Developmental Education: Meeting Diverse Student Needs

Patricia L. Dwinell
Jeanne L. Higbee
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Dear Colleagues:

I am pleased to introduce the 1998 NADE Monograph, Developmental Education: Meeting Diverse Student Needs. This document is timely and specific to some of the most prominent issues in higher education today.

More than at any other time in our history, educators from kindergarten through twelfth grade, undergraduate colleges, and graduate schools are looking for answers to the complex issues of access, lack of preparation, retention, minority student admissions and graduation rates, diverse student populations, accommodations for learning differences, and international student barriers. With our rapidly growing body of research into what works in academic development, assessment, and evaluation, developmental educators possess solutions for all levels of education. This monograph details some of the best practices in our profession.

Thanks to Patricia Dwinell and Jeanne Higbee for their continuing leadership in research and publication of the work of NADE members.

Don Garnett, Ph.D.
President, National Association for Developmental Education
1997-1998
vi DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION: MEETING DIVERSE STUDENT NEEDS
Introduction

Patricia L. Dwinell & Jeanne L. Higbee
The University of Georgia
Editors

One of the goals of developmental education, as defined by the National Association for Developmental Education (NADE), is "To preserve and make possible educational opportunity for each postsecondary learner." Developmental education programs have proven very successful in meeting the diverse needs of diverse populations of postsecondary learners in a wide variety of settings. The purpose of the 1998 edition of the NADE monograph series is to inform and guide educators regarding the breadth of programs and services provided within the scope of developmental education to enhance the access and retention of students who may differ in academic preparation, in heritage, in ability, and even in motivation, who seek to improve themselves through learning at the postsecondary level.

The first four chapters of the monograph address diverse student needs. Patricia James and Barbara Haselbeck describe an innovative program in which exposure to and participation in the arts promotes student learning and multicultural understanding. Linda Galloway and Kenneth Easterday report on their research regarding how to best meet the needs of developmental mathematics students outside the traditional classroom environment. Patricia Kowal and Gladys Shaw reflect on the role of academic support services in promoting learning. In their chapter, Victoria Fry and Antonia Ecung discuss the integration of reading and writing programs.
The authors of chapters five through eight address specific needs of diverse populations. Cheryl Stratton examines the benefits of a summer program for incoming African American students. Mac Lean Gander and Lynne Shea explore how writing programs can more effectively meet the needs of students with learning disabilities. The unique issues faced by international students are discussed by Karen Burrell and Dae Jin Kim, while Robert Lemelin provides a perspective on developmental programs in other parts of the world.

Perhaps the unifying theme of these eight chapters that represent diversity in programs and populations served is that developmental educators strive to meet the needs of all students, to assess individual differences, and to promote academic success. We wish to express our appreciation to these authors, and to Peggy Brady-Amoon and Martha Maxwell, who have provided reviews of books pertinent to the topic of this monograph and to developmental education as a whole. We also thank the NADE Executive Board for its continuing support of the monograph series. We encourage the members of NADE to contribute chapters to the monograph for the year 2000, The Many Faces of Developmental Education. Guidelines for submission are provided at the end of this monograph.
The Arts as a Bridge to Understanding Identity and Diversity

Patricia James and Barbara Haselbeck
University of Minnesota

Abstract

As educators in developmental education, we need to develop imaginative ways to teach students with diverse cultural backgrounds and abilities. This chapter describes an experimental humanities course that used artistic processes and content as a way to teach multicultural issues to students with diverse backgrounds and abilities. Readings and discussions, visiting artists, examples of art, and their own artmaking enabled students to use artistic perspectives to reflect on issues of diversity and to translate their own thoughts and feelings into symbolic form using images, movement, or words. We discuss conditions that promote critical and creative thinking and active participation.

During finals week 75 students and three instructors gathered to see the visual and performing art that students had created during a ten-week, team-taught arts and humanities course, “Identity, Community & Culture: Connections in the Arts and Humanities.” There was a strong feeling of individual and collaborative accomplishment as we watched dances choreographed by students who previously thought they could not dance, looked at art work made by students who had assumed they could not draw a stick figure, and heard stories told by students who had believed they would never be able to get up and speak to...
a large group of people. Most of all, there was a sense of joy and discovery from seeing so many
different expressions of students’ worlds, including photomontages of family ancestors, oil
pastel drawings of symbolic images of home, dances about emotional, figurative, or literal
journeys, and stories about growing up in the 1980s and 1990s. Students’ art work gave shape to
their individuality, their commonality, and their diversity as they taught each other about the
power of the arts to create bridges among people.

These presentations were the culmination of an experimental, interdisciplinary course
offered in General College, a two-year non-degree granting unit within the University of
Minnesota. The mission of the College is to help underprepared and non-traditional age students
develop their academic potential and transfer into degree programs. The curriculum is
structured around content-based liberal arts courses, including the arts. Teaching through and
about the arts invites students into cognitive, affective, social, and sensory learning experiences
that develop their intelligence in multiple ways (Goldberg, 1996; Greene, 1995). In accordance
with the college’s mission of meeting diverse learning needs and providing multicultural
perspectives in a developmental environment, our course provided students the opportunity to
explore issues of diversity through critical and creative modes of learning. Students wrote, read,
and held discussions about topics such as heritage, language and social power, and sexual
identity. They listened to visiting artists, viewed art that addressed similar topics to the readings,
and engaged in creativity exercises and their own art making. These combined activities enabled
students to use artistic perspectives to reflect on issues of diversity and to put their own thoughts
and feelings into symbolic form using images, movement, or words.

We had five goals for students in this course: (a) to deepen awareness of their own identities
in relationship to their own and other cultures; (b) to become sensitized to the values,
experiences, and artistic expression of diverse peoples; (c) to become attuned to the ways that the
arts express the complexity of contemporary life; (d) to learn to use artistic languages to
understand and express ideas, feelings, and experiences; and (e) to practice working with ideas
and processes that are open-ended, complex, and ambiguous.

In this chapter, we discuss ways we used the arts as a conceptual, creative, and affective
bridge to successfully engage students of different abilities with ideas about diverse identities
and communities. Students used art to examine these issues in three ways: they actively viewed
a variety of art forms, participated in presentations by visiting artists, and created their own art.
Viewing art by artists who explore identity, heritage, and contemporary society helped students
think about and articulate these issues, and making art themselves demanded that students
identify their own values and create their own imaginative images, movements, and narratives.
By engaging as both artist and audience, students expanded their perceptions of what constitutes
identity and community, and they practiced both interpreting symbols and creating them.

We believe that students’ beliefs and experiences shape their learning, so we designed
instruction to utilize students’ personal and cultural knowledge as an explicit part of the course
content. Our focus on students’ knowledge was a reflection of a “learning paradigm” rather than
a “teaching paradigm” (Barr & Tagg, 1995), and it reflected a constructivist approach to learning
in which students, in interaction with others, construct models of reality that guide their actions and the way they make sense of their experiences and form meaningful conceptual structures (Candy, 1991). By incorporating student discourse, we sought to maintain a dialogue in the classroom that would increase students' connection to course material and show them how their lives might be viewed in terms of the critical and creative concepts being studied (Shor, 1992).

We used diverse instructional strategies to address differences in learners. Dimensions of learning include the way an individual adapts and assimilates information; intellectual processes used to make sense of information; preferences for various learning environments, instructional methods, and subjects; and culturally-shaped values and preferences for certain approaches to learning (Anderson & Adams, 1992; Bonham & Boylan, 1993). Personality, past and current life situations, personal interests, and motivation also are factors in learning.

Our course was an experiment in active ways to use the arts to teach diversity to academically underprepared students. We describe below the underlying rationale and structure of the course, characteristics of the participants, and our instructional methods. We also identify conditions that shape a supportive, creative learning environment, ways that students made connections among concepts and activities, and implications of this kind of course for developmental education.

**Identity, Community, and the Arts**

The theme of the course, identity and community, met the needs of underprepared students as they seek to establish their sense of self in relationship to their own and other cultures. College students wrestle with significant issues of identity as they construct a new understanding of themselves in relation to school, family, and peer relationships. Identity can be thought of as “a dynamic fitting together of parts of the personality with the realities of the social world so that a person has a sense of both internal coherence and meaningful relatedness to the world” (Josselson, 1987, pp. 12-13). Chickering and Reisser (1993) suggest that the development of identity includes comfort with body and appearance, comfort with gender and sexual orientation, and a sense of self in a social, historical, and cultural context. Establishment of identity is a life-long process that is particularly crucial during the college years, especially if the student is a late adolescent, although students of nontraditional age also experience identity issues as they find their places in the new world of higher education and begin to integrate their academic experiences into the rest of their lives.

Besides exploring personal identity, it is important that college students expand their understanding of cultural diversity so that they will be able to constructively participate in our increasingly diverse society and become more aware, tolerant, and sensitive to the traditions, beliefs, and realities of their own and of others’ communities. Although students exist within one or more cultures in which there are implicit, usually unspoken norms, they often are not aware of these norms until they interact directly with someone from a culture with different norms. Students may have difficulty or even resistance to learning about other cultural perspectives, especially if they engage in dualistic thinking, form premature judgments, have difficulty
dealing with ambiguity, or show intolerance toward people and ideas that are unfamiliar to them (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; King & Kirchener, 1994). In addition, cultural insularity influenced by students’ family, high school, and community experiences and by stereotypes promoted by mass media often results in patterns of xenophobia, homophobia, and racism that make learning problematic.

As a response to the often alienating and divisive pressures of contemporary society, educational philosopher Maxine Greene (1995) charges educators with the task of empowering students to be critically aware of their own realities:

...we teachers must so emphasize the importance of persons becoming reflective enough to think about their own thinking and become conscious of their own consciousness. People must become aware of the ways they construct their realities as they live together—how they grasp the appearance of things, how and when they interrogate their lived worlds, how they acknowledge the multiple perspectives that exist for making sense of the common sense world (p. 65).

The arts provide a unique process for reflection and critique because they touch us aesthetically, emotionally, intellectually, and kinesthetically. The visual arts, music, dance, drama, or literature each have different techniques, vocabulary, and conventions through which ideas are expressed, but metaphor is an essential concept that underlies all of these arts. Rooted in the concrete and sensory, metaphors present information in ways that link personal, transpersonal, cultural, and disciplinary knowledge (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Sanders & Sanders, 1984). Poet and essayist Kathleen Norris (1996) writes about the way that metaphors touch us:

Metaphor is valuable to us precisely because it is not vapid, not a blank word such as “reality” that has no grounding in the five senses. Metaphor draws on images from the natural world, from our senses, and from the world of human social structures, and yokes them to psychological and spiritual realities in such a way that we’re often left gasping; we have no way to fully explain a metaphor’s power, it simply is (p. 156).

The aesthetic, emotional, kinesthetic, and symbolic aspects of metaphors convey complex dimensions of meaning and provide links among students’ personal experiences, their cultural knowledge, and the course content. To grasp the nature of metaphors and to know how to interpret and construct them is to understand concepts at a deeper, more insightful level than mere facts. Although the complex nature of metaphor often seems difficult to describe, the process of interpreting and constructing metaphors is teachable.

To emphasize the way that metaphor illuminates and creates personal, cultural, and cross-cultural meanings, we structured the course around metaphors of trees, circles, journeys, barriers, home, and bridges. Metaphors add dimensions of meaning to these ordinary objects in ways that are life-affirming and, in many cases, cross-cultural. Trees, for example, symbolize life, flexibility, growth, and family. Circles symbolize life, birth, community, journeys, and completion. Perhaps the most significant metaphor in the course was “bridges,” for students needed to perceive that within the complexity of the course were multiple relationships and connections among art forms, social issues, and their own lives.
Another concept that underlies each of the arts is the synergism between form and content. The aesthetic qualities found in formal relationships convey as much meaning as the overt subject matter or symbolism. As students learn to perceive and interpret art, they identify and respond to the aesthetic nuances of things—the “whole complex of feelings” (Briggs, 1988, p. 39) that are perceived in artistic forms. Students learn the difference between the “factual approach” of practical utility and the “creative approach,” which Briggs defines as “one of purpose, sensitivity, and the ability to visualize an emotionally and aesthetically exciting image” (p. 40). Learning from the arts means paying close attention to the forms, structure, and internal relationships of a work itself. Perceiving aesthetic form is seldom the end of the process of thinking about art, however, for lines, shapes, colors, textures, movements, and sounds serve as aesthetic conduits of complex, multi-layered, metaphoric meanings about the human condition.

As vital, living forms of expression that empower individuals and communities, the arts embody emotions and ideas that both maintain and challenge social practices. Some contemporary artists celebrate and teach about ways that their cultures have traditionally perceived and valued the world. Other contemporary artists expect a new kind of engagement from the audience and ask that people be willing to “enter” and interact with the work physically, intellectually, and emotionally to imagine the past, the present, and the future in new ways. Often confrontational and critical of social structures, language, and social practices, contemporary art may evoke uncertainty, empathy, joy, anger, or disgust.

### Description of the Course

Teaching the arts, especially to academically underprepared students with little art background, is a multifaceted undertaking, for teachers need to work not only with course content but also with students’ personal experiences and feelings. To connect students’ knowledge with concepts, we chose a systemic approach to course design and instruction. In this approach, all parts of the classroom system are perceived as dynamically affecting other parts (Dobbert, Eisikovits, & Pittman, 1989). In our class, activities in the large class established the groundwork for the smaller art laboratories, and the work in the art laboratories informed learning in the large class. Themes of identity and community were woven throughout all of the activities, as shown in Figure 1 on page 8. The following section describes key aspects of the various parts of the instructional system. Narrative descriptions of classroom interactions are woven throughout to bring to life for the reader the richness of the experiences within the class context. Students’ names have been changed to protect their anonymity.
Large Class Sessions

Twice a week for two hours, the entire class of approximately 75 students met for group discussions, guest artist presentations, creativity exercises, informal writing, lectures, and presentations. The three instructors who co-led these large sessions brought diverse disciplinary knowledge, teaching styles, and pedagogical perspectives to the class. One is a professor of American literature; another is a dancer, choreographer, writer, and teaching specialist in the humanities; and another is a sculptor, educational researcher, and assistant professor of visual arts. All three of us were present in each of the large class sessions, and we took turns leading activities and discussions.

The diversity of the class provided a fertile context for exploring cultural issues. The student population included 13 recent immigrants from Vietnam, immigrants from Africa, Iran, Hungary, and Russia; approximately 14 African American students, as well as Asian American, Hispanic American, and European American students. Besides racial and ethnic diversity, students represented a diverse range of geographical regions, social classes, sexual orientations, political orientations, religions, family situations, and physical and mental abilities.

Students contributed to the course varying levels of experience, interest, and skill in the arts. A few intended to continue to study some form of art, but the majority were taking the course to fulfill a liberal arts requirement. Although most did not have much specific art knowledge, their
knowledge of their often challenging lives gave them much to express about their worlds. Typically idealistic, many students hoped to uncover hypocrisy, improve social conditions, and promote peace. On the other hand, some students were grappling with sexuality, leaving home, illness, money, alcohol and drug use, and the paradox of seemingly unlimited possibilities and fear of failure. A number of students balanced single parenthood, several jobs, or the challenges of learning a new language.

Fiction and non-fiction selections in the multicultural text, Encountering Cultures: Reading and Writing in a Changing World (Holeton, 1995), were the starting point for students’ explorations of identity and community. Topics including immigration, language and power, sexual orientation and diversity, bicultural identity, and social power helped students understand the unwritten rules that are part of every culture and to empathize with individuals of different cultures. Many students were challenged by reading first person perspectives of cultures about which they held stereotyped preconceptions, or prejudices, and other students were affirmed by reading about aspects of their own culture they may never have seen articulated in print. In weekly reading responses, students were asked to identify and explain metaphors, discuss issues from the point of view of the authors or characters, and make connections between the readings and their own lives.

Small groups functioned as important pedagogical systems in the large class for helping students learn cognitively, socially, and creatively, and they served an especially vital role in helping students connect social issues to their own lives. We placed students into 13 heterogeneous groups of five to seven students. As students discussed social issues and engaged in small group exercises, they were able to share multiple perspectives and listen to other students’ stories. Groups were also a way for students to develop abilities to collaborate, build trust, give feedback, and negotiate and resolve conflicts (Bruffee, 1993; Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 1991). The intentional mix in each group provided a rich opportunity for understanding a variety of cultures. To become aware of the diverse perspectives of their peers, students discussed such things as generational differences in sexual relationships and differences between private and public languages. These exercises challenged students’ cultural perceptions and required them to see their peers as situated in many different contexts. In a number of group discussions, groups made lists of the main points on large paper and taped them to the walls, graphically showing the range and diversity of thinking in the class and serving as the basis for all-class discussions.

We designed sequences of exercises and assignments to help students make personal connections with artistic and social concepts. On the second day of class, for example, we began a series of exercises to teach students about the nature of metaphor and help them focus on their own heritages. The guiding metaphor for that two week period was “tree,” and the chapter that students were reading in their text at this time was about immigrant experiences. To ground students in the concrete and metaphoric characteristics of “tree,” we asked them to go outdoors in their groups, find a tree, and use the following categories to brainstorm about various aspects of a tree: (a) factual: describe physical characteristics of a tree; (b) functional: what does a tree do? how is it used? (c) personal: describe personal stories and feelings about trees; (d) cultural:
describe various symbolic, ritual, or social meanings of “tree”; and (e) metaphorical: what ideas and feelings can a tree represent? When groups returned to the classroom, we discussed these aspects of “treeness.” Students made connections between ways trees function in nature and as a resource for humans and the metaphoric, expressive attributes of trees, such as strength, endurance, protection, and rootedness, and they then made connections among those qualities to families and family lineage.

After a slide presentation about various ways to graphically represent a family lineage tree, students drew their own family trees. Sharing within groups about these drawings of family trees was particularly rich as students talked with each other about their family’s immigration experiences, ethnic backgrounds, and current location and status. In a continuation of this exercise, students wrote a personal letter to an ancestor or living person on their family tree. This writing was based on an exercise described in Writing Your Heritage (Dixon, 1993). The following class period, students read aloud their letter to the other members of their group, which helped them share in an even deeper way their connections to their heritages.

