

CMU's Quality Initiative's Teaching and Learning Academy Pilot Project: Program Evaluation Summary

Overview of the Quality Initiative and the Pilot Project

CMU's Quality Initiative (QI)—*Promoting Academic Challenge: Taking Stock and Moving Forward*—aims to advance academic excellence by promoting a greater focus on academic challenge across undergraduate education. In the first year (2013-2014), the Leadership Team reviewed earlier committee reports and initiated a campus-wide conversation to identify promising targets for change and to solicit project ideas. In addition to collecting input through stakeholder meetings and a QI email address, the Leadership Team encouraged innovative thinking by launching two ideation websites where faculty, staff and students could post project suggestions and comment on posted ideas.

During this conversation, the faculty repeatedly expressed a need for resources and strategies to help them advance students' reading, writing, critical thinking, and independent learning skills. Prompted by an ideation post from the Director of General Education, and mirroring a possibility put forth in our QI proposal, the Leadership Team focused on meeting these needs in 100- and 200-level classes (especially University Program courses). A second decision refined the direction of subsequent planning: Supported by the development of a Teaching and Learning Toolkit, QI projects would promote academic challenge by infusing information about learning and evidence-based teaching strategies throughout the University Program. In the spring of Year 1, the Teaching and Learning Academy Pilot Project pilot tested the Toolkit concept.

The Teaching and Learning Academy Pilot Project

The QI began by advertising an opportunity for instructors of University Program courses. Thirty-three instructors volunteered to attend two 3-hour workshops and to meet with a peer mentor for a conversation about integrating a new strategy into class. Whereas existing instructor training opportunities focused primarily on single-topic workshops and time-intensive course redesigns, the Teaching and Learning Academy Pilot Project covered a set of topics selected to address the course features students rate as most important to them, the instructional practices that most impact student success, and strategies for advancing students' writing skills. Presenters discussed cognitive development during the early college years; differences between novices and experts; syllabus design; best practices for models and rubrics; the importance of early, frequent assessment with referral to appropriate campus resources; reading strategies for students; best practices in writing assignments and feedback; and course features that promote critical thinking skills.

Pilot Project Evaluation

After the fall 2014 semester, the QI Leadership Team surveyed pilot project volunteers to assess the changes they made to their courses, their perceptions of the efficacy of those changes, and their

perceptions of the pilot project.¹ Data from a survey of faculty members who had attended other teaching-oriented workshops served as the comparison group. Respondents were 20 pilot project volunteers and 22 instructors in the comparison group.

Table 1 lists the percentages of pilot project and comparison instructors who made various changes to their courses in the fall of 2014. A higher percentage of pilot project instructors made modifications they attributed to pilot project attendance in 12 of the 14 course feature categories (significant with a binomial test, $p = .013$). For example, 85% of pilot project participants but only 64% of comparison instructors provided students with a model of high-quality work, and pilot project participants were much more likely than their peers who attended other teaching presentations to use the Early Alert system, to flip content so class time could be used for an activity, to increase the repetition of key content throughout the class, and to provide students with information about reading or study strategies. (See the Appendices for more detailed data.)

Table 1

Percentage of Respondents Who Made Each of Fourteen Course Modifications (Fall of 2014)

Course change	Pilot Project Participants	Comparison Group
Improved the syllabus	100	73
Rewrote an assignment to increase clarity	80	82
Created or tweaked an assignment to promote application/critical thinking	95	77
Added a grading rubric for one or more assignments	60	50
Improved a grading rubric for one or more assignments	80	55
Provided students with a model of high-quality work	85	64
Changed how I provide feedback on written assignments	80	45
Added one or more in-class activities	80	86
Added one or more early assessments (earlier assignments, quizzes, etc.)	85	50
Began using the Early Alert system to submit names of failing students	70	14
Added resources/activities to prepare students to read/learn (e.g., chapter pre-quizzes)	80	55
“Flipped” some content (i.e., students prepared outside class so class time could be used for an activity)	85	64
Increased the repetition of key content throughout the class	90	55

¹ CMU’s IRB returned a “not research” determination to the QI on February 12, 2014, and the Faculty Association approved the surveys on January 20, 2015. Extensive responses to open-ended questions are not included in this report to protect the confidentiality of the respondents.

