

Introduction

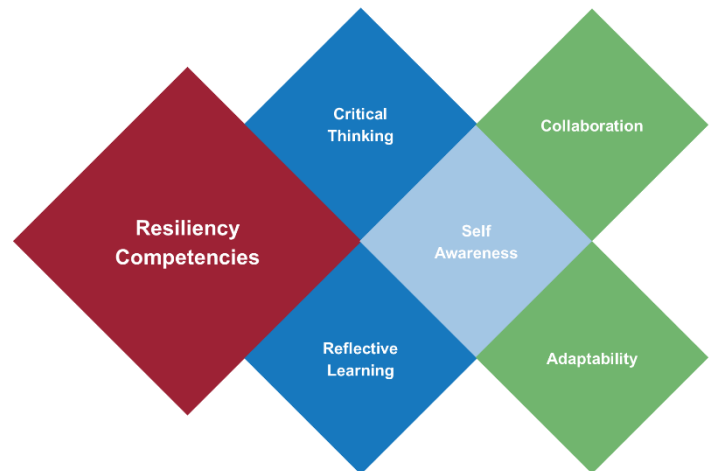
Following several natural and man-made disasters, like Hurricane Sandy and the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting, seven community colleges¹ in the Northeast banded together to form the Northeast Resiliency Consortium (NRC)². The NRC is committed to improving the resiliency of its communities by preparing students and the workforce to adapt to new challenges and thrive in an ever-changing economy.

The core mission of the NRC is to create innovative education and training opportunities by integrating resiliency skills (self-awareness, critical thinking, adaptability, collaboration, and reflective learning). These abilities, not often intentionally taught in traditional curricula, increase student success and enhance employment skills. Providing the knowledge, skills and resources for students to adapt to adversity strengthens career pathways by preparing and encouraging students to continue their education. The NRC is building a community made up of educators, capacity builders, employers, and students that increase the capability of its member institutions by offering enhanced professional development, collective problem-solving, and the sharing of leading practices.

Tools

To achieve its mission, the NRC created a system of tools, professional development opportunities, and standards that assist teachers, administrators, and students in incorporating resiliency into their courses, their practice, and their lives. To increase the capacity of its institutions the NRC developed an in-depth program to build relationships within the consortium and develop innovative leading practices.

The Resiliency Competency Model is the foundation of this system and is augmented by the Curriculum Alignment Table and the Instructional Design Table. The Competency Model was created with the input of employers, industry groups, students, staff, and faculty. The Competency Model defines resiliency, the resiliency competencies that help students succeed and be employment ready, and examples for each competency. Instructors use the Curriculum Alignment Table to examine course content and integrate resiliency competencies into learning materials. The Instructional Design Table allows instructors to create resiliency outcomes, craft activities for learners to



demonstrate those resiliency outcomes, and build assessments that show specific, observable resiliency development.

The model and tables along with examples of NRC instructors' work can be found in the Building Resiliency guidebook being published by Achieving the Dream (ATD).

To introduce these tools for integrating resiliency, the NRC built a professional development approach focused on one-on-one grassroots interactions with faculty. These conversations, led by a NRC community college instructor, centered on identifying a pattern of leading practices where learning environments mirrored the workplace. Learners could learn resiliency skills, struggle productively, and reflect honestly as colleagues. Additionally, the professional development encouraged faculty to speak with students about the correlation between classroom learning and job skills. Students could then communicate their classroom learning more directly to employers as relevant work skills.

The NRC has also worked to enhance career pathways by providing a strong foundation for students through Work Based Learning and Prior Learning Assessment. The NRC developed work-based learning opportunities that respond to employer needs, and allow students to demonstrate resiliency skills. Also, the NRC Prior Learning Assessment Standards allow consortium colleges to accelerate student progress by codifying and increasing credential attainment.

¹ Atlantic Cape, Bunker Hill, Capital, Housatonic, Kingsborough, LaGuardia, and Passaic County community colleges

² The NRC was originally funded by a grant under the U.S. Department of Labor's Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training Grants Program (TAACCT).

Finally, the consortium's education technology partner Smart Sparrow designed adaptive online lessons that can be integrated into any curriculum or support service. These online tools are hosted in addition to online coaching for mapping the resiliency competencies and integrating the lessons on The Resiliency Hub at nrc-hub.org.

Impact

Similar to students of urban community colleges across the nation, NRC students include many low-income, ESL, first-generation college students and minorities. Often NRC students are unemployed or underemployed. Approximately, 48% of NRC students are underpaid incumbent workers balancing their jobs and families while trying to gain the education needed to obtain a higher paying job.

To date, 1,632 students participated in a resiliency enhanced course, 78% or 1,270 of those students were retained in there program or course. Over the last two years, more than 75 instructors and staff participated in resiliency professional development, leading to 29 resiliency enhanced programs and courses.

Resiliency skills have been integrated across multiple fields of study ranging from Data Management to Emergency Medical Technician training, and Culinary Arts. NRC programs have shown a dramatic decrease in the course drop rates when compared to courses not featuring the resiliency skills education. Across, the entire consortium students only drop a course 22% of the time.

NRC Prior Learning Assessment Standards have been adopted by five of its seven institutions. The Standards provide opportunities for students to earn certificates more quickly because they receive credit for previous experience. Also, they provide institutions bridges to articulate students from non-credit programs to for credit tracts. Work Based Learning Protocols have led to 1,249 students participating in work based learning experiences, helping students make the connection between academic principles and real-world applications.

NRC institutions have built new partnerships with diverse employers. Across the consortium institutions have engaged employers ranging from Microsoft to local food pantries. Through the NRC, over 150 employer partnerships have been created and maintained across four states. Students have been

able to gain valuable experience through internships and work based learning, as well as permanent employment.

A Resilient Future

The NRC will continue to focus on building a network of educators, capacity builders, employers and students dedicated to increasing the resiliency of their communities. By building on the collective strengths of its members, the NRC will prepare students and the workforce to adapt to new challenges by providing inventive resources and support services. It will also utilize its experiences in professional development and capacity building to strengthen the links between students and potential employers.

The NRC is currently exploring opportunities to develop new partnerships to further enhance the capacity of its members and work collectively to impact student success. The NRC hopes to expand resiliency education into other areas including workforce readiness programs, and further integrate schools with the communities around them by creating new opportunities for students with local employers and community groups. Central to these efforts is finding new and impactful ways to share these experiences and tell the stories of consortium members. As always, the NRC will be driven by the belief that collaboration and communication are the foundation of providing innovate education.

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