These concepts were given greater specificity when an African American administrator in the college talked to the class about her search for her family tree in the deep south and read aloud a bill of sale for one of her great grandparents who had been sold as a slave. In the visual art lab, concepts about family trees and heritage were expanded even further in photomontage tributes students created about the person to whom they wrote the letter. Through these multiple ways of working with concepts in the tree and heritage exercises, students were better able to root the concepts of identity and metaphor in their own experience and see how they could be manifested in art.

### Visiting artists

A Bush Diversity Grant supported visiting artists, art materials, and multicultural audiovisual resources. Most importantly, the grant enabled us to invite five culturally diverse artists to show examples of their art and talk about ways their work expresses their personal and cultural identities. The visiting artists were Marilyn Lindstrom, muralist; Ta-Coumba Aiken, painter; Marci Rendon, poet and playwright; Patrick Scully, dancer; and Deja Vue, a rap group. The immediacy of hearing artists speak helped students understand the intimate links between artistic purposes, creative processes, and identity. Students were able to de-mystify art and to learn about the discipline, thoughtfulness, and vulnerability that are part of an artist’s life.

For many contemporary muralists, art is a way to build community, to instruct people about heritage, and to celebrate the dignity and vision of a neighborhood or ethnic group. When an urban muralist showed slides of her collaboratively-produced neighborhood murals, she emphasized the political and collaborative nature of mural art and the importance art can have on youth and community identity. She asked students to collaboratively create circular drawings based on cultural symbols. An African American painter, who talked about and showed the influence of African patterns and values on his work, asked students to make individual oil pastel drawings using his methods of spontaneous pattern-making.
Several of the visiting artists raised important questions about cultural diversity in contemporary society. One of the artists was a dancer who talked to students about issues of being gay in a sometimes hostile environment and about his artistic journey to create expressions that support his identity. Students’ questions elicited a lively discussion. For example, upon hearing the dancer use the word “queer,” one student asked, “Who is allowed to use the word ‘queer’?” When members of an emerging African American rap group visited the class, they alternated between rapping and talking about their collaborative process of creating music. During a spirited discussion, the rappers answered challenging questions about power, sexuality, and profanity in their lyrics.

A Native American poet and playwright read excerpts of her poetry and talked about some of the cultural and personal barriers she faced becoming an artist. She engaged students and instructors in several activities in which they identified and expressed their cultural backgrounds. For example, she asked the class to take part in a cultural identity exercise called “Crossing the Line” (Holeton, 1995), in which she asked questions such as: “Who grew up in a house where English wasn’t spoken?” “Who grew up without enough food to eat?” “Who grew up in a family that had too much to eat?” People who answered positively to any of the questions had to move to the other side of the room and face the others, thus illustrating differences in our backgrounds. She later asked us to get into groups of similar racial and gender identity (White male, Black female, Asian American male, etc.) and create impromptu performances to show the rest of the class who we are as racial and gender groups.

Students were assigned to write short response papers about any three of the visiting artists. These papers gave them a focus for thinking about how artists express identity and culture, what it is to be an artist, and differences in aesthetic stances and creative processes.

An Exhibit of Contemporary Art

For a direct encounter with contemporary art, students were assigned to attend an exhibit of eight international artists titled “no place/like home,” a multimedia media show at the Walker Art Center that explored issues of cultural boundaries, cultural dislocation, and notions of “home.” The works that students saw and wrote about included multi-media, walk-in replications of a South African migrant worker’s shanty and an illegal party room; a full-size ramshackle wooden bridge by a Cuban artist; an installation of silhouetted scenes of obscenities of slavery by an African American artist, photographs of the desolate Northern Irish border, and a photograph of the shredded feet of a dead political prisoner. The challenging exhibit demanded considerable physical, intellectual, and emotional involvement from students.

To make critical connections among social issues and contemporary arts, students wrote a five-page paper about a work or series of works by one artist in the exhibit. As a way to help students understand the context of contemporary art, we showed slides of early modernist and post-modernist art and talked about underlying aesthetic theories. The first challenge of seeing contemporary art, however, is to perceive “clues” provided in the art work. Our assignment
handout advised students to avoid premature judgments about the exhibit until they had spent sufficient time attending to the characteristics of what they actually saw, heard, and felt:

Approach this exhibit as if you are a traveler to a strange land. Please be open-minded and gather lots of information before you make judgments about the art. Some of the works may make you uncomfortable. If they do, that means the artists have probably achieved their goal. If you are confused at first, keep trying to make connections between what you see, your readings, the critical articles, and readings in your text. Everyone’s interpretations of these works will be different—there is not one interpretation that you are supposed to “get.” You may end up disliking the work and being critical of its message or how the message is communicated. That’s fine, but your evaluation, whether it is positive or negative, must be based on strong evidence from the work itself.

We asked students to go through the critical stages of perceiving and describing, analyzing, interpreting, and evaluating, but we also left room for students to respond to the work in expressive, imaginative, and personal ways.

**Art Laboratories**

Usually the arts are invisible to students, and—except for the popular media that shape their culture through movies, TV, CDs, and radio—the arts are something students “get,” or don’t get and therefore reject. Making art is a way for students themselves to actively participate in the creation of culture and the collective understanding of contemporary life. Instead of being only consumers of culture, students construct culture anew each time they create a drawing, a dance, tell a story, or actively think about a work of art.

To help students gain greater knowledge of a specific art form and create their own visual art, dance, or storytelling, the class was divided into four smaller sections that participated for two hours each week in one of four art laboratories. Two sections of dance were offered so that we could have fewer students in each art lab. Because the primary focus was on creative processes and the construction of metaphor, we gave only basic attention to specific artistic techniques, which involve other levels of complexity that students may pursue in future courses. Instead, we emphasized artistic experiences, which can be defined as an imaginative, creative shaping of thoughts or emotions into a new entity composed of words, movements, shapes, colors, or sounds. We believe that all students are capable of artistic expression.

Although students generated their own ideas for their art work, it was important to provide examples of work by established artists to guide their work. Students’ work never directly mimicked the artistic examples, however; instead, seeing the work of other artists gave students alternative ways to generate and solve their own artistic problems. In the visual art lab, for example, several videos about multicultural artists, slides, and prints of paintings modeled ways to stylize human forms by using vibrant, unrealistic colors, patterns, and flat compositional space. In the dance lab, videos of contemporary multicultural dancers modeled techniques for developing narrative in both words and movement and drawing on one’s own cultural experience as a creative resource. In the storytelling lab, two visiting story tellers demonstrated
such qualities as pacing, body language, choice of language, and developing personal meaning in stories.

Besides gaining first-hand knowledge of artistic concepts, making art in the small lab classes was an important way for students to learn more about their own identities. By working with artistic materials, their bodies, or words, students constructed artistic languages to express their physical, emotional, social, cultural, and existential realities. Several examples follow that illustrate how students worked with these issues. In the dance lab, students were assigned to compose, as homework, a one minute movement study based on the metaphor of journey. Students were asked to incorporate several dance concepts they had been working with, and the dance instructor provided a theme and a broad structure that allowed for individual variations. In preparation for the assignment, she talked students through an imaginative movement journey that acted as a creative warm-up and provided students with both a kinesthetic and imaginative sense of what their process might be and where it might take them.

Individually composing and performing the midquarter study was intimidating to every dance student, yet nearly all met this challenge, some gaining significant insight about themselves as human beings and performers. In one student’s study, for example, the instructor observed a clear integration of the dance concepts of level, pathway, and dynamics, with a focused, dramatic sense of motion and emotion. The student maintained a strong presence in his movement, which is perhaps the most important quality sought in student performances. After all of the journey studies had been performed (in pairs, to alleviate self-consciousness), the instructor asked students to write about their own composing process. This student’s account revealed that he used an imaginative narrative to shape a performance based on personal feelings from his own life circumstances. Although his study was performed in silence, he had used music when he was composing at home to set up kinesthetic and emotional associations. Interestingly, he chose a classic hero’s journey as the basis of his study, setting out to destroy a dragon that represented the evil in his life, depression. An imaginary spear represented courage and the support of his friends and relatives. What was compelling about this study was the students’ ability to synthesize feeling and form to explore what was probably for him the most pressing aspect of his identity at the time.

Students often surprised themselves with their own artistic abilities. When a student in the visual art lab drew her interpretation of “home,” the female tree-figure that emerged on the large sheet of black paper seemed to flow out of her fingers. Blocking out chatter in the classroom, she concentrated solely on the image, as if she knew exactly what would evolve. Drawing seemed to be a natural mode of expression for her. Earlier, when the class brainstormed metaphors for “home,” this student contributed “mother’s breasts,” which became the basis of the drawing about what home means to her. From the instructor’s perspective, she seemed to have considerable experience in art, but when she was asked if she had much art in her childhood, she quickly responded “oh no, no, no” as if warning that learning about art was an impossibility in the rough inner city environment in which she had grown up. This was one of her first opportunities to artistically express ideas and feelings, and she entered into the activity with the
energy that she might have used in her training as an athlete. She was swept into the sensuality of working with oil pastels, and she produced a rich, vibrant image that was meaningful to her.

Other students in the visual art lab found their own ways to express what home means to them. The majority of students were recent Southeast Asian immigrants, and many of their oil pastel drawings included images of their land, such as mountains, rice paddies, and temples. They showed historical tensions in their country by using symbols of conflict such as clashing fists within a heart. Drawings by other students used less specific cultural references. To one student, home was a single lit candle on a rock. For another home was a butterfly soaring out of the grasp of a hand, a symbol of both growing up and of the butterflies in his environment. To another home was the cliff he was standing on while he contemplated soaring into his future. None of the students’ drawings was a literal illustration of home; instead, each relied on metaphor to convey ideas about home as a memory, a longing, a sense of belonging, or a place from which to soar.

**Conditions for Creative Learning**

Resistance to the arts comes from many sources, including students’ lack of belief in their own artistic abilities, insufficient understanding of the relevance of the arts to their own life or career, or the common perception of the arts as elitist, inaccessible, or frivolous. Resistance to cultural diversity is engendered by isolation, mass media, and social pressure. Given these beliefs, how could we help students become more open to worlds that are unfamiliar to them? We found there were four conditions that especially enabled students to care about their participation in class, to think and act creatively, to become more tolerant, to respond critically to a variety of ideas and art forms, and to develop meaningful content in their own art work. As we elucidate these conditions for creativity, we return to previously described activities to suggest how they not only served pedagogical functions but set up an environment that promoted successful learning.

**The Creation of Personal Meaningfulness**

To be willing to take artistic and social risks, it is important that students feel that what they are doing is authentic and self-expressive, that it is in some way contributing to a larger good, and that the process itself is worth doing. Personal meaningfulness arises from the utilization of students’ own knowledge and life experiences, and focused and enthusiastic participation is more likely when it is clear that what they create is relevant to their lives. The construction of personal metaphors was an especially important factor in animating ideas for students, as they called on memory, perception, and conceptual knowledge to shape a meaningful way of perceiving and expressing their lives. The intrinsic pleasure of making art and the sense of “flow” that can arise from the integration of mind, body, emotions with materials and symbolic forms also added to personal meaningfulness (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).
Supportive Social Climate

Because both students and instructors were exploring new territories in learning issues of diversity, active communal participation was a crucial aspect of the class. Establishing a sense of community within the classroom was the first important factor for encouraging risk-taking, an understanding of art as shared communication, and a tolerance for diversity. Small groups helped students to feel personally connected to several others within the large class of 75 students. A second factor was the willingness of instructors to engage in the activities of the guest artists, to participate with students in many of the creativity exercises, and to model team work by negotiating with and supporting one another. A third community-building component was the final performances and exhibition. Rehearsing, preparing art work for exhibition, and helping each other gave students an opportunity to make decisions, collaborate, and take responsibility for the success of their work.

Open, Structured Assignments and Instruction

The structure and delivery of assignments, which were designed to help students with little prior art experience, were important to students’ ability to think critically and creatively, understand artistic concepts, grow in their ability to deal with diversity issues, and express their own personal and cultural knowledge. Sequential activities, as described in the tree and heritage exercises, enabled students to practice concepts and processes in multiple ways, and repetition of concepts in visual, musical, verbal, and kinesthetic modes offered students with different learning styles more than one mode for successful comprehension and articulation of ideas. Technical, formal, and conceptual constraints in the assignments helped students focus their thinking and work toward specific goals, but sufficient room remained in the assignments for students to work in expressive and imaginative ways.

Explicit Teaching of Creative Processes

Our instruction alternated between a practical and theoretical understanding of creativity. When accomplished artists create, they integrate their artistic training, life experience, emotions, and aesthetic knowledge into a complex practice (Gruber, 1989). Experienced artists are able to make complex decisions based on their knowledge, but inexperienced students are often overwhelmed with the complexity of making and interpreting art, and they are unable to find meaning in what they do. One of the challenges of working with students with little previous experience or confidence in the arts is to help them quickly learn enough formal principles, symbol systems, and cultural meanings to be able to generate ideas, develop their work, and make critical evaluations. By participating in activities that focused on components of creative processes such as brainstorming, metaphoric thinking, spontaneous play, elaborating, synthesizing, and working with feedback, students gradually acquired strategies and confidence that helped them accomplish their final projects. Opportunities for reflection helped students become aware of the thoughts and feelings that often seem elusive when one is engaged in creative processes.
Making Connections

Our evaluation of students’ learning and the success of the course was primarily based on students’ art work and writing, for it was in these products that we could see an increase in their ability to perceive and analyze relationships and interpret concepts in art, culture, and society. We considered students’ awareness of their own learning to be a major objective, so we asked them to write reflective papers about how they made connections among the various activities in which they had engaged over the quarter. To prepare students to write this paper, we gave them a visual “map” similar to that provided in Figure 1 with a list of the components of the course, and we talked about how concepts had been woven throughout the multiple activities. The following section describes some of the outcomes of their art-making and students’ perception of their learning in relationship to the five goals we had established for the course.

Deepened Awareness of Their Own Identities in Relationship to Their Own and Other Cultures

Students’ writing and art work showed that they came to new understandings about who they are, where they come from, and the complexity of their alliances. A number of students noted a renewed pride in their own ethnic community and a new consciousness of being members of not only an ethnic community but of multiple communities based on common interests and goals. Several students wrote about how the class had helped them reflect on the taken-for-granted patterns of their daily existence. Seeing their peers’ work also helped students perceive commonalities; for example, a student’s performance of a story about growing up in the 1980s resonated with students from both suburban and inner city backgrounds.

Sensitization to the Values and Experiences of Diverse Peoples

There were a number of times throughout the quarter when students expressed discomfort with our focus on cultural diversity, and they grappled with this uneasiness in their writing and discussions. Although they may have abstractly known about the concept of cultural difference, many students had never publicly identified their own race or ethnicity or talked about such issues with someone from a different culture. At first, a number of students were uncomfortable and angry at being asked to take a public stand on their identity, especially European Americans, but later they wrote that they understood why they had been asked to do so and described a new appreciation of their own identities and an awareness of differences within cultures. Many students wrote about positive shifts in their perception of other people, including immigrants and gays, and they wrote of a new sense of respect and empathy for others.

Students indicated that they appreciated the opportunity to work with peers from diverse backgrounds. Some expressed amazement that students in their group had very different ideas about such fundamental subjects as the nature of God, community, and marriage. Students wrote that they valued the lessons in negotiation, collaboration, and responsibility that the groups had offered them and thought that their participation in small groups was a valuable
way to learn and to feel more connected to others. They also valued working with people who had different learning styles, and noted that seeing how other students approached ideas and processes served as important models about new ways to work. Students also wrote about the customary isolation that they feel at the University, and they were pleased that they felt very much a part of this class, had made new friends, and felt that the class itself had become a community.

**Sensitization to the Ways that the Arts Express the Complexity of Contemporary Life**

Students came to a new understanding of the power of art to make their lives more meaningful, to strengthen individual and communal voices, and to improve communities. In a sense, students claimed a personal stake in the arts. Previously, many students had very little interest in the arts; they thought of the Walker Art Center as something that was outside of their world, and they resisted making a trip there. After their visit, however, students wrote about the Walker as an exciting, relevant place that they hope to revisit, and they were grateful for being introduced to the work in the exhibit. The exhibit was complex and difficult, but students’ writing demonstrated that they had met the challenge with empathy, imagination, and insight.

**Ability to Use Artistic Languages to Understand and Express Ideas, Feelings, and Experiences**

Students’ writing showed that they were able to use metaphors to illuminate their own ideas, and many wrote about their learning in terms of a journey, a bridge, and a circle. Although most of the students initially lacked confidence in their artistic and creative abilities, by the end of the quarter they were able to express ideas and feelings through their own visual art, storytelling, or dance. As they experienced some successes in the art laboratories, students’ work showed an increase in confidence and willingness to take expressive risks, and in their ability to generate divergent ideas, think metaphorically, and refine their work.

By the time of the final performances and exhibition, many students were able to bring their work to a fairly high level of artistry. In the visual art lab, for example, few of the students had much artistic experience beyond elementary school, and their drawing style itself was relatively crude, but an emphasis on shape and pattern instead of illusionistic rendering helped them create works in which colors were richly varied, harmonious, and lively, textures were well-developed, and there was a sense of compositional unity. With few exceptions, students in the dance lab also had little or no experience in creative dance. Furthermore, nearly half of them were males, a group who in our culture does not identify with dance as a gender-appropriate art form. The goals were to encourage them to move freely and unselfconsciously in their bodies, to explore new and expressive ways of moving, and to collaborate successfully in their performing groups. The dances, choreographed by nine different groups, employed movement language uniquely expressive of their ideas, each dance appearing very different from any other. A sense of collaborative effort was evident in the focused participation of all performers.
Ability to Deal with Complexity and Ambiguity

Although the participation level in both the large class and the laboratories was generally high, some students showed ambivalence to what we were doing, which we attribute to students’ initial confusion about the complexity of the course, resistance to some of the activities, and discomfort with our non-linear methods. At first, many students thought that the multiple activities in the class were too disconnected, but eventually they were able to synthesize information and find common themes among art, readings, art lab activities, and their own lives. Over time, students’ work showed that they were able to function within the complexity of the class, and the depth of their writing was evidence that many moved from dualism and premature closure to a tolerance for ambiguity, paradox, complexity, and alternative perspectives.

