

USCIS Citizenship and Integration Grant Program

Promising Practices

Organization Name:	Montgomery College
Location:	Wheaton, MD
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Enhanced Integration Tasks

With USCIS funding in fiscal years 2010 and 2011, the Montgomery College Citizenship Preparation Program expanded its curriculum to include Enhanced Integration Tasks. The Enhanced Integration Tasks consist of a series of activities that English language learners (ELLs) complete outside the classroom. These tasks range from simple activities such as obtaining a library card and exploring the local library, to more complex explorations of civic engagement, such as writing a letter to a member of Congress. Not only have these tasks encouraged students to practice English outside of the classroom, the program has provided students with a practical and enriching civic experience.



Montgomery College Citizenship Preparation Program participants.

Purpose

Montgomery College developed the Enhanced Integration Tasks initiative in order to encourage English language acquisition and civic engagement. The tasks

urge students to consider the meaning of citizenship and explore ways to get involved in their local community.

Process

Montgomery College assembled a workbook of Enhanced Integration Tasks, including activities

such as attending parent-teacher association (PTA) meetings, volunteering, and visiting a museum or

government building. Each printed task consists of an activity description, an objective, a list of materials, an estimated time, an estimated cost, a task assignment, and a post-task assignment. Each task also contains a section for a student journal entry and an area for the teacher's response.

After the development of the Enhanced Integration Tasks, instructors and volunteers receive training on how to incorporate the activity into the course curriculum. Instructors implement the activity on the first day of class by explaining the purpose of the

activity to students. Although Montgomery College instructors ask students to complete the activity outside of class time, students can use class time to make task plans. The instructors are available to answer student questions and assist with task planning.

After completing a task, students are encouraged to document their experience in a journal entry. Instructors provide thoughtful feedback to each student's journal entry. Instructors also arrange for students to share their experiences with one another during class presentations.

Challenges

The Enhanced Integration Task initiative presented two main challenges. First, some instructors were concerned that the task activity was too advanced for the students. Many instructors felt that low-level English language learners would not be sufficiently prepared to complete the tasks. Second, students often initially hesitate to

participate in the task activity because it requires a time commitment outside of the classroom. For students with multiple employment and family responsibilities, it can be difficult to find extra time to complete the task activity.

Overcoming Obstacles

Montgomery College instructors respond to these challenges by revising the tasks, which motivates the students to participate in the task activity. For example, instructors create two versions of the tasks, one for intermediate-level learners and one for beginning-

level learners. Creating a beginning-level version of the tasks allows more students to participate in the activity. In addition, instructors create deadlines and assign each student a presentation date. By setting goals, the students are motivated to begin working on their tasks.

Outcomes

The Enhanced Integration Tasks initiative is an integral part of Montgomery College's citizenship education curriculum, benefiting not only the students, but family, friends, and the local community. As a result of the Enhanced Integration Tasks initiative, students become volunteers, regularly attend school PTA meetings, visit museums, frequent the library, communicate with members of Congress, visit government buildings,

attend town hall meetings, interact with government employees, and study U.S. history. In the process, students strengthen their English language skills and abilities, providing much needed confidence as they prepare for the naturalization interview and test. The activities encourage students to learn more about their communities and become active and involved civic participants.

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