Provided students with more information about learning or effective reading or study strategies

95

73

In addition, the majority of pilot project respondents (80%) said that participation led them to increase expectations for what students could accomplish in their courses, 60% said the programming should be offered in-person to all instructors, and 30% said the programming should be offered online to all instructors. Suggestions for improving the workshops included providing materials in advance of attendance, more contact with mentors and better follow-through from mentors, addressing instructor needs for writing assistance/training, and including more content that is not widely available in existing books or online.

This project demonstrated that a wide variety of high-impact, evidence-based teaching practices infiltrate courses after only two workshops paired with a single meeting with a peer mentor. Some participants mentioned the helpfulness of the printed materials, and one suggested that instructors have continual access to updated materials. Based on these data, the QI continued to refine the Toolkit concept and added video modules to the list of resources that were under development. Release of the first materials was scheduled for December, 2015.

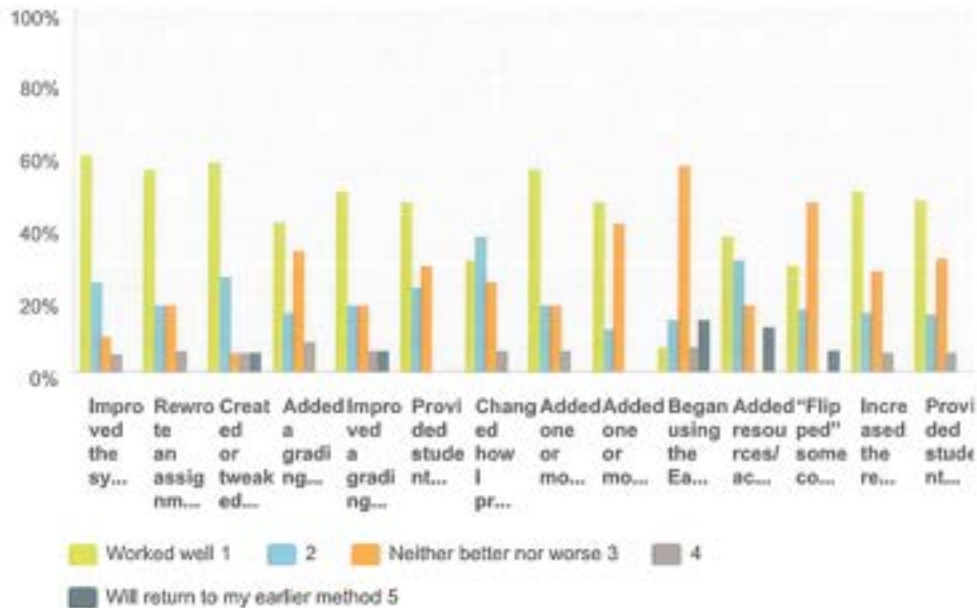
Appendix A

Pilot Project Participants' Responses

Evaluation of the UP Academies Pilot Project

**Q1 Did the Pilot Project prompt you to try a new strategy in one or more classes?
(Check all that apply. For selected items, let us know how that worked out for you on a scale from 1 to 5.)**