Implications for Developmental Education

We discovered that applying the arts to issues of identity and community is a fruitful endeavor when combined with active learning strategies. Students, many of whom have had mediocre or unsuccessful prior experiences in schools, were able to successfully express and explore their diverse backgrounds and abilities. Although some structural characteristics of this course will change over time, we will continue to develop and refine strategies for establishing creative learning conditions that promote diversity in both the content and process of teaching. We offer our description of the course not as a model, but as an invitation for developmental educators to turn to the arts as a way to deepen students’ critical thinking, creativity, and insight about social and cultural diversity. The experiential, holistic processes of making art provide valuable models for active, learning-centered instructional strategies for working with academically underprepared students.

The study of visual and performing arts showed students ways that the arts critique, explore, and celebrate life in contemporary America and the world. By having students see the complexity of art-making through the eyes of artists and through their own roles as creators and critics, we hoped to imbue them with some of the passion for art that comes from understanding the arts as their birthright. Making art was a way for students to put their experiences and feelings into metaphoric, aesthetic forms to share with other people. Students worked out an understanding of issues for themselves by having an opportunity to participate in a learning community that examined and shared perspectives on significant artistic and social issues. By critically reframing and expressively imagining their own experiences, students built bridges of experience between personal stories and conceptual structures so that they were able to theorize and symbolize their own lives and think at a deeper level about what their lives mean.
References


Help-Givers in Developmental Studies Mathematics: Whom Do the Students Prefer?

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Abstract

Students in developmental studies mathematics classes from five institutions in Georgia and Alabama ranked potential sources of help (teacher, tutor, classmate, friend or relative) in order of preference given different situations. The rankings indicated that students prefer the teacher and classmate as their first and second choices of a help-giver. The tutor barely ranked higher than friend or relative. These rankings were also examined by race, age, and gender to see if any patterns emerged. The low ranking for the tutor in this study should be of concern to educators providing tutorial programs.

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In a study comparing exemplary Developmental Studies programs across the country, McDonald (1988) found that tutoring was the most common form of academic assistance offered to developmental students. Yet, as Silverman and Juhasz (1993) noted, many such academic assistance programs have been plagued by a lack of participation by students. Given the diversity of today’s college student, it would be helpful to have a better understanding of the factors that influence a student’s decision to seek help from the available sources.

The process known as help-seeking involves three steps: (a) recognizing that help is needed, (b) choosing the source of help, and (c) actually seeking the help (DePaulo, 1983; Gross & McMullen, 1983). Ames (1983) described help-seeking as “an achievement behavior involving the search for and employment of a strategy to obtain success” (p.165). Thus, help-seeking may be viewed as a learning strategy. Improving student help-seeking in the academic context may be one way of helping developmental studies students cope in the college setting. Crawford (1993) suggested that colleges should strive to “ensure that students at every level are taught how to learn as well as what to learn” (p. 26).

In an effort to understand some of the factors that influence whether students seek help, the following research questions will be examined in this chapter:

1. Who is the preferred human source of help for developmental mathematics students and why is this particular source of help preferred?
2. Do the personal factors of race, age, or gender influence the choice of a help-giver?

Method

Developmental studies mathematics students at five institutions in Georgia and Alabama served as the subject pool for this study. The participating institutions included two two-year colleges serving primarily rural students and two four-year colleges in large cities. For each type of college, comparable institutions in Georgia and Alabama were asked to participate. The fifth participating institution was a historically Black institution that offers Master’s degrees. The comparable institution declined to participate in the study.

A total of 22 developmental studies mathematics teachers agreed to give their students the opportunity to participate in the study. A total of 492 students completed a questionnaire regarding help-seeking attitudes and behavior during the fall of 1994. Fourteen questionnaires were randomly selected from each teacher set giving an n of 308. Estimates for the needed sample size indicated that 156 students would be necessary to obtain a power level of .80 with a medium effect size (alpha = .01).

Students in the sample ranged in age from 16 to 47 with a mean age of 22.9 years. Sixty-eight per cent were females and the racial composition of the sample was 48.7% Black, 47.7% White, and 3.6% from other races. It was interesting to observe that 73% of the students reported taking Algebra One in high school and only 34% reported taking Algebra Two.
At one of the institutions, students were given the opportunity to volunteer for the interview portion of the study. Of those volunteering, two per teacher (n = 10) were arbitrarily selected. The interview allowed students to discuss their responses to the questionnaire. The discussions with students also enabled the researchers to develop a better understanding of the questionnaire results. Due to problems with taping equipment, one of the interviews was not included in the analysis.

**Questionnaire Results**

Four items on the questionnaire were intended to examine student preferences for sources of help in different situations as indicated in Figure 1. Students were asked to rank the sources of help (teacher, tutor, classmate, friend or relative) from 1 to 4 with 1 being the most preferred. The rankings for each source of help on the four items were totaled for each student. These totals were then averaged for the entire sample. An analysis of variance procedure indicated that the four means were significantly different (p < .001). A Tukey test was used to compare each pair of means. This test also indicated that the means were significantly different (p < .05). The order of the rankings, as displayed in Table 1, indicated that the teacher was ranked as the most preferred source of help followed by the classmate. Tutor and friend or relative ranked third and fourth, respectively.

**Figure 1**

*Items from Questionnaire Used to Assess Preferences for Help*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank the following from 1 to 4 to indicate your preference for source of help for each situation.</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(With “1” being the most preferred)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37. You have a question about your math homework.</td>
<td>_teacher _tutor _classmate _friend/relative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38. You don’t understand the new material just presented in class.</td>
<td>_teacher _tutor _classmate _friend/relative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. You are having trouble understanding previously covered material.</td>
<td>_teacher _tutor _classmate _friend/relative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40. You are reviewing for a test and you have some questions.</td>
<td>_teacher _tutor _classmate _friend/relative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1  
Means for Rankings of the Sources of Help

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Help-Giver</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>6.964</td>
<td>3.316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classmate</td>
<td>9.169</td>
<td>3.198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutor</td>
<td>11.295</td>
<td>3.748</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend or Relative</td>
<td>12.464</td>
<td>3.592</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The preference of a help-giver was further explored by considering the influence of the personal factors of race, age, and gender. The rankings of the sources of help were averaged and rounded to obtain a ranking from 1 to 4 for the choices of help-givers. A discriminant analysis procedure was performed for each source of help to find a maximally efficient linear combination of the variables race, age, and gender. The variables were entered stepwise with order of entry dependent upon the Wilks’ lambda.

The choice of teacher was examined by race, age, and gender in the first discriminant analysis procedure. Only gender was entered into the discriminant function, which was not significant (p = .392). It appears that race, age, and gender did not influence the ranking of the teacher as the most preferred source of help.

Frequency distributions for the rankings of the teacher by race, age, and gender were also examined. The distributions by males and females were consistent as were the distributions of Black and White students. The distributions for age proved very interesting when the sample was divided using the median age. Although the differences in the distributions were not statistically significant, 7.1% of those 19 or younger ranked the teacher highest, while 46.7% of those older than 19 indicated the teacher as their first choice.

In the analysis of the choice of classmate as a source of help, none of the variables entered into the discriminant function using the stepwise procedure. Therefore, it would appear that for this sample, the personal factors of race, age, and gender do not influence the ranking of the classmate as a help-giver.

The examination of the ranking of the tutor as a source of help did produce some interesting results. The values for the Wilks’ Lambda and the Univariate F ratios are presented in Table 2. Using a stepwise procedure, the variable race was entered into the analysis at step 1 followed by gender and age, respectively. Two discriminant functions were produced by the analysis. Function 1 had a significance probability p < .001 and function 2 was significant with p = .036.
Table 2
Wilks’ Lambda and Univariate F Ratios for Race Age, and Gender from the Analysis of Tutor as a Source of Help

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Wilks’ Lambda</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RACE</td>
<td>.92185</td>
<td>8.590</td>
<td>p &lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGE</td>
<td>.99103</td>
<td>0.918</td>
<td>p = .433</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GENDER</td>
<td>.96403</td>
<td>3.781</td>
<td>p = .011</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There were two significant discriminant functions so the potency indices for the significant variables were computed. The potency index allows interpretation of the contribution of the variables across all significant functions (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1992). Race had a potency index of .633, while gender had an index of .280. Therefore, race made a larger contribution than did gender in the ranking of the use of a tutor as a help-giver.

The frequency distribution for the rankings of the tutor by the variable race also provided some interesting results. A larger percentage of Black students (44.7%) ranked the tutor as either their first or second choice for help as opposed to only 26.5% of the White students. Additionally, 42.9% of the White students indicated that the tutor was the least preferred source of help, as opposed to 18.7% of the Black students.

The distributions for the ranking of the tutor by the variable gender indicated differences in whether the tutor was ranked third or fourth. The rankings by the female students indicated that the tutor tends to be the least preferred source of help, but the differences were not statistically significant.

In the discriminant analysis of friend or relative, race was once again entered to obtain a significant function. This function had a Wilks’ lambda of .957, Chi square = 13.38 and p = .004. The frequency distribution for the rankings of friend or relative by race indicate that 56.7% of the Black students ranked this source of help as the least preferred. Only 36.7% of the White students ranked friend or relative as the least preferred source of help.

**Interview Results**

The rankings for the sources of help were not as clearly delineated for the students who were interviewed. For this small group of students, the average ranking still had the teacher and classmate ranked first and second, respectively. However, the sums for tutor and friend or relative were equal.

Reasons given for preferring the teacher included the convenience of seeing the teacher on a regular basis. One student noted that “if a question comes up while she’s teaching on the board,
that’s the time to ask so that I won’t get behind on that particular principle since they seem to build on each other.” The expertise of the teacher was also noted as a reason for preferring the teacher as a source of help. As another student stated, “she’s the expert so she should be able to bring it to my terms.”

Several students also indicated that their teacher actively encouraged students to seek help with mathematics, both in and out of the classroom. Many of these students had a very positive perception of their teacher and preferred the teacher as their primary source of help. All of the students interviewed whose teachers encouraged them to seek help did in fact seek help from someone, although it may not have been the teacher who provided the help. It would seem then that the encouragement by the teacher to seek help may influence help-seeking behavior.

Classmates were preferred over tutors because the classmate would have been exposed to the same explanations in class. Also, the students indicated that they were more comfortable asking classmates for help because the classmate “is on the same level.” Thus, the students believed that the classmate was more likely to explain the problem in a way that the students could understand.

There did not appear to be any ambivalence about tutors for the interviewed students: the tutors were either well-liked or not liked at all. Several students expressed concern due to bad experiences with tutors. One student thought that the tutors she had seen did not know any more than she did. The most common problem mentioned, though, was that “they all explain things different and it confuses [the student].” As one student said, “I guess they know what they’re doing but they do it in a different way” from the teacher. The students who liked tutors had found one tutor to work with on a consistent basis rather than just using the tutoring lab. Several of the students interviewed reported that they had never seen a tutor. Because only a small percentage of the total sample was interviewed, the results from the interview cannot be generalized to the entire sample. These results do, however, imply that there may at least be a problem with how tutoring programs, especially tutors who have not been taught by the same instructor, are perceived by the students.

The reasons given for friend or relative being ranked so low were interesting. Several students indicated that they did not have any friends or relatives who knew the material well enough to help them. Of the ones who did have a relative available, one commented that she preferred another source of help over the family member because “he’s too close.”

**Discussion**

The results of this study emphasize the importance of teachers’ relationships with their students in developmental studies mathematics classes. Clearly, the teacher was chosen as the preferred source of help. Although this may be flattering to teachers, it does create a demand for the teacher’s time and attention. Also, the personal factors of race, age, and gender did not affect the rankings of either the teacher or the classmate. Therefore, it would seem that, for this sample, the teachers have created a positive learning environment in which all students and teachers can work well together. Furthermore, teachers are considered approachable by their students both
during and outside of class. Research is needed to further explore the influence of teachers on the help-seeking behavior of their students. In particular, classroom observations and student interviews may assist in identifying which actions of the teacher positively or negatively influence student help-seeking.

In a review of literature, Robert and Thomson (1994) reported that “it has been a common finding that academic support programs which require the student to initiate the contact are particularly unsuccessful with at-risk and minority students” (p.6). Because the tutoring programs available to the students at the participating institutions depended on student-initiated contact, it is surprising that Black students ranked tutors higher than did White students. However, this instrument is measuring student perception of the help-giver, so these results may indicate that Black students perceive tutors to be more helpful even though they may have never seen a tutor for help. This possibility is supported by the interviews of the Black students who indicated that they had never seen a tutor.

The low ranking on the questionnaire of the tutor as a source of help may suggest a need for changes in tutorial programs. Awareness of the influence of race and gender on this ranking may be useful to academic assistance programs as they explore options for improved service. The results of this study should encourage tutorial programs to explore student perceptions of the tutors, better training for tutors, and some type of evaluation of the tutorial services. Additional research is needed to explore the types of programs used by colleges to provide academic assistance for students. Such a study could potentially provide college academic assistance programs with new ideas or, at a minimum, a justification for improving current programs.

With the high ranking of the classmate, perhaps group-oriented study programs should be developed. Gartner and Riessmann (1994) found programs like reciprocal tutoring, which involve classmates tutoring each other, “give all students the opportunity to be tutors and thereby learn through teaching” (p. 58). MacDonald (1993) suggested an additional benefit is that “group tutoring helps students share techniques for learning and so promotes independence” (p.16).

The results of this study support the use of the academic assistance program known as Supplemental Instruction (Arendale, 1994). In this program, student leaders are hired to attend a targeted class and then lead study sessions for the students in that class. The leader is then viewed as a help-giver who is perhaps more accessible than the teacher. Also, the study sessions are group oriented and promote collaborative activities. The Supplemental Instruction program provides opportunities to meet the concerns expressed in the interviews of this study.

Today’s college students have changed from those in college twenty-five years ago (Upcraft, 1996). In particular, there is more diversity among students regarding race, gender, and age. In recognizing the diversity among students, developmental studies educators and academic assistance coordinators should explore offering a variety of resources for providing help for students. Factors such as learning styles and communication skills should be considered in planning these resources. The teacher could also help students explore which type of assistance would be best for them.
Crawford (1993) noted that there is a mistaken belief at all levels of the college program that students enter college with “effective learning-how-to-learn skills” (p. 26). Help-seeking is one such skill that may be encouraged on a daily basis in the classroom. Colleges should examine ways of encouraging students to seek help and provide resources to support the needs of these students. As educators plan programs that support these diverse needs of students, it may be helpful to be reminded of Donald’s (1997) comments about students. She stated that “the characteristics they [the students] bring to the learning situation affect what and how much they will learn, and so they themselves form an important part of the environment for learning” (p. 55).

References


Academic Support: The Bridge and Catalyst for Academic Success and Student Development

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Abstract

Many learning support professionals consider themselves developmental educators. The process of facilitating the academic growth of students is grounded in developmental theory. This chapter discusses how academic assistance programs such as Supplemental Instruction, tutor training, freshman experience programs and collaborative efforts promote the cognitive and personal development of participating students. The authors encourage faculty, academic support staff, Student Affairs, and Academic Affairs to work together to meet the diverse needs of students.

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Academic support is maligned more often than not as “remediation,” but most professionals in academic support consider themselves developmental educators. Our services are based on theoretical foundations of both developmental psychology and learning theory. It is true that we provide tutoring or other academic support in basic skills and content areas according to students’ needs, a tradition going back to the early days of education, and it has been controversial ever since (Boylan, 1988). However, our profession has evolved from research that demonstrates the impact of affective factors on academic preparedness, retention, and ultimate success at the college level. Also impacting the practices of academic support personnel are the theories of cognitive development that suggest that many students are not prepared for the academic demands of college, not because of lack of ability but because of some combination of background and intellectual maturity (Hardin, 1994). Those affective and developmental factors affect cognitive processes at all levels of the learning continuum; therefore, “developmental” is a much more accurate descriptor than “remedial” for what we do. This reliance on both affective and cognitive factors makes academic support programs and personnel the natural bridge between student development and the academic program. The truth is we do not remediate in academic support programs as much as we provide a supportive environment, use psychologically sound teaching and learning strategies, and create a home for the spirit of learning.

The National Association for Developmental Education recognizes six goals for the profession that codify what a seamless experience for a college student might be: (a) To preserve and make possible educational opportunity for each postsecondary learner; (b) To develop in each learner the skills and attitudes necessary for the attainment of academic, career, and life goals; (c) To ensure proper placement by assessing each learner’s level of preparedness for college work; (d) To maintain academic standards by enabling learners to acquire competencies needed for success in mainstream college courses; (e) To enhance the retention of students; and (f) To promote the continued development of cognitive and affective learning

Application of Theory

Who in the academic community, other than the most devout elitist, would argue with these goals? For myriad reasons, however, the college experience does not reflect a collaborative effort to achieve them. Instead, the reality is a polarization of cognitive and personal development as though they are discrete experiences. Student life programs recognize the need for students to develop independence, responsibility, self-esteem, wellness, involvement, and the concomitant acquisition of leadership and life management skills through involvement in campus activities. Academic programs stress attainment of academic skills and knowledge. However, the reality is that students learn in both of these areas of their life. According to Patricia Cross (1996), higher education no longer focuses on student learning. Academic support services, if utilized effectively, can provide a bridge for the gap that exists between the two areas.
Supplemental Instruction

A perfect example of the “bridge theory” is the Supplemental Instruction (SI) model (Martin & Arendale, 1994). Developed at the University of Missouri—Kansas City, the model stresses the development of independent learning through group study. SI leaders are selected by faculty and academic support personnel and trained in group facilitation skills closely allied with student life: learning how to build rapport with students through active listening; providing positive feedback and encouraging students; and demanding student involvement in their own learning. When introducing and practicing these skills during SI training, the developmental educator is borrowing heavily from counseling. When introducing SI leaders to ways of encouraging group involvement and participation, the developmental educator is borrowing heavily from counseling and leadership studies. When SI leaders learn to vary their styles of presentation to adapt to individual differences, SI trainers are borrowing from researchers in psychology and education: learning style theories, cognitive development theories, and special education particularly. And what is the final goal of SI? It is to improve academic success and student retention, certainly, but also to produce learners who are confident of their ability, who are capable of organizing their study time, and who know how to take responsibility for their learning. In the process, those students who are SI leaders are developing leadership and life management skills.

