

Wisconsin Bridges Case Study

ARTISAN BAKING/CULINARY BRIDGE

Moraine Park Technical College

The idea for developing an Artisan Baking Bridge at Moraine Park Technical College (MPTC) sprouted from discussions with an area employer, Festival Foods, who expressed interest in culinary training for its incumbent employees. Partnering with Festival Foods, and later with other local grocery stores, bakeries, and restaurants, Moraine Park created the Baking Essentials Certificate, a 10-credit, one-semester program to serve a variety of student populations – from dislocated workers of area factories, to English Language Learners and Adult Basic Education students, to incumbent workers looking to expand their skills as in the case of Festival Foods employees.

The Baking Essentials Certificate blends occupational and basic skills education. The occupational courses of Baking; Artisan Breads; and Cakes, Tortes, and Desserts are taught concurrently with three corresponding one-credit Basic Education classes that focus on math skills, reading comprehension, safety, measurements, and study skills. The program also includes a mandatory, two-week basic skills pre-course for enrolled students to refresh essential skills. All of the seven postsecondary credits earned in the Baking Essentials Certificate can be applied towards Moraine Park's year-long Artisan Baking Certificate (13 credits) as well as MPTC's Culinary Arts Associate Degree program.

Non-traditional recruitment procedures, extensive employer participation, and the integration of basic and occupational skills instruction have strongly contributed to the program's success to date. Rather than rely on standardized testing, Moraine Park evaluated potential students based on their initiative and commitment to pursue further education, and on their work and life experiences. Moreover, MPTC collaborated with Festival Foods to interview program applicants as part of the admission process. Festival Foods was so impressed by the applicants that it hired two individuals prior to their admission and completion of the Baking Essentials Certificate; they also sponsored four individuals for the program, covering tuition and fees.

Students completing the initial pilot of the Baking Essentials Certificate indicated that the integration of basic skills instruction was indispensable; given that the basic skills instructor was also new to baking, she often asked questions about the technical curriculum, thereby encouraging students to do the same. The students valued very highly the presence of both instructors (basic skills and occupational) in the lab. The occupational instructor related that he gained new teaching techniques for use in all of his courses, and a greater awareness of cultural bias in assessments.

The promise of Moraine Park's Baking Essentials Certificate is best illustrated by its initial outcomes. Of the 12 students who enrolled in the program in Spring 2009, 11 successfully completed the technical content and basic education courses. Seven of the 11 completers improved their basic skills by at least one functioning level as designated by the National Reporting System. Of the 11 students who completed the course, nine have found at least part-time employment and have secured wage gains with their certificate. In addition, several Baking Essential Certificate students continue to utilize the Student Success Center at the college in pursuit of their GED/HSED, while other students have continued to take postsecondary and/or basic education courses at MPTC. Results for the Fall 2009 and Spring 2010 cohorts have been similarly promising.



"The Artisan Baking Bridge was a win-win for the students who completed the program, the businesses who were able to hire skilled bakers, and for Moraine Park. It certainly is a format we will replicate in other programs."

Dr. Gayle Hytrek, President, Moraine Park Technical College

"This approach is a great 'on-ramp' onto career pathways for dislocated workers, and we will work in partnership with other occupational areas to expand this successful model."

Sandra Huenink, Dean of Adult Basic Education, Moraine Park Technical College

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