Answered: 20 Skipped: 0



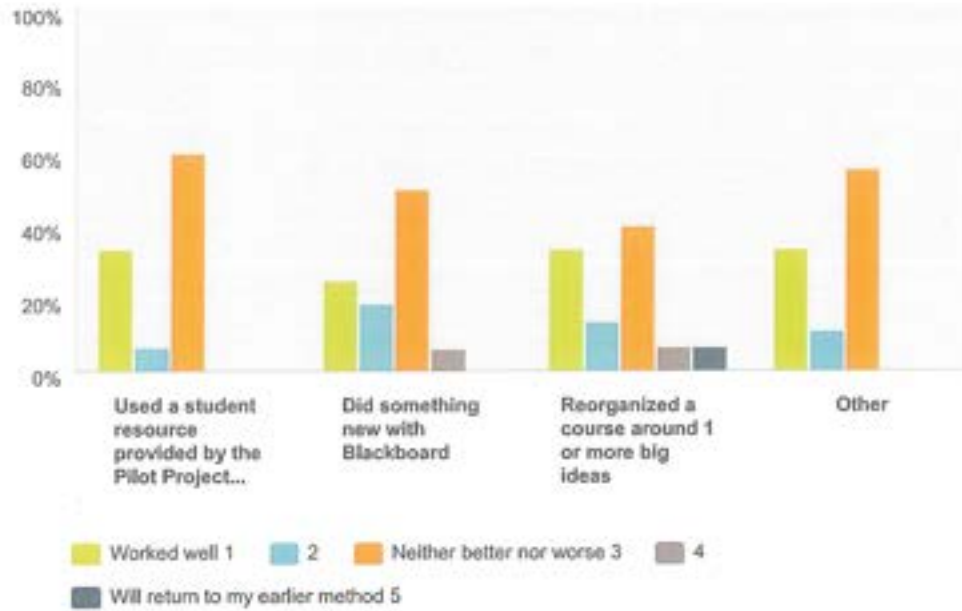
	Worked well 1	2	Neither better nor worse 3	4	Will return to my earlier method 5	Total
Improved the syllabus	60.00% 12	25.00% 5	10.00% 2	5.00% 1	0.00% 0	20
Rewrote an assignment to increase clarity	56.25% 9	18.75% 3	18.75% 3	6.25% 1	0.00% 0	16
Created or tweaked an assignment to promote application/critical thinking	57.89% 11	26.32% 5	5.26% 1	5.26% 1	5.26% 1	19
Added a grading rubric for one or more assignments	41.67% 5	16.67% 2	33.33% 4	8.33% 1	0.00% 0	12
Improved a grading rubric for one or more assignments	50.00% 8	18.75% 3	18.75% 3	6.25% 1	6.25% 1	16
Provided students with a model of high-quality work	47.06% 8	23.53% 4	29.41% 5	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	17
Changed how I provide feedback on written assignments	31.25% 5	37.50% 6	25.00% 4	6.25% 1	0.00% 0	16
Added one or more in-class activities	56.25% 9	18.75% 3	18.75% 3	6.25% 1	0.00% 0	16
Added one or more early assessments (earlier assignments, quizzes, etc.)	47.06% 8	11.76% 2	41.18% 7	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	17
Began using the Early Alert system to submit names of failing students	7.14% 1	14.29% 2	57.14% 8	7.14% 1	14.29% 2	14

Evaluation of the UP Academies Pilot Project

Added resources/activities to prepare students to read/learn (e.g., chapter pre-quizzes)	37.50% 6	31.25% 5	18.75% 3	0.00% 0	12.50% 2	16
"Flipped" some content (i.e., students prepared outside class so class time could be used for an activity)	29.41% 5	17.65% 3	47.06% 8	0.00% 0	5.88% 1	17
Increased the repetition of key content throughout the class	50.00% 9	16.67% 3	27.78% 5	5.56% 1	0.00% 0	18
Provided students with more information about learning or effective reading or study strategies.	47.37% 9	15.79% 3	31.58% 6	5.26% 1	0.00% 0	19

Q2 Did the Pilot Project prompt you to try a new strategy in one or more classes? (Check all that apply. For selected items, let us know how that worked out for you on a scale from 1 to 5.)