Tutor Training

Many of the same skills are also taught in tutor-training programs. Tutoring is perhaps the oldest and most common component of academic support programs. Professional standards now exist for training tutors in the International Tutor Certification Program sponsored by the College Reading and Learning Association. It is interesting to note that content proficiency is addressed in those standards only in the initial selection of tutors. Thereafter, tutor training focuses on skills drawn from a variety of disciplines. According to Casazza and Silverman (1996), “Although tutor training programs are necessarily diverse and specific to individual institutional settings, the core topics of all tutor training are the tutor’s role, referrals, policies and procedures, special populations, ethics and academic integrity, supervision, and tutor recognition” (p. 128). Information and teaching strategies for these areas draw heavily from college student development theory, sociolinguistics, cognitive theory, motivational theory, counseling, group dynamics, and research on special populations. Evaluation of tutoring programs draws heavily from research methodology in the behavioral sciences.

Freshman Experience Programs

Nowhere, however, can the bridge be more clearly crossed than through freshman experience programs. Of 1,700 institutions responding to a survey published in 1991, two-thirds had freshman experience programs (Fidler & Fidler, 1991). Of those institutions with programs, over half included content related to student life (e.g., test anxiety, career planning, stress management) as well as content related to the academic program (e.g., academic planning, library skills, study skills). Such areas as writing, critical thinking, and an introduction to the
At Blackburn College in Carlinville, Illinois, as well as in many other institutions, the Academic Support unit has provided the impetus for the development of All College 101, Freshman Seminar. In its fourth year, the one-credit class includes many traditional topics: orientation to college, time management and study skills, alcohol and drug issues, sexually transmitted diseases, diversity, and academic planning. Readings are included where appropriate and students are asked to write reactions and analyses of both readings and large group activities. The class is taught by a combination of faculty, student affairs professionals, and administrators; both the Academic Dean and the Dean of Student Life are instructors. All instructors are volunteers who also help plan the course and participate in training and weekly meetings, thus collaborating on a regular basis. Each section of Freshman Seminar elects a representative to the Freshman Council. This Council, co-led by the Director of Student Activities and the Director of the Learning Center, provides the leadership for a freshman convocation presented during the last week of Seminar. It is also from this group that the freshman class officers are elected.

Finally, the Freshman Seminar faculty and student mentors serve as a focal point for the retention efforts of the College. If a student is identified through an early warning system as being at risk of dropping out or failing, the Dean of Academic Affairs notifies the Freshman Seminar instructor, who coordinates efforts to provide support to the at-risk student. Thus, the Freshman Seminar, coordinated through the Academic Support Program, brings together resources from throughout the campus, all of which contribute to the students’ affective and cognitive maturation.

Although many campuses include both student affairs personnel and faculty in their freshman experience courses, others resist. Some freshman experience classes probably should not include Student Affairs personnel as instructors. Classes that are usually three credits and emphasize the academic skills, such as reading, writing, and critical thinking, are probably more appropriately taught by academic personnel. The 1991 University of South Carolina survey (Fidler & Fidler, 1991), however, reports only 21% of the credit-bearing freshman experience courses are three credits; most are one credit, and there is little collaboration in the majority of institutions. Recent discussion on the Freshman Year Experience list-serve underscores the existing situation. When a participant asked for information about colleges and universities that have successfully bridged the gap between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs, the replies suggested that the gap is wide at most institutions. Academic support personnel are logical catalysts. They have one foot in student affairs, the other in academics. They often serve on committees with personnel from both areas of the college or university and have the opportunity to initiate discussion between the two units.

Several factors can enhance the possibility of Student Affairs and Academic Affairs working together. These include:
1. A planning committee composed of faculty, student affairs personnel, administrators, and student leaders can play a key role. At Blackburn College, that committee is the Student Life Committee, chaired by the College Chaplain (who is also a professor of philosophy and religion) and including two additional faculty members (one of whom is the Director of the Learning Center), the Dean of Student Life, two student life staff members, and four student leaders. It was that committee, along with the Admissions Office, that provided the leadership for the development of the current Freshman Seminar. Many other institutions that have successfully bridged the gap also have committees composed of individuals from throughout the campus community.

2. A funding source that does not encroach on anyone’s territory may be needed. If an institution charges an orientation fee, that fee can be raised to support a Freshman Experience Program.

3. Support from the top administrative officials is essential. The president of the college has to support an increase in fees in order for any Board of Directors to approve it.

4. Grassroots support is also critical. Even though the president and deans need to be supportive, they cannot demand a Freshman Experience course and expect cooperation. Faculty may be resistant to any ideas imposed from above.

5. Dissemination of research on retention and student satisfaction should occur on an ongoing basis. Personnel in both Student Affairs and Academic Affairs respond positively to research conducted with attention to methodology and interpretation of results. That research continues to grow and is disseminated through the journals and publications of the Freshman Year Experience staff at the University of South Carolina, the National Center for Developmental Education in Boone, North Carolina, and the professional journals of organizations in Developmental Education and Student Affairs.

6. Voluntary participation of faculty or staff to teach freshman seminar classes is important. Ideally, the most respected faculty and staff should teach such classes, but must not be coerced to do so.

**Collaborative Efforts for Student Support**

Other academic support models that contribute to metacognition as well as affective development include adjunct classes, study groups, computer-assisted instruction, in-class tutoring, cooperative learning, and workshops and laboratories that address content acquisition and personal skills development. According to Terenzini and Pascarella (1994), “If undergraduate education is to be enhanced, faculty members, joined by academic and student affairs administrators, must devise ways to deliver undergraduate education that are as comprehensive and integrated as the ways that students actually learn” (p. 32). Student learning and development is the goal of faculty and staff alike; achieving that goal requires the cooperation of all units of the institution. The mind-set that stakes out territory and defends it against encroachment is detrimental to the growth of students, whereas institutional personnel working side-by-side send a very different message about the values of the institution. Students
quickly understand when various elements of a college or university are in conflict. They may use these conflicts to avoid responsibility, thus hindering their growth; or, just as significantly, they may recognize the lack of concern for students inherent in the conflict and seek out an institution where the student is the central concern.

Campus constituencies need to collaborate to structure the total student experience. Everyone can benefit from that collaboration. Faculty can benefit because students will become more effective and involved learners. College departments can gain added learning resources, in-service training, and practicum and internship opportunities. Academic support enhances the efforts of Student Affairs programs by providing students training in active learning, responsibility, accountability, independence, leadership, professionalism, and skills that minimize personal stress.

What is needed, ultimately, is ongoing dialogue between faculty, student life, and academic support programs. Those of us in academic support programs can be proactive in making that happen. We who are accustomed to building alliances with the varied resources on campus are the natural catalysts to connect developmental and cognitive theory. We can do several things to initiate the process: we can let individual faculty know what we can do for them to expand their instruction beyond the classroom; we can publicize our services on campus; we can publicize our adherence to high professional standards such as those published by the National Association for Developmental Education (Thayer, 1995) to reassure faculty of our credibility; we can continue and expand our research efforts to validate our practices; and we can publicize our successes by providing reports and research results to deans, faculty, and other administrators, especially our presidents. As retention becomes critical in the face of declining enrollments, we may find faculty and Student Affairs staff much more receptive to our ideas. Now may be the opportune time for us to complete our old bridges and start building new ones.

References


Views and Processes
For Integrating Reading and Writing
For Successful Developmental Practice

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Abstract

Integrating reading and writing into one course is a way to help students by providing a new approach quite different from the artificial boundaries of current separated courses. The process of creating such a course requires knowledge of the institution and of the needs of the student population. The curriculum design process must be reviewed and the movement of students through the courses and means of assessment and evaluation have to be determined. The literature provides clear curricular design parameters. Following proper curriculum guidelines and creating objectives and learning strategies in a logical order preserve the course content and credibility. A model reading and writing course with institutional fit is explained.

“It wasn’t accepted. I can’t believe that they just said no, and this was supposed to be such a positive move for the future. I just can’t believe that they didn’t like this course. All that effort!” Christine laments her situation to one of her colleagues and continues, “I’ll never try to do something like this again!”
Has this happened to you? This is a very discouraging situation, especially if your effort is an attempt to integrate the current research and to meet the needs of your students. Developmental educators sometimes feel that they are on the periphery of the legitimate course world, so they can take discouragement of this type very personally.

Developmental educators are constantly looking for formats and procedures that can help them prepare students to be successful in college. Integrating reading and writing into one course is a way to help students by providing a new approach that eliminates the artificial boundaries of current separated courses. But, as for all curriculum change, the educator must have clear views and processes to follow in order to make any change a positive and improved path to the successful education of developmental students. A review of what is important to us as educators in our philosophical goals, perceived student needs, and pressing institutional issues is a way to insure that any courses we create mesh in a positive way with what already exists at our institution. Reviewing the curriculum development process is also important for new and vital implementation of a developmental course such as an integrated reading and writing content course.

Trends in Reading and Writing

Educational history continues to evolve and discussion on reading and writing is not new, having taken place since as early as 1864. But this discussion did not always view reading and writing as modes of learning or as learning necessary for success in future educational endeavors (Quinn, 1995). There are many movements that can be studied, such as the Cooperative Movement of the 1920s. This movement supported interdisciplinary connection or cooperation of teachers to promote successful student learning (Quinn, 1995).

Until the 1950s there was emphasis on an integrated reading and writing approach in education. Then elementary reading teachers, who believed that they had other concerns not addressed by the National Council of Teachers of English, a key professional organization, initiated a separation. This separation eventually became a division between those teaching reading and those in writing. From this division came the formation of the International Reading Association to meet reading concerns. Based on this early split, both reading and writing began and have continued to grow farther and farther apart (Quinn, 1995). As Dias (1990) observed, reading on the college level became the work of reading specialists, removed from the English and writing classroom. There was a division of writing from reading. English teachers began to specialize in one area or the other. Writing became synonymous with English and reading became an even more separate and distinct field of study (Quinn, 1995).

Until the 1970s no mention was made of how important it was for readers to connect with their reading in order to promote meaning. This changed with the work of researchers like LaBerge and Samuels, and was expanded by writers such as Rand Spiro, taking a cognitive perspective on reading and writing. Both the reading and writing arenas experienced similar emerging research leaning toward interactive and constructivist viewpoints (Quinn, 1995). This research has led to the new interest in combining reading and writing that we see today. There are some texts that advocate this integrative approach and there are now many developmental educators looking to forge new curricula using both areas as a realistic basis for student learning.
There are years of negatively patterned activities that have affected students due to the artificial separation of reading and writing (Kutz & Roskelly, 1991). The elementary and high schools have begun their move back to connecting reading and writing. The Whole Language movement was one favorable effort to blend English language study, maintaining that “reading and writing are natural processes that occur as a result of maturation and interaction with the language world” (McCarthey & Raphael, 1992, p.12). Though this trend has met with some resistance from older teachers and some parents, there were many teachers who advocated this connectiveness as a positive way to teach language. Today, college faculty are still dealing with students who have these attitudes from separated reading and writing study that altered students’ abilities to use both as successful modes of learning. Like elementary teachers, many developmental educators look for more ways to connect reading and writing to better educate our students.

At the college developmental level, there has been interest in these changes in public education, and many of those teachers who have taught both areas have experimented with the connection of reading and writing. Tierney (1992) states that much of the move to integrate the areas has been instigated by teachers, and that this trend toward blending reading and writing is currently reflected in discussion among developmental educators and in curricular changes.

**Philosophical Issues**

Curriculum comes out of a clear personal and institutional philosophy that guides important decisions that have to be made throughout the process of course production. Knowing your students, your thoughts about those students as individuals, and seeing the ideal future outcomes that students should gain from participation in their experience within your course and curriculum are important to an ability to develop courses that truly educate.

**A Holistic Viewpoint**

For those developmental educators contemplating the integration of reading and writing, it is a return to the ideas of a holistic model. The individual has to be taught how to use language, both by reading and writing as modes or means to learn content areas in various fields. Because many English teachers are familiar with holistic ideas on grading, it is an easy transition to look at the entire picture of how a student learns skills used for communication and interpretation of the written word. Any problems seem to stem from the existence of two separate areas of rules that now guide both the reading and writing processes. Both demand practice of skills so that students have some reasonable way of applying those skills. Holistic also implies that the overall view of how a student is applying skills makes a difference.

**Basic and Higher Level Skills**

The true integration of reading and writing would demand that one have equal understanding of the various levels of skills within those two areas as they are taught now. The danger would be in the individual teacher’s preparation in either reading or writing, because many times the degrees that people undertake will follow separate directions. For any true integration of this information, there would have to be application of those principles and rules that govern the language when it is both read and written. This might be easier said than done.
The problem is the need to know when to switch from basic rote skills to those higher level thinking and creative skills that become necessary for college study. For example, grammar instruction is not effective until the student recognizes why it is important to the entire writing process. The ability to pick an organizational pattern for an essay may be just as helpful as concentrating on the meaning of various sentences.

**A Shift in Responsibility**

There are many differences from high school to college and one of them is the refocusing of responsibility back onto students for their learning. Students can benefit from this idea if they realize the importance of reading and writing for learning.

For developmental educators, it is important to recognize that this shift in responsibility should reflect a change in the way that information is presented to students. Learning in the same way they did in high school will not promote an opportunity for growth for students at the beginning college level. There is a need to do something different, to attempt to recognize and promote the students’ maturity and to educate students regarding the link between these basic skills and the standard curriculum. Obviously there is a need to break the cycle of misunderstanding and the lack of motivation that some students have experienced. They must see the value of their education in order to change an unsuccessful pattern. If we stress that all learning is good, then there should not be an artificial preference for one skill over the other. Both should be considered equal in importance to the student. Our expectation is that we want integration of skills in content courses, yet we teach these skills separately.

**Interdisciplinary Trends**

The interdisciplinary trends in higher education that we now see are similar in that perhaps our educational system has been following guidelines that are too artificial. The separation of reading and writing may illustrate one of the most artificial of such situations. We have often heard it said that reading is thinking and also that writing reflects the thinking of the individual. They are not separate entities.

**The Equality of Reading and Writing**

Separation of reading and writing from the standard curriculum is a difficulty for developmental students. Teaching separate developmental reading and writing courses usually leaves reading in a predicament because in many institutions the first freshman English course is basic writing and the second is literature. Some professors mix both reading and writing in the first course and there is definitely the mix of reading and writing skills in the second course. Sometimes students cannot see how their developmental reading courses are preparing them for this sequence, due to the way in which the first English course is taught. Some institutions do not know what to do with the basic reading course because of this dilemma. Combining reading and writing can help promote a realistic view of the importance of both skills.

**Institutional Issues**

There are many institutional issues that must be addressed as decisions are made about the possibility of integrating reading and writing.
Credit

Credit is a major issue. Most campuses offer imputed (non-transferable credit) or nondegree credit for developmental courses. This usually indicates that the skills being learned are prerequisites to the learning of the standard first year curriculum. Students usually do not appreciate taking these courses and will try to avoid such choices. If students are required to take two separate courses, one in reading and one in writing, they might feel as if they are penalized rather than helped by the opportunity to improve skills.

Taking fewer non-degree credits might be appealing to students. A combined reading and writing course could be taught for fewer credits. However, this might not be a wise idea unless there are other changes such as a lab (two hours for every one hour of credit) that can give students the practice they need to gain some experience with new skills. At some institutions, a four or five credit course might replace two three-credit courses, for example.

Financial Aid

Financial aid is also an issue for institutions to consider. Though aid guidelines have been responsive by allowing some developmental classes as legitimate coursework necessary to the student’s success, there is now a tightening of financial aid rules and limitations on the number of possible academic terms enrolled in developmental work. Thus, the issues of credit and financial aid become intertwined, and may lead students to become increasingly resistant to placement in developmental courses.

Trained Personnel

Recruiting properly trained personnel who can do an equally good job helping students with reading and writing is not easy. First, developmental educators are still perceived as second class citizens in many institutions. Positions in developmental education are often low paying, with no job security and thus no stature, resulting in quick turnover. Second, personnel may still be educated for either reading or writing without equal training in both so that the key integration of reading and writing can take place. These are major employment issues that have been discussed within the profession for some time.

Realistic Connections

Trying to relate this work in reading and writing holistically to real situations is sometimes difficult for the practitioner. There have been many educational moves to relate what students need to actual applications. This type of movement probably needs to be brought to the college level for developmental courses and would be very helpful on the standard curriculum level.

Adult Learners

Adult students especially (and some traditional age students) worry about the amount of time it will take to finish their degrees. Adult learners are students over the age of 25 who have broken the pattern of continuous formal education and have reentered the system with a variety of life experiences unlike those of traditional students. They come back with personal time limitations and specific educational needs and their concern for a short and attainable educational program can be related to concerns caused by family considerations as well as
disability, veterans’, or other benefit restrictions or loss of regular income. Adult learners would also be able to benefit from the integration of separate reading and writing courses into one course for two reasons. By combining two separate courses into one course for fewer non-degree credits, students might not believe they are losing valuable time. A more important reason is that adult learners have the ability to benefit more from integrated learning (Dinmore, 1997) and can benefit from learning tied to real life situations, desiring an “immediacy of application” (Cross, 1981, p. 189).

Institutional Tradition

The processes of the institution are often issues themselves. Tradition and past practice affect how new courses are viewed and how they fit the existing framework of the institutional organization. Fitting the course into the institutional pattern of courses as well as accommodating faculty and staff schedules is important. Usually there are problems with old “past practice” workload hours for those faculty who are teaching the traditional three-hour courses.

Placement

It is a fair assumption that to have appropriate placement into any developmental course demands some sort of basic skills assessment procedure. The institution makes decisions based on a variety of factors including placement testing, transcripts, interviews, or other demonstration of the skills. Though the choice of factors used is based on institutional history and preference, the only issue seems to be trying to use multiple indicators or factors. Using more factors gives a picture of the different aspects of the student’s abilities and can aid in the process. To accommodate a move toward a reading and writing course, consideration has to focus on factors highlighting each skills area or on an overall view of both areas.

