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Tutor Training Program on the Importance of Confidence in Education

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Prof. Atlas

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Honors Project Reflection

My honors project of creating a tutor trainings session on the importance of confidence in education taught me different things than I had expected. Originally, I had identified the following learning outcomes: develop skills as a presenter, gain knowledge about educational practices, and further my professional development. I will start this reflection by explaining how these learning outcomes were met, then I will explain some additional and unexpected learning outcomes, and then I will end by discussing the overall success and results of holding the training sessions.

I had been hesitant to even list “developing skills as a presenter” as one of my learning outcomes because I already considered myself a very competent presenter. However, I hadn’t considered how the shift in dynamic would affect my presenting strategy. I am used to presenting in classes, where we have all been studying the same thing, people understand my reason for being in the front of the room, and likely everyone in the audience will eventually have to present too. There is a mutual quality to it that wasn’t there during my training session presentations. Most AEC tutors probably consider me a familiar face, but very few knew why a math tutor would be choosing to hold a center-wide training, especially since center-wide trainings are usually disliked and considered a tedious part of the job. As I launched into my first training session, it suddenly struck me how important the buy-in of my audience would be, and that the buy-in was suddenly much harder to get than it had ever been in classes. I was slightly shaken by this realization, and it did indeed have an affect on my ability to present. I spoke very quickly, and I adopted an almost apologetic mindset. Fortunately, I had the help of the assistant director of the center to, so to speak, stabilize me, and she discussed with me ways to improve my presentation for the next session. I took her advice and found that the second time I presented, I was able to be a lot more open about my enthusiasm for the work, and that helped generate the audience engagement I was looking for. This only improved for the third day, where the discussion amongst the tutors was good enough that my bosses decided to post a recording of the session on Sakai for tutors who missed it to listen to. In hindsight I am glad that I listed presentation skills as one of my learning outcomes, because this type of presentation was new to me, and even within the course of a week I became more confident and comfortable with it.

I had listed “improving my knowledge of educational practices” as one of my objectives, thinking that my new knowledge would be found in scholarly articles or studies testing different educational theories. My research, however, was disappointing, in that so few people seem to have invested in finding ways to improve the academic confidence of college students. Articles about the benefits of giving children a sticker on their sticker chart for a problem well solved was not relevant to my work. Instead, the knowledge came from discussing tutoring strategies with my boss and with the other AEC tutors, which was one of the activities of my training session. After explaining the research study, I had people group together, discuss Do’s and Don’t for instilling confidence in students, then share out. I heard suggestions that I hadn’t considered before and was impressed by. For example, tutors have noticed that subtle tonal difference between “Good work, you’re doing great!” and “I’ve noticed that you’ve gotten a lot

better at this type of problem, it's definitely something to be proud of!" can have a large impact on a student's recognition of their own progress (with the latter being the more effective).