Answered: 18 Skipped: 2

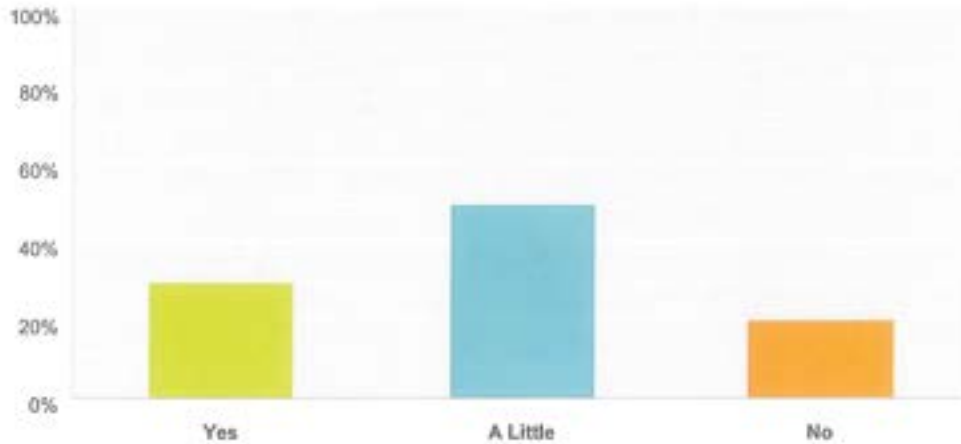


	Worked well 1	2	Neither better nor worse 3	4	Will return to my earlier method 5	Total
Used a student resource provided by the Pilot Project (e.g., Plagiarism, Paragraphs & Transitions, Learning from Textbooks)	33.33% 5	6.67% 1	60.00% 9	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	15
Did something new with Blackboard	25.00% 4	18.75% 3	50.00% 8	6.25% 1	0.00% 0	16
Reorganized a course around 1 or more big ideas	33.33% 5	13.33% 2	40.00% 6	6.67% 1	6.67% 1	15
Other	33.33% 3	11.11% 1	55.56% 5	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	9

#	Please explain:	Date
	There are no responses.	

Q4 3. Did your participation in the pilot project lead you to increase expectations for what students can accomplish in your course?

Answered: 20 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	30.00%	6
A Little	50.00%	10
No	20.00%	4
Total		20

Evaluation of the UP Academies Pilot Project

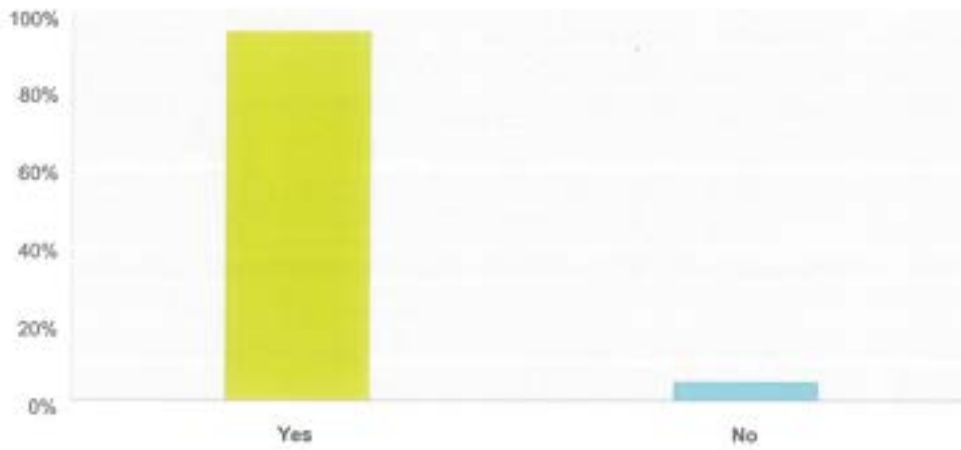


Answer Choices	Responses
Yes, offer in-person programs to all instructors	60.00% 12
Yes, offer separate in-person programs for instructors of University Program classes	45.00% 9
Yes, offer online programs to all instructors	30.00% 6
Yes, offer an online program tailored for instructors of University Program classes	15.00% 3
No (please explain why the Pilot Project format didn't meet your needs):	5.00% 1
Total Respondents: 20	

#	No (please explain why the Pilot Project format didn't meet your needs):	Date
1	I think these are helpful for some faculty. However, I lead a lot of workshops on game-based learning and have done, and continue to do, a lot curricular development based on materials that I am able to track down on my own. Part of it for me is that the list of stuff provided in the workshops doesn't look like it has changed much since I started teaching.	2/10/2015 11:21 AM

Q6 Did you meet with a Pilot Project peer mentor?