Curriculum Development

Identifying Needs

The notion that an integrated reading and writing course will be offered can be a positive move for the institution. However, there is a process by which the course should be put in place. There is no question that a needs assessment is required. The ideal system would be to have the standard curriculum faculty identify those skills that they feel are necessary for student success. This procedure not only helps the developmental education faculty, but it also helps the standard curriculum faculty members rethink and verbalize exactly what skills they want their students to possess. This needs assessment can help strengthen the teaching process as well as the coordination of courses. It is also necessary for valid assessment of learning outcomes and teaching effectiveness in the regular courses.

Outcomes and Goals

Besides identification of skills, a review of real goals and their prioritization should be discussed by all faculty involved. Often this means going beyond the identified skills to the broader perspective of course outcomes and mission. Goals will be based on the institutional
philosophy and mission. Input at this level comes from faculty and staff as well as knowledge of student needs. Students can assist in telling us what they need, but this demands taking risks. Asking previous students what did and did not work is a refreshing way to view what we think we are doing as professionals.

Evaluating the course as a whole rather than merely as the sum of its component parts is important. One can start with the desired end result and then brainstorm all the steps to that end. This is actually a productive method. We have all experienced courses that did not seem to have a main focus or direction. Our developmental students need to see the whole picture. The developmental educator can help especially if the course is organized in a manner that also leads the students through a logical progression of their connection to the “real world.” The skills taught within an integrated reading and writing course are extensive and critical to academic success. If these skills are not connected for students, they continue to be problem areas; students might not learn to use strategies to the proper degree.

Objectives Lead to Strategies

Which comes first, the writing of clear course objectives or the developmental educator’s “bag of tricks?” This is a serious question and could be the cause of differing quality in courses. As Diamond (1989) suggests, “Limiting the original design to meet anticipated constraints tends to limit the creativity and openness of the process and thus results in an inferior product” (p.8). Not all developmental educators have a good grasp of curriculum development. There might be a tendency to write lessons and courses around the knowledge base and current strategies that an individual or particular group of teachers possess. Educators often tend toward the classroom situation with which they would be most familiar, rather than one that responds to broader student needs.

Determining student needs and desired outcomes through appropriate needs assessment should come before the writing of curricula. Writing goals based on student needs and curriculum outcomes can produce a clarity that maintains curriculum integrity. These goals can then be the source of our clearly written objectives, which can contain the behavior, conditions, and even the standard of performance that we can expect from our students (McBeath, 1992).

After course objectives are clearly stated, classes can be developed with all those “appropriate” strategies that we have stored away during our careers. So many times, it is possible to lose sight of the bigger picture, knowing that we ourselves might have to develop our strategies or even change our long developed image of what students need as the educational needs of our students change.

A Model for a Reading and Writing Course

At our campus we have gone through a curricular process as we have worked on developing a reading and writing course. We did have to review many of the institutional issues as well as credit course requirements and student needs. We closely followed some of the processes described by McBeath (1992), who guides the reader through greatly simplified instructional and evaluation material. We began by looking at and thinking through the entire process of a student’s move into and out of the developmental course as well as the fit of the course to previous developmental courses and to the standard content courses.
Often we restrict our creativity if we review limited parameters concerning our courses. This does not prepare the developmental educator to answer the bigger questions concerning their courses. There are many times when we have heard faculty say that they wish they could confine themselves to worrying only about their courses and not about all the outside campus issues. But this is not the way to insure that your course is comparable, validated, or even appropriate in the scheme of the campus curriculum. “While we will be focusing on courses and curriculum, we should also keep in mind that what goes on in the classroom cannot be separated from the total instructional experience of students” (Diamond, 1989, p.3). We do have to try to go beyond our own courses to respond to all possible questions concerning our students and our course.

**Visualizing**

Creating a visual of the course and the student movement into and out of the course can give the developmental practitioner a better handle on the fit of the course. A sample visual of our course, the assessment techniques for placement and student flow in and out of the developmental course, as well as exit criteria, are included in Figure 1.

![Integrated Reading and Writing](chart)

**Figure 1 Course map.**

From the top, our first step is the assessment process. This particular course placement depends on the current ASSET test of the American College Testing Program (ACT), transcript evaluation (Ratcliff, 1996) by our English Department, a writing sample, information reading survey, and a survey of student needs administered by our Registrar’s Office. The Student Needs Survey provides data on the student’s expectations concerning study, ability, and outcomes. The use of several indicators like these gives a broader and more extensive picture of the student than could be obtained through one technique or instrument.
Based on the results of the assessment step, students may place in any of three situations as indicated in columns 1, 2, or 3 of Figure 1. If students need intensive help in both reading and writing, they are placed in the traditional separated courses so that they can learn basics in both. Whether it is realistic to maintain separate reading and writing courses along with the integrated course is still under discussion. When students have successfully learned the necessary concepts, they can move into the integrated reading and writing course. Or, if students are in need of general improvement in both areas, they are placed in the integrated reading and writing course. This course assists in self-regulation of learning for the students through use of specific strategies. It also uses study skills, reading comprehension, and the writing of papers as necessary preparation for a successful move to the first year curriculum. If student skills are acceptable, they are placed in the standard first year curriculum. Some students drop out, as shown in lines to the bottom lines of Figure 1.

Evaluation methods, as depicted in Figure 1, include a student interview, a readministration of the ASSET, and an aggregate of student final exams, attitude inventories, and a portfolio of the student’s work. These evaluation methods not only assess the individual student, but in their aggregate form give the instructors important information on how the integrated reading and writing course is achieving its goals. Also, as can be noted in the box labeled Intermediate Evaluation, this includes a blind study on all students finishing the first year standard curriculum (correlating grades for students unidentified as to having taken or not taken the integrated reading and writing course), attitude inventories, midterm grade check, and teacher interviews with the first year standard curriculum teachers. Use of all these techniques can help add credibility to the course and build support for a course as well as allowing for modifications in the course when necessary.

The final box represents the opportunity to study both those students who have successfully followed the developmental curriculum and graduated and those students who were unable to progress. Both groups can give back important information through interviews and surveys about their life circumstances. This type of evaluation can give legitimate and long term validity to the work being done in a course such as Integrated Reading and Writing.

As is shown, just working on course content and creating a course does not result in successful developmental practice. Unless the entire process of how the course works for students and ways to both assess student placement and evaluate the course success are well thought out, even the most creative course might not be accepted.

Implications for Developmental Education

As developmental education teachers, we should constantly be rethinking what we do and why. There are ways that we can help our students be successful. Perhaps, if we find ourselves doing the same things without any really significant results, we should seek change. Our thinking must be more tailored to what will work for our students. We cannot do what we have always done and we cannot move in a new direction unless we do it in a researched and logical manner.

Quality training for developmental education professionals is always important and instruction in curriculum design is one area that will always be critical to successful practice.
There are resources such as Diamond’s (1989) book on curriculum design and McBeath’s (1992) book that offer excellent guidelines for a projects such as integrating reading and writing.

Removing institutional barriers requires creative solutions. Developmental educators have to be calm and consistent as they forge ahead with new changes to the curriculum. They must be knowledgeable about all the philosophical and institutional issues and go about addressing the challenges posed. Work with non-developmental staff is critical to having the efforts of the developmental educator pay off. It is important to forge bonds and network with the faculty who teach the core curriculum.

As indicated, with creative thought and a knowledge of curriculum, institutional, and philosophical issues, courses can be created for integrating reading and writing to facilitate student success. During the next two years, our campus will be experimenting with our integrated course and as this occurs across many institutions, it will hopefully set the stage for successful developmental practice for student achievement.

References


Bridge: Summer Retention Program for Pre-College African American Students

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Abstract

The Bridge program at Georgia State University has served for 13 years as a four-week summer enrichment program for African American students who are accepted to enroll the next fall. The objectives of this program integrate college orientation and academic assistance with social inclusion and personal success for student participants. It is important not only to first recruit African American students and encourage them to pursue a college education but also to give these students assistance so they may be successful in their college career. Instruction in composition, reading, and mathematics is blended with enrichment and orientation activities. The curriculum focuses on issues most important to African American students and reflects the most current research specifically involving African American students. Multi-level evaluations are included and provide optimistic outlooks for the future of these students.

Nationally, participation of African American students in higher education has been increasing over the past two decades. From 1984 to 1994 enrollment by African American students increased by 35%. Yet, this was the lowest of the increases by any minority groups. Although matriculation is increasing, in 1994 only 7% of all bachelor degrees in
the United States was awarded to African Americans. The gap between graduation rates of Whites and African Americans was still more than 20% (Carter & Wilson, 1996).

Howe (Thompson, 1988) reports that after the Higher Education Act of 1965, “there was a certain naivete in the expectation that all you had to do was open the door and everyone could successfully walk through it” (p.16). Minority students entered new environments and totally new social and psychological surroundings. For many, higher education was not part of their culture or their understanding. Early on, educators developed programs to assist students through this adjustment process. Such programs as Upward Bound and Student Support Services, both of which are part of the federal Trio Program, have shown some success.

Though there now is greater enrollment of African American students, many are placed in developmental or remedial classes based on standardized tests. Weiss (1987) posits, “Tests are obviously powerful gatekeepers” (p.113). Astin (1982), in a national survey, has already concluded that students’ academic aptitude, as measured by standard admission tests, does not show substantial relationship to outcome. The downside of the attempt to better prepare students is that some students placed in these classes become instances of the self-fulfilling prophecy. Expectations and self-concept are lowered. The very tests that allow admission are the roadblocks to future educational activities. Instruction in these low-level courses sometimes leaves students further and further behind (Weiss, 1987). It is obvious that something more than ability is responsible for success of African American students. As a result of this type of research, higher education is paying increased attention not only to access but also to retention and success rates of students.

Noel and Levitz (1985) say that academic underpreparedness is only one of the reasons for attrition. Other reasons are: (a) academic boredom and indecision about what to study, (b) problems of adjustment and college student incompatibility, (c) unrealistic expectations regarding college, and (d) ineffective curricula and pedagogies. Miller (1990) suggests early, pervasive attention, and encouragement to students with these issues.

One program that attempts to affect some of these issues with African American students is called Bridge at Georgia State University (GSU). The objectives of this program and others that are the most successful integrate academic assistance, based not only on skill acquisition but also on critical thinking, with social inclusion for student participants (Lauridsen, 1982). Delpit (1986), a leading researcher on African American learning and a member of the GSU faculty, states “skills are a necessary but insufficient aspect of Black and minority students’ educations. Students need the technical skills to open doors, but they need to be able to think critically and creatively to participate in the meaningful and potentially liberating work inside those doors” (p. 384). Stratton (1990) and others (Astin, 1977; Astin, 1993; Heath, 1968; Pascarella, 1985) found that social interaction in higher education does change students’ attitudes and values leading to higher self-esteem, more interest in intellectual matters, and development of higher educational aspirations. The success of the Bridge program is based on the combination of these academic and social activities.
History

For 13 years, the Bridge program has served as a four-week summer enrichment program for African American students who are accepted to enroll the next fall at Georgia State University. As a result of the University System of Georgia’s noncompliance to the 1978 Desegregation Plan, Bridge was begun in 1984 at six institutions across Georgia. It was funded by the Georgia Board of Regents and was designed for recruitment and retention of African American students. It was important not only to first recruit African American students and encourage them to pursue a college education, but also to give these students assistance so they might be successful in their college career. The program was administered by the Division of Developmental Studies and was limited to African American students who were accepted to the university and would be required to take at least one developmental course.

In the early years, Bridge was a nonresidential program and recruitment activities were emphasized. These activities included informing local school counselors about the Bridge program, visiting high schools, and talking to students during the academic year before Bridge. At that time it was decided that the program would focus on enrichment activities that would orient students to college life and the campus, help improve students’ attitudes and their self-confidence, reduce academic anxiety, help clarify career goals, encourage the development of group cohesion, and encourage peer support systems (Singer & Jensen, 1984).

The second goal was to improve students’ basic academic skills. Instruction in composition, reading, and mathematics was blended with the enrichment activities. Students who showed marked improvement in the program could advance to a higher level developmental composition or reading course. Following Thompson’s (1988) requirements for support—first enable students to do it then help them to live with it, Bridge combined academic, personal, and social support.

By 1993 the goals of Bridge had changed somewhat. The student pool came from students who had already been admitted to the university. Therefore, Bridge did not play as large a role in recruitment as it did in the early years. However, many students who have been accepted to a university choose not to attend. The American Council on Education (Carter & Wilson, 1996) reports that only 35.5% of African American high school students attend college. By offering these students a free Bridge program, students were more likely to confirm their enrollment. Table 1 shows sample recruitment, enrollment, and completion statistics. Although the statistics were collected differently through the years, data show steady participation in Bridge until 1996, when admission criteria were increased for the university. It also shows large percentages of students completing the Bridge program and registering for the following fall quarter.

Thus, the major goal for Bridge became retention. These retention efforts would reflect the most current research specifically involving African American students. In addition to the content developed over the first 10 years, the curriculum began to focus on issues most important to African American students. In agreement with Miller (1990), the program began to demonstrate more sensitivity toward and recognition of the historical and cultural contexts that
African American students bring with them. It could not simply be the “immersion of ethnically diverse students in the knowledge bases and value systems of the dominate culture” (Miller, 1990, p.8). The name change of the academic department to Learning Support Programs was indicative of the change in mission to provide support for all students who need additional assistance to be successful. Bridge was still an appropriate method of providing support.

Recent Objectives

The 1996 program tried to incorporate many of the past successes into a meaningful program. An interdisciplinary theme ran throughout the program. Academic reading, writing, research, and even mathematics activities became centered on the study of historical and current issues of African American heritage, particularly the Civil Rights Movement. These studies were accentuated with a trip to Birmingham, Alabama to see the Civil Rights Institute, the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, the Jazz Hall of Fame, and Kelly Ingram Park, where many demonstrations were held during the Civil Rights Movement.

The three areas of objectives for the program are: college orientation, academic success, and personal success. In the area of college orientation, students should become familiar with the campus, learn of assistance and organizations available on campus, gain access to university staff, acquire accounts for and learn to access the university computer network, the Internet,
electronic-mail, and learn to use the library and its On Line Library Information System (OLLI). Some of the academic success objectives are to help students build a collegial atmosphere, develop a peer support system, and learn to work collaboratively; to encourage students to participate in discussions, formulate and express their opinion; to analyze and synthesize historic issues and compare them to current issues orally and in writing; to write about experiences, both real and vicarious, interview others and write reports; to strengthen specific academic skills in reading, composition and mathematics; to learn to use the graphing calculator; and to improve general study skills. Areas considered in personal development are to improve students’ self-confidence, reduce anxiety, brainstorm with successful local professionals, foster realistic academic and career goals, help students find ways to achieve these goals, improve attitudes toward mathematics, and improve their problem solving skills.

**Recruitment**

Recruitment activities for Bridge always begin in early spring. In April, possible candidates for the program are identified. The program is scheduled to run all day for approximately four weeks, five days of the week. This always presents a problem in recruitment because many students have obligations to summer jobs.

By May between 100 and 200 students are identified as eligible for Bridge. Bridge brochures and invitation letters are sent to these students inviting their response. Students who are deemed eligible are African Americans who have been admitted for the fall quarter, have never attended the university or any other college, and who may have developmental studies or learning support requirements.

Students respond to the brochure by sending in their registration forms. Generally there are more female respondents than males, so phone calls are made to improve recruitment. Statistics from the American Council on Education (Carter & Wilson, 1996) report this discrepancy in enrollment of women over men is a national issue by saying that African American women are more likely to enroll than men. By early June most of the students who will participate are registered for Bridge.

**Curriculum**

The Bridge students are divided into two groups to receive instruction. The students exhibit a wide range of ability in the academic areas, making some individual or group instruction necessary. Two upperclass peer advisors are chosen to help facilitate this process. One peer advisor is assigned to each group. The peer advisors attend all classes and assist with the group. Three academic classes are offered: Study Skills Seminar, Language Arts, and Mathematics.

**Study Skills Seminar**

The Bridge program includes the course, Seminar in Personal and Academic Development. Some students in Bridge may be required to take this course the next fall. If students successfully
complete this course during Bridge, they may exempt it during the fall. With the knowledge from this course, students can start their academic career at the university with the advantage of newly acquired academic and personal skills that will help them succeed in college. The course emphasizes study skills, active thinking processes, time management, goal setting, memory development, and techniques for remembering, listening, note taking, test preparation, test-taking strategies, library competency, basic word processing skills, and building self-esteem (Logan, 1996). The text used for this course is Strategies for College Success (Starke, 1993). Students also participate in exercises to familiarize themselves with university support services, faculty as resource persons, college catalog and organization, and career exploration through research and interviews with professionals who work in the field (Logan, 1996). Students also learn to use the OLLI computer library system by completing activities in the book, The On-line Library Information System (Logan & Blumemthal, 1994). All this is conducted in the atmosphere of practicing the ethics of good scholarship.

The research component for students in the study skills seminar is designed to illustrate the connection of academic studies with real life. Students are asked to systematically investigate a career by completing a set of tasks. These tasks include identifying a career and finding the requirements for working in that career (including college courses required), determining whether licensing is required, finding possible salaries, opportunities available, and chances for employment.

Second, students are required to find companies, agencies, or institutions that offer jobs in the particular career they have chosen, use reference materials in the library to discover the future demand for workers in that field, and list journals or other publications they can consult to keep abreast of changes, opportunities, and developments in the career.

Third, students need to contact and interview a person who is employed in their chosen career. Each student creates a questionnaire that they use during the interview. The questionnaire usually covers such issues as influences that helped the person select their profession, skills needed, responsibilities, working conditions, hours, salary ranges, and chances for advancement. The collection of such information helps students become more realistic about career choices and, in some cases, helps them realize the necessity for altering their choices (Logan, 1996).

**Language Arts**

The language arts component emphasizes efficient reading, writing, and study skills through a main-idea approach, focusing on the paragraph as the primary unit of communication. This approach assumes reading and writing to be related communication skills with each supporting and enhancing the other. In recent years, the language arts classes remained in the computer lab for regular instruction, which allowed students to use word processing software on a daily basis. This access to computers allowed for short, in-class writing assignments that developed computer literacy and enhanced writing skills as well. The instructional content for Bridge relates primarily to the African American experience from slavery through the movement for
social equality. This content highlights the achievements of African Americans and stresses this group’s contribution to all aspects of American culture. Other instruction stresses test-taking skills and essay question preparation. At the conclusion of the program, Bridge students take an essay test over historical content similar to tests encountered in college history and literature courses. Bridge offers the opportunity to integrate classroom instruction and social interaction with a variety of external learning experiences, field trips, and guest speakers from various professions. The broad nature of this program offers a learning experience far greater than that of traditional college-level instruction, and students make unusual progress in reading comprehension and writing skills in spite of the relatively short time period provided.

