in our curriculum, implementing Canvas across the organization and creating a system for evaluating and integrating AI tools.

We plan to build on our successes in integrating Northstar in the ESL Department and explore targeted integrations in our ABE/ASE and CTE Departments as well. In ESL we plan to choose at least one technology focused COAPP per year and integrate relevant parts of the Northstar curriculum with the EL Civics curriculum. In ABE/ASE and CTE, we plan to use Northstar to screen students for requisite skills, invite teachers to integrate parts of the curriculum into their classes and enroll students in our Computer Fundamentals course.

Another major goal is that in 5 years 80% of instructors in our CAEP-funded programs will be using Canvas in their instruction. In the 2024-2025 school year our ABE/ASE math program will use the NROC curriculum on Canvas, the current Canvas-user in ESL will train other interested instructors and we will create a Canvas shell for our professional development resources.

Finally, we will create a system for learning about, evaluating and implementing AI tools across our campuses.

Support Needed

- Continued District and Admin support for funding Northstar and Canvas licenses and professional development time

- Continued staff training in best practices for using Canvas in adult schools and ways to manage the transition
- Continued District and Admin vision and support

Summary

Participation in DLAC has been very beneficial for TAS. It has helped us to envision our future and identify specific technology-related goals while drawing on the expertise and support of OTAN and its partners in the process. In the first year, we worked with our Leadership Team to clarify our plan for technology use while increasing digital literacy for all our staff members. Our plans evolved in the second year as we focused more on the implementation of Northstar lessons and assessments with students while offering staff members opportunities to pilot Canvas, explore AI tools and continue with HyFlex.