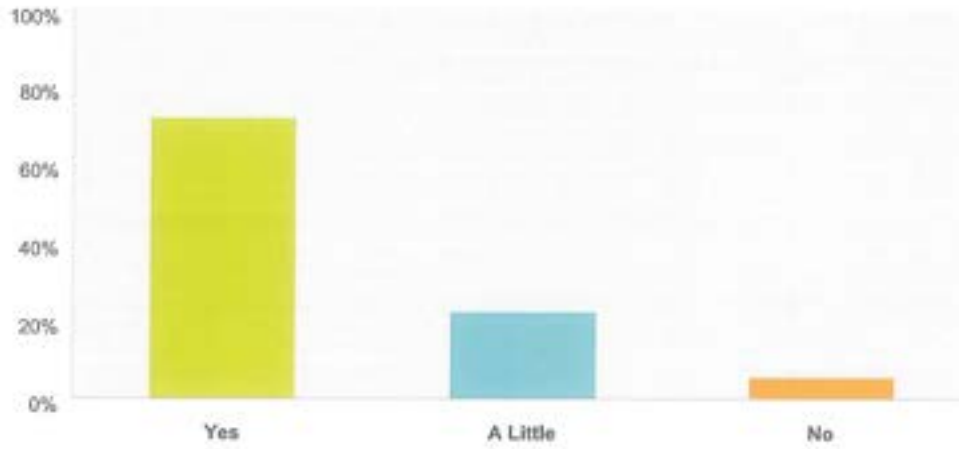
Answered: 20 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
Yes	95.00% 19
No	5.00% 1
Total	20

Q7 If you met with a Pilot Project peer mentor, did this meeting help you design or implement changes to your course?

Answered: 18 Skipped: 2



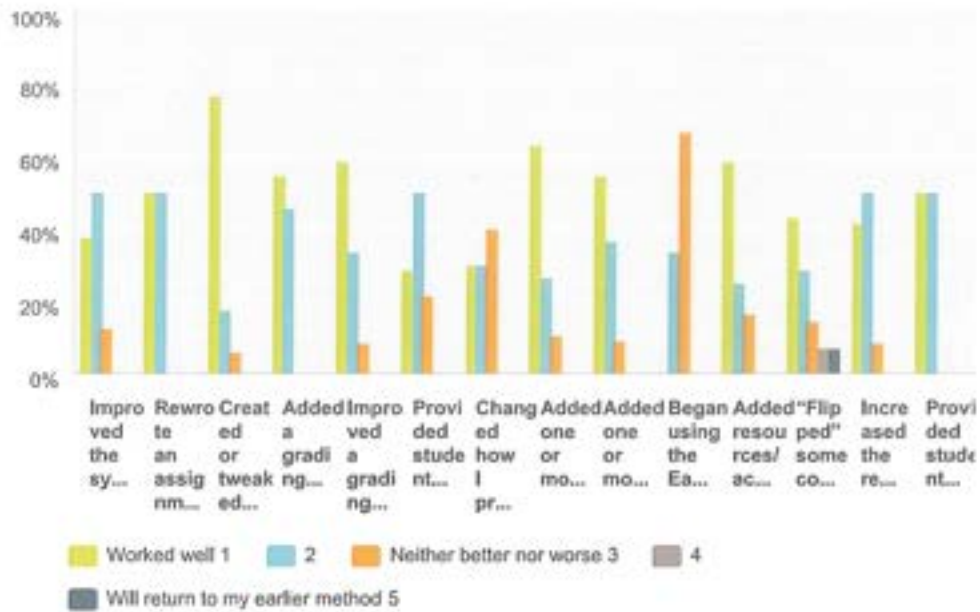
Answer Choices	Responses
Yes	72.22% 13
A Little	22.22% 4
No	5.56% 1
Total	18

Appendix 3

“Copy from instruction” was chosen

**Q1 This academic year, did you try a new strategy in one or more of your classes?
(Check all items that describe a change you made to one or more classes. For selected items, let us know how that worked out for you on a scale from 1 to 5.)**