Text materials include exercises from the Newsweek Educational Service and essays and articles provided by the instructor for in-class analysis. Although the course focuses on the Civil Rights Movement, there is a broader effort to examine other issues of discrimination, gender-related issues, and negative stereotyping of minorities by the news media, television, and motion pictures. Audiovisuals include the Les Brown motivational tape, “You Deserve,” the full-length movie, “The Tuskegee Airmen,” and the “Eyes on the Prize” video concerning the Montgomery bus boycott and racial violence during the 1950s. Students also view a tape on African Americans, including Mohammed Ali, Wilma Rudolph, and Oscar Robertson, participating in the 1960 Olympics. These videos serve as a basis for class discussion and writing exercises and as a preparation for the trip to the Civil Rights Institute in Birmingham, Alabama.

Prior to the Birmingham visit, students read and discuss Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “Letter from the Birmingham Jail,” which contains the complex, metaphorical language that Dr. King employed so effectively as a speaker and writer. The writing task for this material consists of an application of Dr. King’s philosophy of nonviolence to each student’s experience. In a self-examination exercise, students look at their own lives for instances of perceived discrimination that proved to be in error. The purpose of this exercise is to encourage students to gather the facts before drawing conclusions.

In the final essay, students are urged to react to aspects of their culture that they did not know about prior to participating in the Bridge program. These essays usually reflect a content and emotional intensity that is unusual for entry-level college students. Many of the students show a great deal of progress in reading and writing during the Bridge program and they will be allowed to move up in their placement in theses courses during the fall quarter (Phillips, 1996).

Mathematics

Because the students’ mathematical abilities are so varied, activities for the mathematical component of the program are chosen carefully. Exercises and activities are chosen so all the students have the opportunity to participate. The exercises stress reasoning, strategy, tenacity, and logic in a variety of situations, not necessarily a particular mathematical content.

Bridge presents the perfect opportunity to use some of the techniques suggested by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics’ Standards (NCTM, 1989). Collaborative learning, use of technology, and activities that relate to life on the university campus are stressed. Tate
(1994) suggests that traditionally African American students have been provided few opportunities to connect mathematics to their lives and experience. He also suggests that pedagogy for African American students has been hampered by, among other things, less opportunity to use technology.

Some Bridge students have never had the opportunity to work collaboratively, so instruction in cooperative learning is necessary, including possible roles for each participant and goals for group work. A change in attitude is necessary for students who have perceived collaboration negatively or as cheating. The move into the collegiate atmosphere of participatory learning will allow the students to use these techniques in future classes.

The use of technology has become an important part of the mathematics curriculum. Calculator use and problem solving are essential parts of Bridge. Several days are spent learning to use the TI-82 graphing calculator. A condensed version of the TI-82 Learning Guide (Stratton, & Massey, 1995) is used. Students work exercises collaboratively and independently using the calculator to learn about functions. The techniques and information about functions they gain can be transferred to their college mathematics courses.

In an effort to increase students’ ability to recognize mathematics in their lives, a variety of activities are used. As an ice-breaking activity, students are asked to use Venn diagrams to describe their personal preferences, such as in movies, food, and clothing. Then these preferences are discussed. Students learn to calculate predicted grade point average or class averages. Tate (1994) also suggests that mathematics curriculum and pedagogy rarely prepare the African American student to engage in authentic contexts of democracy. One of the mathematical activities with a political theme asked students to evaluate state redistricting plans as they would affect minority voting strength. The use of a portfolio as an alternative to traditional methods of grading has proven to be successful. Students became more responsible for their own learning and chose to self-assess the items to be included into the portfolio.

Several sources were used to assist students develop problem solving techniques. Problem Solving and Comprehension (Whimbey & Lochhead, 1986), Winning at Math (Nolting, 1991), and Studying for Mathematics, (Hart & Najee-ullah, 1995) provided activities and methods for problem solving. The students work a problem. The strategies used (often there were many) are discussed and rated as to effectiveness; then similar problems are worked. Strategies such as working backwards, finding a pattern, drawing a picture, and using formulas are discussed. These exercises give students new methods to add to their problem solving repertoire.

At the beginning of Bridge, the students take a math attitude test from Studying for Mathematics (Hart & Najee-ullah, 1995). Students discuss prevalent attitudes about mathematics, which ones they feel, and which ones they do not recognize in themselves. Often at the end of Bridge the same survey is given and any changes are discussed.
Student Support

The Learning Laboratory

The Learning Support Programs’ Learning Laboratory is available to Bridge students during the summer enrichment program as well as during the rest of their enrollment at the university. At the lab students can receive individualized instruction in mathematics, composition, and reading. Students work closely with the lab coordinator and upper class and graduate student tutors. Students are encouraged to recognize the special advantages of their experience in the lab (Chapman, 1995).

INCEPT

INCEPT is the formal freshman orientation program that is provided for all university students. The objectives of this two-day program include providing a variety of information about the university and its services. The INCEPT session that Bridge students attend includes many other freshmen. This opportunity gives the Bridge students the sense of being a part of a multi-cultural university community.

Academic Advisement and Counseling

Students attend a standard Learning Support Program orientation session during INCEPT. At this session students are told about the policies governing placement in, progress through, and exit from Learning Support Programs. They are informed of their registration status and register for courses. Students consult the Learning Support Programs’ academic advisors many times during Bridge to answer their questions. Informally, the peer advisors also provide academic advisement. Counseling about curriculum, class choice, financial aid and extracurricular activities is provided through INCEPT. Personal counseling is provided throughout Bridge by the Learning Support Program’s staff counselors.

Special Events

Opening Ceremony

A special opening ceremony with brunch is held on the first day of Bridge. The members of the Bridge staff are introduced and each of them speaks to the students about the goals and prospective activities of the program. The students introduce themselves and get a chance to meet, learn more about each other, and begin their journey as colleagues at the university. Leaders of INCEPT inform the students about the special INCEPT day for Bridge students. The objective of this opening ceremony is to create an atmosphere of passage and belonging to a new culture, that of the university.
Touch The Earth Challenge Program

The first Friday special activity is a group-building experience at a university park. The Touch the Earth program uses the rope course facility at the park. The activities build self-confidence and team effort. The students are divided into three groups and each group is given a problem to solve that presents a challenge and requires close teamwork. Afterwards the groups eat lunch and discuss the effects of the experience. During this time a film on African American participation in the 1960 Olympics is shown and the students discuss team work and excellence.

Visit by Community Professionals

One of the special Friday events is a visit from several African American professionals from Atlanta. In the past some of the speakers have included former United Nations Ambassador, Andrew Young; Phil Hibbert, Assistant Superintendent in Charge of Technology for Cobb County Schools; Sonya Johnson, the only female Georgia Boxing Commissioner; George Howell, an attorney who is renovating housing in the historic Auburn Avenue area; and author Dori Sanders. From the university, Dr. Lisa Delpit, well-known writer in the area of teaching and learning of African American students, has spoken about the learning experiences that can be available at the university.

Talks by Representatives from University Programs

Students need to know about the services available to them on the campus. For that purpose, several colleagues present information to the students about the services provided by their offices. Representatives from Human Resources advise students about jobs on campus, allow the students to apply for jobs, and tell them how to go about getting campus work. The Cooperative Education program representatives explain the co-op program. Advisors from the Counseling Center talk to the students about all the programs available at their facility. Finally, representatives from African American Programs and Services give an informative talk about the services their office provides for students.

The Civil Rights Institute

Students and Bridge staff report that their most rewarding experience is the visit to Birmingham, Alabama’s Kelly Ingram Park, the location of many of the demonstrations during the 1960s, the Civil Rights Institute, the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, and the Jazz Hall of Fame. The Institute chronicles the civil rights struggle in Alabama from the 1920s to the present and contains replicas and actual paraphernalia, from drinking fountains marked “white” and “colored,” to the bus that was bombed in the Freedom Ride, to the jail cell from which Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote the “Letter from a Birmingham Jail.” This is always a moving experience for all the students.

Last year Bridge was fortunate to have Dr. Shirlene Holmes, professor at the university, writer and actress, accompany the group. Students read some of her work before meeting her on the trip. During the walk through the park, Dr. Holmes related some of her memories of the
events during the Civil Rights struggle. Next, the group went through the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, the location of one of the most notorious bombings in the 1960s. The church has made a film that chronicles the events leading up to and including the bombing, which killed four young girls in their Sunday school class, along with the search for and the conviction of one of the people responsible. Finally, the group toured the Jazz Hall of Fame, which displays much of the memorabilia from the birth of the jazz movement in the South (Chapman, 1995).

**Closing ceremony**

The Bridge program closes with one of the most inspiring events of the program. Assisted by the peer advisors, Bridge students plan and implement the ceremony. Students participate by reading and reciting some of their own or others’ favorite writings. Others contribute musically. Each student is recognized with a certificate and a gift for their special talents during the program.

**Staffing**

The Bridge program is staffed by a mix of full-time and part-time faculty members from the Department of Learning Support Programs. The Director chooses three faculty members who teach mathematics, study skills seminar, and language arts. A multi-cultural mix of professors provides the students with a preview of the variety of faculty they will meet in the university. As Miller (1990) found, it is important for minority students to know minority faculty members; they can become informal role models and mentors. It is also important for minority students to experience professors of other ethnic backgrounds (some for the first time) because they will experience a variety of ethnicities at the university. Some of these faculty have been working with the Bridge program for many years; others are recruited for their new, innovative ideas. Several years ago the Language Arts professor began emphasizing the Civil Rights movement as content for reading and writing. Since that time all the faculty have collaborated on the theme of African American issues for Bridge.

Two new peer advisors are chosen each year. Often students who were formerly in the Bridge program like to serve the new Bridge students in this way. Successful role models are a necessary component of the Bridge program. These peer advisors enthusiastically complete their responsibilities, attend classes with the Bridge students, and participate in all the special activities. The peer advisors provide information from a student’s perspective. They answer questions about typical assignments, time management, contacts, and, of course, social activities. They are respected and appreciated by the students. Another valuable member of the Bridge team is a graduate research assistant who has general responsibilities for making plans such as making room reservations, contacting presenters, scheduling, and collecting data for assessment.
Facilities

There are certain facilities that are necessary for a successful Bridge program. A variety of classroom space is needed. Language arts and mathematics classes meet in computer classrooms part of the session. The other classes are held in regular classrooms. Space for special events and the opening and closing ceremonies is also required. The Learning Support Programs’ Learning Laboratory is used for group study and computer access out of classes. In addition, there are space and tutors available in the Learning Laboratory’s tutoring suite. Students are issued identification cards that permit them to use the library and the university computer system.

Evaluation

Each year evaluations are scheduled on several levels. The Director writes a report for the department and the Board of Regents that includes a description of that year’s program and evaluations from the students and faculty. The program, the faculty, and the peer advisors are evaluated.

Director’s Evaluation

The director’s evaluation of the Bridge program usually includes descriptions of the aspects that provide Bridge participants with unique academic, social, and personal enrichment experiences. Reviews of past directors’ evaluations report Bridge is a successful method of easing the transition of African American students to the university. Positive responses are reported from the students, faculty, and staff. Students express feelings of belonging and camaraderie. They believe their new knowledge of the university will help them succeed. They see Bridge as a major asset toward accomplishing their goals at the university. Successful orientation of the students to the university has always been an important goal that appears to be realized each year.

Many of the other objectives of the program are achieved. This can be evidenced each year by the successful completion of many of the students in the Seminar component, which allows these students to exempt this course in the fall quarter. Also, many students are allowed to move up in a reading course. Students’ leadership abilities emerge. They demonstrate talents and express their desire to achieve. Students have positive feelings about starting the fall quarter and they feel a step ahead of other freshmen. Some students learn for the first time that they are not as strong academically as they had thought. For those willing to reflect upon the possible reasons for an unrealistic view, this realization seems to serve as a stimulus to work harder. Students learn who to see, where to go, and what to ask. Through the rigor of the academic components of Bridge, students begin to understand some of the academic realities they will be experiencing in the university. Each academic area (language arts, mathematics, and study skills seminar) provides well-planned, thoughtful instruction that successfully blends the objectives of orientation and academic enrichment (Chapman, 1995).
Faculty and staff have always been extremely motivated and worked harmoniously to promote student unity and comraderie. Their planning and implementation of the program is outstanding. In each academic area, as well as the special activities, faculty members create opportunities for students’ self-expression. Faculty growth is an unexpected and significant outcome of the program. Faculty often discuss with excitement the opportunity to plan activities that they would not usually be able to use in regular academic courses. The success of the Bridge program is due to the cooperative attitude of both the faculty and staff involved.

The peer advisors have been found to provide positive role models, performing their tasks responsibly and promptly and providing valuable suggestions. They work closely with the director and the instructors to provide whatever assistance is requested.

**Students’ Evaluation of the Program**

Students repeatedly say they enjoy participating in the Bridge program, they learn about the campus, and make new friends. On their written evaluations of the program, students respond positively to questions relating to orientation to the campus, improving study skills, and building a feeling of belonging. Being better prepared and easing the adjustment are benefits students relate after attending Bridge. Bridging the “transition from high school to college” is a positive theme that appears in the students’ comments. Results from the 1996 program (Stratton, 1996) are representative of past years. When asked, “Would you recommend Bridge to a friend?”, student replies were all in the affirmative. Many students mentioned meeting new people and familiarizing themselves with college life, learning new study skills, gaining confidence and preparation, and finding answers to questions and problems. Several suggested, “Yes; I think everyone should take it. Yes; it is a program that everyone can benefit from.” Surprisingly, students reported a variety of things as “the thing they enjoyed most.” As expected, the trip to Birmingham was the highest rated event, although all the other activities were mentioned. Exempting classes and learning the campus were also included. Students reported that the teachers and their advice were important to them.

**Students’ Evaluation of Faculty**

Students find the faculty supportive and informative. In Seminar, specifically, students appreciate learning about time management, note taking, study skills, and new ways to prepare for class. The discussion on immediate gratification always has a positive effect. The language arts faculty member has always received praise for helping students to write better essays, to learn to edit and proofread papers, and to understand what college-level English will require. Beyond the writing content, the Civil Rights movement theme seems to inform and inspire. Mathematics faculty are seen as facilitators for students to learn more about the level of their own skills and to offer new skills such as use of the graphing calculator. The activities in the math component are useful for reduction of anxiety and stress. In general, faculty are seen by students to be concerned, enthusiastic, and inspiring.
Students’ Evaluation of Peer advisors

Students are very positive in their evaluations of peer advisors. They generally find the advisors accessible, friendly, concerned about the students, very knowledgeable about the university, responsible, and great role models.

Faculty and Staff Evaluation of the Program

Faculty and staff have the opportunity to evaluate the Bridge program also. There are two important questions that faculty answer: “In general how did you feel about the students in Bridge this year?” and “What was your overall reaction to Bridge?” Faculty describe Bridge students as exceptional, bright, talented, well-rounded, eager to learn, cooperative, energetic, ready to adapt, and eager to become “official” members of the university community. Predictions are made such as: “those who participated fully should do well in college”, “some of the Bridge students will be a great asset to GSU.” Each year the quality of students improves.

The faculty and staff describe the program as meaningful, interesting, excellent, and useful. Most of the faculty believe there is more chance for interaction between students and faculty and staff than in regular classes. Bridge gives students a head start by giving them a taste of college expectations. Noting the distinctive difficulties of a large, urban university with a majority of white students and professors, faculty think Bridge can give an advantage to those students who attend. Although it is true that Bridge presents more work for the professors than a regular class, the faculty think it is successful for the students and rewarding for the faculty and staff. Faculty and staff alike would recommend Bridge for any student, especially first generation college students.

Retention

At Georgia State University, the Bridge program is well conceived, carefully designed, theoretically sound, and responsibly staffed. Although it requires a great deal of energy to conceptualize and carry through, those involved are confident that GSU provides a successful experience for the students (Chapman, 1995). Because it is difficult to prove that programs such as Bridge have been helpful to students by conventional methods like achievement scores (Thompson, 1988), longitudinal studies are necessary. Some quantitative evaluation of the program may be found in the follow-up statistics on the retention of the Bridge students. Table 1 includes statistics on students’ successful completion of the four-week long Bridge program and the numbers of Bridge students registering for the fall quarter. Table 2 shows one-year retention data for Bridge students as they compare to African American students required to take Learning Support (developmental) courses, and regularly admitted African American students (Hand, 1994; Mack, 1998).

Keeping in mind that most years all of the Bridge students were also classified as Learning Support students, taken as a cohort the Bridge students persist for one year at a greater level than other African American Learning Support students and at a higher rate than regularly admitted
African American students. The average one-year retention rate from 1984 to 1996 for Bridge students is 90.3%; for all African American Learning Support students it is 67.9%; and for all regularly enrolled African American students it is 67.7%. At Georgia State University, data from 1984 to 1992 show that approximately 66.3% of all Learning Support students, regardless of race, are retained after one academic year and approximately 69% of regularly admitted students, regardless of race, are retained after one academic year. Although retention rates of Learning Support students are usually slightly below that of regularly admitted students, Bridge students clearly show rates well above both groups. There appears to be a positive relationship between retention and participation in the Bridge program.

Tinto (1987) suggests that “the more central one’s membership is to the mainstream of institutional life the more likely, other things being equal, is one to persist” (p.123). The Bridge formula, which combines immediate academic assistance with methods for continued assistance,
as well as creating social, intellectual, and academic community for students, appears to be successful as a retention effort.

