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Predictive Variables
Success in Online Instructional Formats
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Should Resources be Spent Piloting SmarterMeasure?

Laura Payne-Bourcy Consulting reviewed the literature underpinning and related to SmarterMeasure as well as the research reflecting the phenomenon generally (predictive variables for online course completion).

The research base is not strong enough to recommend the WFL BOCES Learning Technology Grant program spend resources at this time piloting SmarterMeasure:

a) all of the research available in peer reviewed journals focused on post-secondary populations, including adult learners; and

b) the evaluation team was perplexed with the question – what would we do with the data if we had it?

If the purpose of using SmartMeasure is more than to cull out students not likely to find success, a more useful approach may be to engage local schools, program leaders, and online learning coordinators in the respective districts in a conversation and planning to explicitly teach – to school-age children – the skills reflected in research that does seem to predict success or failure in online learning.

Skills, Attributes, Experiences Linked to Online Learning Success

Most relevant to school age populations, the following attributes, skills, experiences are identified as associated with online learning success.

- Previous experience with online/hybrid learning
- Skill with operating systems and file management
- Grade point average
- Reading rate/recall
- Ability to work autonomously
- Typing Speed
- Comfort with learning presented verbally (text or listening)
- Time management

The issue of "learning styles" is referenced in multiple studies, but findings are somewhat contradictory across studies. As such, the Consulting team recommends an emphasis on skills noted above.

Likewise, the issue of "motivation" was noted – but in the sense that learners understood how the experience (mostly college courses in studies available) fit into their short or long-term goals. This may be relevant with younger students, but the notion of motivation is also likely different than what was explored with post-secondary populations.