Answered: 22 Skipped: 0



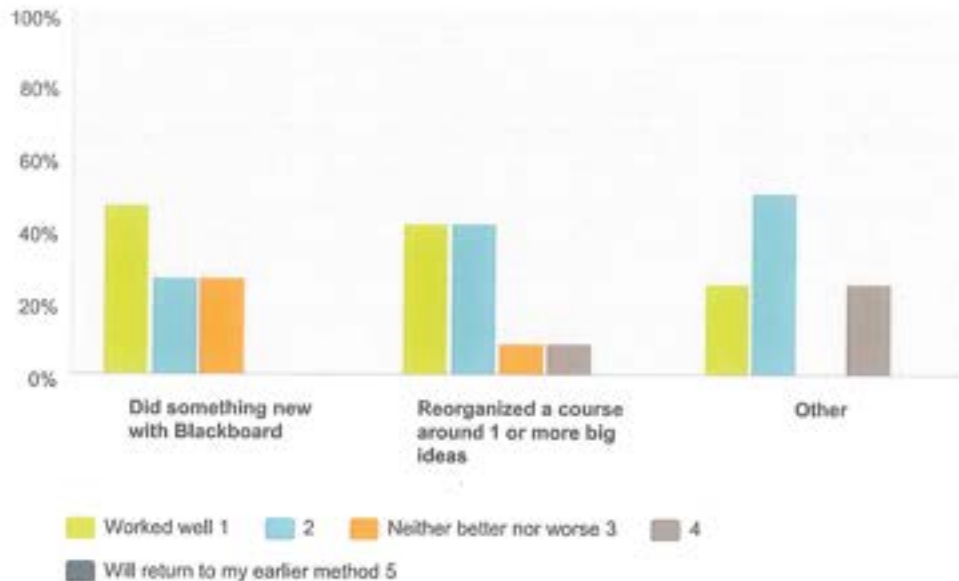
	Worked well 1	2	Neither better nor worse 3	4	Will return to my earlier method 5	Total
Improved the syllabus	37.50% 6	50.00% 8	12.50% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	16
Rewrote an assignment to increase clarity	50.00% 9	50.00% 9	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	18
Created or tweaked an assignment to promote application/critical thinking	76.47% 13	17.65% 3	5.88% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	17
Added a grading rubric for one or more assignments	54.55% 6	45.45% 5	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	11
Improved a grading rubric for one or more assignments	58.33% 7	33.33% 4	8.33% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	12
Provided students with a model of high-quality work	28.57% 4	50.00% 7	21.43% 3	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	14
Changed how I provide feedback on written assignments	30.00% 3	30.00% 3	40.00% 4	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	10
Added one or more in-class activities	63.16% 12	26.32% 5	10.53% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	19
Added one or more early assessments (earlier assignments, quizzes, etc.)	54.55% 6	36.36% 4	9.09% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	11

Evaluation of the UP Academies Pilot Project - Control Group

Began using the Early Alert system to submit names of failing students	0.00% 0	33.33% 1	66.67% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	3
Added resources/activities to prepare students to read/learn (e.g., chapter pre-quizzes)	58.33% 7	25.00% 3	16.67% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	12
"Flipped" some content (i.e., students prepared outside class so class time could be used for an activity)	42.86% 6	28.57% 4	14.29% 2	7.14% 1	7.14% 1	14
Increased the repetition of key content throughout the class	41.67% 5	50.00% 6	8.33% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	12
Provided students with more information about learning or effective reading or study strategies.	50.00% 8	50.00% 8	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	16

Q2 This academic year, did you implement any of these strategies in one or more of your classes? (Check all items that describe a change you made to one or more classes. For selected items, let us know how that worked out for you on a scale from 1 to 5.)

Answered: 17 Skipped: 5



	Worked well 1	2	Neither better nor worse 3	4	Will return to my earlier method 5	Total
Did something new with Blackboard	46.67% 7	26.67% 4	26.67% 4	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	15
Reorganized a course around 1 or more big ideas	41.67% 5	41.67% 5	8.33% 1	8.33% 1	0.00% 0	12
Other	25.00% 1	50.00% 2	0.00% 0	25.00% 1	0.00% 0	4

#	Please explain:	Date
	There are no responses.	