**Future Implications**

The Bridge program at GSU has shown success with African American students. However, Bridge has the potential for being effective if it were offered as a summer enrichment program open to all underprepared incoming first quarter students. Although the current move is to increase the criteria for enrollment at universities nationally, there will always be a certain number of students deemed underprepared. Boylan (Stratton, 1998) relates that when entrance standards were raised at a large California university, the mathematics department raised their pass rate for departmental screening tests even higher. More students than ever were labeled as underprepared. If the educational system is truly the pipeline leading to positions of leadership and influence in our society, then there is a need to assist students into this pipeline. Howe (Thompson, 1988) posits,

> Education needs to pay attention to people who are having the hardest time. Good teaching and successful education for those will guarantee good teaching and successful education for a lot of people . . . We have included people from different economic circumstances and from different cultural circumstances and we have devised a rather adaptable system. From time to time we tend to tighten up about it. Sometimes we are not willing to spend what we should on education. Or people are not willing to stand up and go to bat for education politically. (p.19)

It has been nationally reported (Astin, 1982) that certain ethnic or socioeconomic groups are not evenly represented in certain disciplines. Often subjects such as mathematics act as filters keeping minority and underprepared groups from reaching their full potential in majors requiring those subjects, eventually keeping students from careers in those areas. A Bridge program that identifies some of these roadblocks, in the same way Supplemental Instruction (Martin & Arendale, 1990) identifies high risk courses and then addresses students’ needs in a special way, should be successful.

Simpson, Hynd, Nist and Burrell (1997) consider one of the problems with self-contained Bridge programs is “that students are not allowed to take regular content courses. Therefore, there is a lag between the strategies taught in the classes and the opportunity to transfer those strategies to other college course work” (p. 55). This issue of lack of transfer is being addressed by many educators with the use of Supplemental Instruction and adjunct or paired courses. Restructuring Bridge to combine the best of these initiatives and Freshman Experience course material, learning communities, and collaborative learning can make a lasting difference in students’ academic success as well as membership in the university society.

Miller (1990) maintains that underprepared students often present “a greater challenge to conventional, entrenched and often inflexible academic structures, curricula, and personnel, and these challenges are too often ignored”(p.7). Bridge at GSU has proved that faculty are often
willing to provide the necessary effort to structure exceptional experiences for students. However, campus wide institutional support is necessary to implement a variety of strategies for the underprepared. This includes administrative and financial support for a move to action to construct the educational environment that has the best chance of enabling students.

References


Rethinking the Writing Classroom: Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners

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Abstract

The developmental writing classroom often brings together students with a broad range of differing learning needs, united mainly by their inability to meet the writing demands of college-level work. Addressing these heterogeneous needs represents a significant challenge to writing instructors. Although the broad integration of a writing-process paradigm into composition classrooms has meant that students in developmental writing courses generally receive far more useful and effective instruction than they would have twenty years ago, process-based instructional models often lack the multi-dimensionality required to address the whole range of needs that students may present. An effective framework for process instruction must incorporate clear assumptions about the nature and breadth of heterogeneous learning needs of students and address those needs through a comprehensive system that is flexible and that incorporates students’ development of self-understanding and self-efficacy in strategy employment. Such an approach may reduce the challenge to instructors and serve the whole range of students better.

The typical developmental writing class brings together students who not only are unready for the first-year writing course but who also often differ from one another in fundamental ways. Within a single classroom there may be students whose secondary education left

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them unprepared for college writing, students for whom English is a second language, students with diagnosed or undiagnosed language-based learning disabilities, and students with diagnosed or undiagnosed disorders of attention. Even within each of these categories, there may be fundamental differences between students; for example, second-language learners from different first-language groups may have widely different learning needs, and students with learning disabilities by definition represent a broadly heterogeneous group. Furthermore, each of these categories may overlap. There is a high degree of comorbidity between attention disorders and learning disabilities; many underprepared students may have undiagnosed learning disorders; some second-language learners may also have learning disabilities, and so on.

Contemporary composition pedagogy has made significant strides in adapting to the challenge we describe here. Most college writing teachers use regular individual conferences, and seek to address the diversity of student needs through that vehicle. The widespread adoption of a process orientation in writing instruction in itself marks a fundamental improvement, in that process instruction, however defined and applied, necessarily attends to individual student needs in a way that a more formal, product-based approach does not. In learning to approach writing as a process, one that may involve a range of generating and organizing strategies at various moments in composing, most students will begin to develop their own individual approaches to writing. The widespread implementation of portfolio-based instruction and grading has also increased the individualization of instruction and enhanced the ability of instructors to meet student needs directly. Finally, the increasing role of writing centers on many college campuses has created a safety net for struggling writers that by its very nature is more individualized than the classroom can be.

Still, the mechanisms available within postsecondary institutions for responding to the individual needs of developmental writers are limited in scope and tend to be applied after the fact. In general, it is difficult for developmental writing classes to avoid offering a single model of instruction, pitched somewhere near the middle of the diverse range of students’ abilities and needs, with needs and problems that fall outside of that middle range addressed mainly through individual conferences and writing center appointments. The argument of this chapter is that this situation can be improved by defining a framework for writing-process instruction that systematically addresses the diversity of students’ learning profiles and needs for writing development within the classroom context itself, reducing the pressure on more individualized structures, and placing a greater focus on ways in which students can become active in the process of their learning. The framework suggested here was developed specifically to work with students with diagnosed learning disabilities and attention disorders, in a college program designed to work with students whose academic skills range from elementary grade levels to graduate levels. Although the site at which the approach to instruction we describe was developed is a specialized one, we would argue that the lessons learned from working with students at extreme ends of the spectrum of learning diversity have application for all students who learn differently and who require innovative teaching practices in order to succeed as writers. Specific teaching approaches may vary, depending on the needs of individual students,
but the framework proposed here is designed to be flexible, individualized, and inclusive of a broad range of learning styles and profiles.

The starting point for any system of instruction should be an understanding of the students who will join in it: what their profiles and characteristics are as learners, what their strengths are, and what their needs are. To begin at the point of student need requires that we have a way of understanding learning needs in all of the richness and complexity of the cognitive, linguistic, sociocultural, and affective factors that underlie them, rather than defining need simply by the production problems that manifest themselves superficially on tasks such as standardized tests or placement exams. In contemporary usage, the word “diversity” in academic settings is often limited to cultural, ethnic, social, economic, and racial contexts. These meanings are, of course, essential ones. But we argue that the term must be augmented to incorporate the diversity of learning styles and abilities, so that addressing a diverse group of students also means understanding how complex and different their range of abilities and needs as learners may be. Starting with a diversity model for learning abilities and needs, it is possible to outline a system for developmental writing instruction that defines frameworks for responding to individual differences among students, and that shapes itself around the basic premise that instruction must be flexible, individualized, comprehensive, and systematic, rather than pitched toward a mythical middle ground.

The approach to writing instruction defined here incorporates two interconnected components. It begins with the assumption that effective teaching must be based on an accurate understanding of the broad nature of a student’s underlying learning profile, including strengths as well as areas of need, rather than depending simply on a more superficial recognition of the specific problems that a student has had executing the requirements of a given assignment. To support this approach to assessing and understanding a student’s writing problems, a systematic framework that incorporates all of the elements involved in the site of writing is required. The framework suggested here is based on the premise that similar surface problems in student writing may arise from very different underlying factors, and that the only way to address surface problems—for example, with mechanics, grammar, organization, or completion of assignments—is to understand the nature of their cause and to focus instruction at that level.

In addition to suggesting a framework for understanding writing problems, we propose a system for instruction in the process of writing that enables teachers to respond flexibly and appropriately to the range of needs presented by their students. Such a system has several requirements. First, it must be based on an accurate description of writing as a human activity that involves affective, social, and linguistic elements as well as fundamental neurocognitive processing components such as attention or memory. For the writing process strategies we teach to have meaning, they must stem from and account for the rich and varied ways in which writing proceeds for individuals. For this to occur, we must start with the most accurate knowledge we possess of how writing works as a cognitive process. The prescriptive process model that we teach will have value primarily to the extent to which it is based on an accurate descriptive model. Our pedagogical approach assumes the validity of a primarily cognitivist orientation to understanding the nature of learning and of writing, while incorporating
theoretical work directed toward an understanding of the factors that differentiate “basic” or developmental writers from their more accomplished peers (e.g., Bartholomae, 1980, 1985, 1987; Berninger, 1994; Flower, 1989; Flower & Hayes, 1981; Horning, 1987; Levine, 1987, 1996; Meltzer, 1993; Rose, 1983, 1984.)

Second, specific process strategies must be taught explicitly, with support for practice and adaptation among individual students, and the specific strategies that are taught should be situated within explicit instruction in the concept and description of writing as a cognitive process. To the extent possible, students should learn about the nature of writing as a process, and understand that the specific strategies that we suggest or assign, such as brainstorming, free-writing, and outlining, are not ends in themselves, nor even necessarily useful to a given individual, but rather attempt to make explicit and systematic the sorts of generating and organizing strategies that effective writers often perform in less explicit and more intuitive ways. Ideally, students should encounter a rich, extensive range of possible approaches to writing as a process, and engage in a process of testing out what works for them, and how various specific strategies may work together.

Third, students who have not acquired knowledge and use of the forms and conventions of written language must be given an opportunity to do so, but this teaching-learning process should occur within the context of a process-based approach, rather than be dealt with separately or in a way that makes such formal learning seem external and valueless. Instruction in aspects of writing such as grammar, mechanics, and patterns of development should take place within a context that gives those activities context and meaning; and even more important, such learning will be most effective if it is situated within direct instruction and practice in the ways in which it may be applied in the process of composing.

Finally, the value of explicit instruction in process strategies will depend primarily on how closely students collaborate in the development of a personal, individualized approach to composing. This requires a role for the instructor that is more coach than judge, and asks students to reflect on and assess the value of specific strategies in relation to their own self-perceived needs. The central role that the development of reflection, metacognition, and self-efficacy plays in successful student outcomes cannot be overstated. The goal of the approach described here is first that students come to understand their difficulties (and strengths) as writers, and second that they develop an approach to composing that responds directly to those difficulties and strengths. For this to occur, teachers must build into the course of their classes a reflective, metacognitive component that is integral at every step of the way.

The remainder of this chapter will discuss these elements in turn, beginning by describing and illustrating a framework that can help instructors recognize and understand the factors that underlie individual students’ writing difficulties, and then discussing an approach to writing-process instruction that incorporates the four aspects noted above.
A Framework for Understanding Writing Problems

In developing an approach to informal educational assessment of writing abilities, there are a number of factors to take into account. These factors are laid out in Figure 1.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. The Writer’s Learning Profile</th>
<th>2. Extrinsic Factors</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Knowledge in Long-Term Memory</td>
<td>A. The Writing Context</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Background Information</td>
<td>• Implicit Context Elements (e.g., Time and Deadlines, Relationship with Instructor, Previous Feedback, etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Vocabulary</td>
<td>• Broader Social, Familial, and Peer Elements</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Language Skills</td>
<td>• Cultural and National Elements</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Written-Language Rules, Structures, and Conventions</td>
<td>B. The Nature of the Assignment</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Knowledge of Writing Plans, Procedures, and Strategies</td>
<td>• Explicit Language of the Assignment</td>
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<td>• Knowledge of Topic and Audience</td>
<td>• Assigned or Implied Procedures</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Level of Challenge and Cognitive Processing Demands</td>
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<td>• Evaluation and Other Performance Elements</td>
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<td>B. Production Components</td>
<td>3. Focal Points for Assessment in the Writing Process</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Attention</td>
<td>• Planning and Previewing Skills</td>
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<td>• Executive Functions</td>
<td>• Ability to Generate Language and Ideas</td>
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<td>• Retrieval Memory</td>
<td>• Organizational Skills</td>
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<td>• Active Working Memory</td>
<td>• Understanding of Writing Structures and Rhetorical Strategies</td>
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<td>• Graphomotor Production</td>
<td>• Fluency in Drafting</td>
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<td>• Sequential Processing</td>
<td>• Ability to Rethink and Reorganize Materials</td>
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<td>• Simultaneous Processing</td>
<td>• Editing and Proofreading Skills</td>
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<td>• High-Order Cognition</td>
<td>• Ability to Self-Monitor, Follow Step-wise Processes, and Employ Writing Strategies</td>
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<td>• Automatization</td>
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<tr>
<td>C. Affective Elements</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Writing Anxiety</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Unproductive Coping Strategies (e.g., Avoidance, Denial, Dishonesty)</td>
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<td>• Low Self-Esteem and Confidence</td>
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<td>• Anger and Frustration</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Comorbid Psychological or Behavioral Components (e.g., Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, Depression, etc.)</td>
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Figure 1. A framework for teacher-based assessment and informal diagnosis of writing problems, incorporating all of the major components that may be factors influencing writing production.

This model or framework for educational assessment of writing problems draws from the Flower and Hayes (1981) cognitive model of the writing process and Levine’s (1987, 1996) interactive developmental paradigm for learning disorders. It provides a way of looking at the individual within his or her social context, and incorporates both cognitive and affective elements. Although the cognitivist approach has been critiqued from both humanistic and social
constructivist perspectives, arguably it continues to provide the clearest model of how writing works as a human activity. Pemberton (1993) provides an interesting discussion of this point. Without some sort of descriptive model of the process of writing, it is difficult or impossible to develop a purposeful approach to instruction in writing skills and strategies. Unless the strategies we teach are based on accurate approximations of how human cognition operates to process information, they are unlikely to succeed, and may even be counter-productive.

The framework for assessment defined here embeds the cognitive process model as the locus for assessment, and defines several major elements within the situation of writing as feeding into that cognitive process. Foremost among these is the writer him or herself, whose “learning profile” includes the neurocognitive constructs involved in information processing, affective components, and information and knowledge stored in long-term memory. Additionally, the task environment, which incorporates both the immediate context and other sociocultural spheres of context, must be taken into account, as much the task itself, both in the way it is explicitly defined, and in implicit elements. Finally, the writing product itself, as it accretes, feeds back into the process of writing.

This framework was defined in order to better address the writing needs of students with language-based learning disabilities and disorders of attention. However, if one sets aside these labels, and considers instead an approach to understanding learning difficulties that focuses on individual variations that operate within specific educational contexts, the framework may be useful for working with any student. It is not meant to imply that teachers necessarily have clinical knowledge of such elements as attention or memory; rather, that in working with diverse learners, it is essential to begin with the broadest and most accurate sense of all of the categories that diversity may encompass.

The goal here is to define a way of thinking about writing problems that moves beneath the surface of the problem, which is generally situated in the written product itself, to look at underlying factors, whether intrinsic to the writer or external, and how these shape the process of composing and its outcome. By embedding a descriptive model of the composing process into this framework, it is also possible to begin considering how intrinsic or extrinsic factors may shape, either negatively or positively, sub-processes within composing. For example, an anxiety-provoking task environment, such as a testing context, may severely limit a writer’s ability to generate information, and result in an essay that is over-structured and empty of content. If the student also has difficulties with attention and focus that make him or her more susceptible to anxiety in test contexts, the problem will be exacerbated. Understanding how these factors may interact to produce a specific type and level of writing performance is the whole point of the approach we have outlined here. Once these factors are understood, a much richer, more directed form of instruction, one focused on developing specific strategies and skills to compensate for areas of weakness, can begin.

A few examples may serve to illustrate. The first has to do with the way in which the immediate task environment may have a profound effect on writing performance. The two samples in Figure 2 were produced by the same student, within about a month of each other. The
student, 18 years old, had been diagnosed with dyslexia at age eight. He tested at roughly a 4th to 5th grade level on standardized tests of reading and spelling; on cognitive measures, he demonstrated low average abilities on verbal tasks, and superior abilities on non-verbal tasks. Both writing samples display obvious difficulties with the forms and structures of written language. Sample A, however, also shows severe constraints in the production of language, a relatively limited vocabulary, a relative degree of caution in syntax, and on the whole, a brief, shallow approach to the topic, given that it is the entire essay. Sample B, which is the first paragraph of three, seems by contrast like a torrent of language, has absolutely no caution regarding syntax or mechanics, but uses a richer vocabulary and expresses a great depth of feeling. Looking at the two samples, it is difficult to imagine that they were produced by the same writer. What accounts for the difference? In this case, it is the task environment and task definition. The first sample was produced in an admissions testing context at the college to which the student had applied. He was furnished the prompt by a specific individual, who handed him a pencil and piece of lined paper and had him write for fifteen minutes or so in a small, sparsely furnished testing room. The prompt itself asked the student to describe someone or something that had personal significance for him, focusing the writer away from himself to at least some degree. The second sample, which was written as part of the writer’s college application describing his past educational experiences, was produced at home, for an unknown audience (“the admissions department.”) There was no sense of time constraint, and the prompt asked the student to speak about himself in an open-ended way. Out of these differences came two writing products that fundamentally differ from each other. If one were to use either sample in isolation from the other in order to define where instruction should begin, or what the student’s main needs were in terms of process strategies, one would risk developing a partial or even inappropriate approach.
A second example, provided in Figure 3, may illustrate this point more fully. In this brief essay, written in response to a placement test prompt in a structured and timed context, the writer alternates between poorly organized or syntactically problematic sentences, and fairly eloquent statements. Some of the errors seem nearly inexplicable. The overall idea of the essay, the author’s conclusion regarding flag-burning, seems confused and contradictory.

Simply focusing on the product and its surface errors and problems might lead one to conclude that the student needs to work on sentence skills and mechanics, along with developing reasoning skills. But if one takes into account the student’s underlying processing difficulties in the areas of attention and memory, the assessment of the product changes, and the orientation for instruction must be redefined. For example, the confusing first sentence (“The purpose of public flag-burning should be legal if done with a purpose and not out of malice. We do not live under a dictatorship, we have democracy, a people government; by the people, for the people. The framers of the constitution gave us a wide definition of the freedom of expression. Flag burning is a dramatic utensil for crowd persuasion. When a flag is burned people become very emotional and it then relieves the stress the problem originally creates. People feel as if they have gotten one step forward in getting what they want from govt. For me the burning of a flag contradicts the morals, in my eyes, it stands for; freedom, democracy, power and success. If a burning is for protest, to help get a point across I believe it is a given right to do.”)

| Figure 3 | A writing sample produced by an adult female student with an attention disorder. The sample was produced in a placement testing situation, with a one-hour time limit. |

...
understanding of students’ needs, and to enlist students’ own self-understanding in that service. First, it is essential to begin with some sort of systematic framework for investigating and understanding a student’s strengths and needs. We have proposed such a framework here. Second, it is important for teachers to develop and expand their understanding of how various categories or elements within that framework may manifest themselves in the act of writing itself and in other learning contexts. This means becoming familiar with the ways in which learning disabilities, underpreparedness, second-language backgrounds, attention disorders, and other impediments may display themselves in various contexts, both in terms of their similarities and their differences.

