

**Southwest Texas Junior College
Quality Enhancement Plan Executive Summary
Enhancing Critical Reading Skills**

Based on existing student performance data collected by Southwest Texas Junior College, critical reading was identified as an area that requires attention in developing and improving student learning. The Quality Enhancement Plan committee at SWTJC researched the performance of students in critical reading and discovered the decline of critical reading levels at both the national level and at SWTJC. After a thorough review of documented evidence the committee members reached consensus and chose as SWTJC's QEP topic, "Enhancing critical reading skills".

The plan to develop student critical reading skills provides that faculty will introduce reading activities designed to strengthen readers' ability to integrate, synthesize, and analyze multiple complex passages and charts. The essential skills of a proficient reader, as identified by the institution, are categorized as the three "A's": Acquire, Analyze, and Apply. The first, "Acquire" will enhance the student's ability to receive information from printed texts. The second, "Analyze" will provide students with strategies and skills necessary to synthesize information. The third, "Apply" will ensure the ability for students to apply information in multiple disciplines.

SWTJC's gatekeeper courses (Freshman English, U.S. History, and College Algebra) were chosen for implementation and assessment of critical reading skills. Phase I of the implementation began Fall 2006 in Freshman English. Phase II implementation in U.S. History is scheduled for Fall 2007 with phase III College Algebra to follow in Fall 2008. Both the reading activities (interventions and strategies) and assessments will be discipline specific. Consultants will provide instructors the training, guidance, and support throughout the implementation as well as the administration and appropriate scoring for each assessment.

Utilizing an experimental design will aid the institution in identifying successful strategies and interventions that will improve students' critical reading skills. Evaluation will utilize two groups – an experimental group and a control group. The experimental group will be exposed to reading strategies and receive instructional interventions designed to enhance students' ability to read critically. Pre- and post-assessments will be administered to both groups. Data will be collected at the end of each term to identify any statistically significant differences in critical reading. Formative evaluation will include the identification of successful instructional strategies and interventions in selected courses. Summative evaluation will include an analysis of any statistically significant improvement in students' critical reading skills while at SWTJC. Analysis of this data will be utilized in determining if the goal of the QEP, "Enhancing critical reading skills", has been achieved.

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