A third key element in taking a diagnostic approach to teaching involves the way in which teachers look at the act of writing and the written product itself. Finding opportunities to observe students actually writing, in a variety of tasks, may provide important information. Even more essential, teachers must read students’ writing from a hypothesis-building approach, assessing errors and problems for the factors that may potentially underlie them, and then basing instruction on those hypotheses as a way of testing and refining them. The work of informal diagnostic assessment should be ongoing and continuous, and to support this work it is essential that students perform a variety of writing tasks in different contexts. Sifting through the variations in performance on different writing assignments will be particularly useful if one begins with a sense of how task definition and task environment contribute to and shape writing performance.

Finally, and most important, the student must be engaged in this process of understanding and self-understanding. Student self-reports often provide the richest and most useful information teachers can have to guide instruction, yet it is relatively uncommon to actually ask students to talk about their strengths and weaknesses as writers, their goals, or about the difficulties they encountered in responding to a writing assignment. Means for obtaining this type of information can be quite simple. Students can fill out an information sheet at the beginning of the semester that describes their interests, goals, strengths and areas to develop, which in turn can be used as the basis for discussion at an initial goal-setting conference. For each formal writing assignment, students can fill out both a previewing or planning sheet, which provides an indication of how they will approach the task, and then after the assignment is done write a brief analysis of the process they used and the difficulties they experienced in writing the paper. A course focused comprehensively on the development of metacognition might incorporate having students write a self-analysis of themselves as writers at both the beginning and the end of the semester.

More than anything, the system proposed here has to do with how the instructor defines his or her role. Specific expertise in areas such as second-language instruction or learning disorders cannot be expected of every writing instructor, although a working knowledge of such categories and the issues associated with them is certainly desirable. What can be expected is an approach to teaching that sets aside evaluation and judgment in favor of assessment and coaching, that is hypothesis-driven and collaborative, and that takes as its starting premise the rich range of individual variations across the diversity of students’ learning needs.
A Framework for Process-Based Instruction

We suggest that there are two primary modes for writing instruction, which link back to the division between processing and long-term memory components within the writer’s learning profile. As teachers, we can provide instruction in the forms, rules, structures, and conventions of written language (including those conventions peculiar to specific types of written discourse), or we can provide procedural strategies for writing, such as invention heuristics, organizing strategies, and the like. These two possible modes are sometimes characterized as being in opposition to each other, and even stereotyped as conflicting philosophies of instruction (e.g., the stereotype of the grammar drill-based remedial writing class versus the stereotype of the expressivist classroom in which no error is ever noted.) The prevailing paradigm in composition is clearly a process-oriented one, although in practice, most teachers employ elements of each mode of instruction, with emphasis and actual methods varying widely.

The question of how instruction in forms, structures, and rules should be balanced against instruction in process strategies and direct engagement with writing tasks is a complicated one, especially in a context in which a diverse group of students presents widely varying abilities and needs. We suggest an approach that assumes that linguistic knowledge and information about writing contained in long-term memory and deployed either consciously or automatically will have a significant influence on how the process of composing works for an individual. If that knowledge and information is extensive and largely automatic, it will provide powerful support for effective writing; if it is thin and mainly accessed through conscious recall, it will provide little support. Furthermore, long-term memory and processing components to some degree are inversely related. Strengths in one area (e.g., extensive background knowledge) can help compensate for weaknesses in the other (e.g., poor attention). Likewise, weakness in one area (e.g., poor retrieval memory) may undermine strength in another (e.g., adequate or strong receptive vocabulary). To give a broader example, if a student’s knowledge of simple mechanics is partial and not automatic, then the attention he or she must pay to the relatively low-order task of punctuation will prevent or impede the necessary focus on higher-order concerns such as concept formation, sequential ideation, and coherence. For such a student, the choice may appear to be between a surface correctness that displays very little of his or her actual depth of thought, or an attempt to capture the quality of thought that forces correctness aside. The two writing samples in Figure 2 represent an extreme example of these two options, in the case of a student with very limited automatic memory for writing structures and rules. Likewise, a student who possesses strong linguistic knowledge but who has difficulties with attention and memory may appear to have difficulties with mechanics and grammar, when in fact the surface errors produced arise instead from an inability to attend to both high-order and low-order demands during the process of composing. This seems to be the case for the student who produced the writing in Figure 3.

Based on this premise, our suggestion is that any instruction in rules, forms, and structures should be situated within the broader context of a process-strategy orientation. Furthermore, in the scarcity of time that operates in every composition classroom, the focus on rules and
structures should be limited to only those elements that will have the widest and most powerful application, so that adequate attention can be paid to procedural strategies and writing in context. It is true that in an ideal world students whose knowledge of mechanics, grammar, and organizational structures is limited and not automatic would receive the instruction that they need. But to be effective, such instruction must necessarily be time-intensive and highly individualized, and it is a rare writing program that is able to provide the class size and depth of teacher-student contact required. And in most cases it may not be necessary. Furthermore, for students whose first language is not English, the development of basic second-language competence is a necessary precursor, and such students are unlikely to make significant progress in writing unless they are also progressing in their spoken command of English. The question of how best to address these students falls outside the scope of this chapter.

We suggest that the most powerful approach to writing difficulties is through the development of procedural strategies that are directly linked to the specific strengths and areas of need of the individual student. As we have argued above, such an approach is strongest when based on an accurate understanding of the specific needs of the individual student. However, even when this understanding is lacking or only partial, an overall process approach can be highly effective.

Such an approach includes four key elements, which we will address in turn. First, the prescriptive or teaching model of the process of writing is based on an accurate descriptive model. Second, process strategies are taught explicitly and made part of the course objectives and the evaluation criteria for grading. Third, students collaborate with the instructor in developing an individual approach to composing that best matches their own needs. Finally, students practice self-reflection and develop a metacognitive understanding as part of the course design.

The Prescriptive Model

For a teaching approach based on procedural strategy development and employment to be most powerful, it must be situated within an overall teaching model for writing as a process that is consistent with how writing actually works as a cognitive activity. For example, a model of process instruction that suggests that writers begin with invention strategies such as brainstorming and free-writing, then proceed to organize and arrange their ideas in outline form, then write a draft, and then revise, is only slightly more useful than the current traditional stereotype of think, outline, write, revise. Here again, we follow the cognitive process model, particularly in its emphasis on writing as a recursive process in which any given element may interrupt and supersede another element. That means we need a model for the composing process that is not sequential or linear, but builds the potential for recursiveness explicitly into instruction. Likewise, the Flower and Hayes model (1981) posits elements such as goal-setting, planning, and self-monitoring, that are not generally taught explicitly in standard process textbooks, and it also implies an approach to “revising” that situates the work of review and revision within the process as a whole, rather than an element that is applied only at the end.
PLANNING
- Preview Assignment
- Define Outcome
- Plan Steps and Sequence
- Schedule Work Plan

GENERATING
- Gather and Organize Notes from Reading and Class
- Use Generating Strategies to Define Response/Angle
- Generate Idea, Interpretation, Language, etc., through Specific Strategies (see “Process Strategies”)
- Use Generating Strategies to Explore Organization & Approach to Paper
- Connect Organizing Steps to Generating Activities
- Return to Generating Strategies to Develop More Information as Necessary
- Use Generating Strategies to Overcome Blocks while Drafting

ORGANIZING
Develop Thesis from Generated Material

Identify and List Sub-Topics
- Construct Topic Sentences
- Identify Supporting Material

Sub-Topic A
Use Separate Page or File for each Section or Paragraph

Sub-Topic B

Sub-Topic C

Sub-Topic D

Transfer Generated Material to Sub-Topic Page/File; Generate Additional Material; Sequence; Draft Sentences for Topics & Transitions

Draft & Edit

Figure 4. A flow-chart for the process of writing that defines specific prescriptive strategies within the major activities involved in writing, including built-in structures designed to prompt self-monitoring and a recursive approach to writing as a process.
The flowchart provided in Figure 4 is a schematic representation of a prescriptive approach to writing as a process that can be used to provide an overall framework for more specific individual instruction. The flow-chart defines the major activities involved in writing, and offers guidelines within each activity, rather than specific lists of strategies, which are furnished to students separately. Although it is organized in a sequence that begins with planning and ends with editing, the actual sequence of work can flow in either direction. The core of the model is the assumption that planning, generating, and organizing are the key areas of focus for students, and that if they use appropriate strategies within these activities, then the acts of drafting and editing will be far less cognitively burdened, and more effective. The model also assumes that revision per se, as the act of re-seeing and re-thinking the paper as a whole, needs to be part of the process from the beginning, and that by the time an actual draft is completed, the primary remaining task should be editing rather than restructuring or rewriting. Furthermore, generating and organizing operate in a closely linked fashion, with the writer moving back and forth between the two, developing organizational structures out of the material he or she has generated, while using the categories and questions defined by the organizational framework as heuristics for further invention.

This relationship between generating and organizing is underscored and made explicit in the suggestion that students use the sub-topics or categories of their paper as the headings for separate files or sheets of paper into which they cut and paste or write the information, ideas, and language that they have generated. Although students need not necessarily follow this step literally, it is highly effective for writers who tend to be very disorganized, or who tend to produce papers that are underdeveloped. The sub-topics act as a sorting mechanism for ideas and language, and the amount of information gathered under a sub-topic acts as a visible cue, either that there is too much information, and the sub-topic needs to be further divided, or that there is too little, and the writer needs to return to generating. The overall goal of the model as a whole, and particularly of this aspect of it, is to enable the writer to arrive at the stage of actually producing a draft with as much of the material of the paper already on paper, and organized, as possible, in order to reduce the cognitive load in drafting and to allow for a focus on such issues as style and expression.

To this model, we attach a schematic for standard deductive essay structure, in essence a more elaborated and flexible version of the often criticized five-paragraph essay. This schematic provides students with one basic option for organization that can be directly linked to organizing activities within the process model. Although providing and teaching such a structure can potentially be limiting and deadening to invention, having ready access to a flexible, reusable plan for writing for many students liberates them from relatively low-order organizational concerns, so that they can focus on concept development. It is also a way to demystify the nature of an essay. To explain to a student that a five-page paper can essentially be broken down into six or seven paragraphs of about five to eight sentences each may transform an insurmountable task to one that seems possible.
Explicit Instruction in Process Strategies

With the process template as a starting point, we suggest that the early stages of a class focus on explicit instruction in process strategies. The goal here is to allow all of the students in the class to encounter a range of possible strategies for planning, generating, and organizing. This work forms the basis for students to determine which strategies seem particularly effective for themselves as they work to develop an individual approach to writing. Some strategies may lend themselves to practice in isolation within the context of the class. Strategies of this sort include various invention activities, such as brainstorming, webbing, or mind-mapping, forms of free-writing, and the use of non-verbal strategies such as drawing or movement. Whenever a strategy is practiced, it is best if the instructor begins by modeling the strategy, and provides a rich context for practicing it, assuring that the prompt toward which the strategy is directed has meaning and value for the students.

Some strategies, especially planning and organizing strategies, do not lend themselves to meaningful practice in isolation. In order to help students develop and practice these strategies, the instructor may situate them within the context of an assignment sequence, in which students are asked to perform a sequence of process strategies toward the goal of completing a specific writing assignment. In order to emphasize the importance of the practice, teachers can construct evaluation criteria in which various activities contribute to the final grade. Such an approach works best if some degree of latitude is given students in the strategies that they practice, and if they are also asked to monitor and report on which strategies worked best for them. A teacher might assign as many as three or four assignment sequences of this sort in the first weeks of a course, before beginning to move toward a more independent, student-developed approach to process strategy development. The goal of the sequence is not simply to practice the strategies, or to finish the paper; rather, both ends are important, with the linkage between them the key. Such an approach increases the opportunities for teachers to learn about their students as writers, and to begin developing a collaborative, individualized approach. By the time the explicit phase of instruction has ended, students should have encountered and practiced a broad range of planning, generating, organizing, and editing strategies, and should have begun to develop their own hypotheses about which strategies work for them.

Individualizing the Process

The work of supporting students as they develop an individualized approach to writing begins during the explicit-instruction phase, as the instructor develops a diagnostic sense of the student, and enters into a collaborative dialogue about strategy development and use. In general, the teacher has two key roles here. The first is to help students see which components of the process of writing need the most emphasis; and the second is to help the student define individual strategies within each component, as well as linkages between strategies, that seem most promising and effective.

Ultimately, the quality of this work will lie in the way and extent to which a writing instructor is able to understand the learning needs of individual students and collaborate with
them on that basis. But it is also possible to make a few generalizations, based on broad categories of learning needs, that can help guide this work. Although all students need to develop the ability to plan and set goals, to generate information, materials, and ideas for the substance of this work, and to organize these materials as the basis for executing a successful draft before editing, specific areas of focus will depend to a great extent on learning profiles that tend to be shared by groups of students within the diverse classroom. In addition, it is possible to make some generalizations about how individuals might focus within each area.

In terms of planning for students with attention disorders that make previewing, outcome estimation, and self-monitoring problematic, it is essential that planning activities be explicit, and performed in depth rather than superficially. Such students may need to break down the process of writing a paper to a specific daily schedule, with checkpoints or benchmarks at each step along the way. Likewise, students who are academically inexperienced and who do not understand the nature and requirements of specific assignments or discourse conventions will benefit from working out a plan for the paper in advance in some detail. All writing involves at least some element of planning, and the more explicit and articulated this element is for inexperienced writers, the more likely they are to produce a final product that reflects their actual abilities. The teacher may also want to look for students in whom planning is a strength; some students have strong executive skills in other life areas, which can be adapted and applied to writing.

In terms of generating, students with language-based learning disabilities, students for whom English is a second language, and those for whom standard written English differs broadly from their own oral language will all benefit from a focus on generating language, information, and ideas before drafting. In a sense, the goal is to produce the raw material of the paper beforehand, even down to the sentence level. This also should be an area of focus for students who have difficulties with academic or text-based tasks, or with verbal reasoning tasks, enabling them to work through such elements as vocabulary, concept formation, and relationships between ideas before drafting. For students of this sort, the attention paid to generating language in depth before beginning to structure a paper will help greatly with issues such as coherence and development. In addition, by allowing students to come to the drafting stage with much of their language already on paper, a generating-rich approach will also reduce the sort of cognitive overload that often gives rise to accidental errors in mechanics and grammar. The area of generating or invention is one that lends itself to a great number of possible strategies, going beyond brainstorming, mind-mapping, and various free-writing strategies to encompass activities such as drawing, movement, model-building, and the like (Klein & Hecker, 1994). However, it is important to note that for some students, over-generation of text and an accompanying disorganization may be major writing issues, and the focus should instead be on finding ways to limit and shape, rather than increase, the flow of language. This is particularly true of some students with ADHD.

For most students, the work of organizing and structuring their ideas should not begin until an adequate amount of time and energy has been spent in invention activities, or the risk is a final draft that is too tightly controlled and underdeveloped. At the same time, organizational
elements, such as the definition of paragraph topics as part of an overall outline, can also act as heuristics for invention. While students should be encouraged not to develop a thesis and subtopics too early, the sooner they can construct a rough organizational plan, the sooner they can be sure that activities such as focused free-writing, mind-mapping, and the like will be purposeful. Organization is also an area that may lend itself to innovative strategies that go beyond traditional outlining, such as using three-dimensional models to depict a paper’s idea structure, or using large sheets of paper, such as flipchart paper, to paste on the material for different parts of an essay.

In terms of drafting, the actual work of translating the raw materials into a logically-sequenced, coherent, and developed paper, key areas of focus include the physical components involved in writing, the task environment, and all of the ways in which the potential for cognitive overload can be reduced, as through the strategies described above. It may be useful for students to focus on how writing affects them physically, and to look for ways to work against physiological phenomena, such as under-arousal or over-arousal, or what Larson (1985) calls the boredom and anxiety scenarios. Elements such as the time of day, the place in which writing occurs, the duration of a writing episode, all offer potential to positively or negatively impact the quality of what is produced.

In terms of revising and editing, the key is to build the former into the process from the start, and to defer the latter until a full draft has been produced. It is important that the teacher not expect that a student who is incapable of writing an adequate draft can somehow be capable of the much more complicated work of making large-scale revisions in a flawed product. One interpretation of the many studies that find student or novice writers to be poor or superficial revisers is that the level of skill involved in effective revision is beyond the scope of inexperienced writers, and should not be expected of them. If the final product is deeply flawed, the best thing is to treat it as though it were part of the generating process, and start the composing process from there, or else put it aside and move on to the next assignment.

By the same token, students should be encouraged not to edit their writing too closely until they have produced what they set out to say. Too great a concern in the early stages of writing with mechanics or spelling may often result in papers with simplified language, syntax, and ideas, despite the student’s intellectual capabilities. Premature editing may also be a significant contributor to writer’s block among students who have difficulties in that area (Rose, 1984). Instead, students might be encouraged to follow editing protocols and to use proofreading checklists once they have produced a draft. These can be developed to fit an individual’s idiosyncratic difficulties (e.g., with certain spelling patterns), and may also contain general elements that apply to all students in a class.

The final point about developing an individualized writing process is that it is not simply the strategies one uses within a given area that count; the key is to develop linkages between various strategies that allow for a process that extends purposefully and efficiently over time. The work of developing these relationships inevitably must involve collaboration between the teacher and
the student, with the teacher best positioned to suggest sequences of steps that may work for the student, either in general or for completing a specific assignment.

**Self-Reflection and Independence**

In providing this model, we attempt to help students understand the concept that writing is a process, one that involves many different sub-processes. In particular, we focus on the relationship between specific components of the process, and how they are affected by individual learning styles. In order to make such a process-orientation work within a diverse group of learners, it is essential that students share responsibility, and help to direct their own progress. For students who engage fully in the reflective exercises and experimentation with process strategies that this teaching framework suggests, progress is likely to be relatively swift, and the burden on the teacher manageable. To make such an approach work with students who resist it, who wish to be passive recipients of instruction or who would prefer to avoid writing altogether, is probably impossible. But neither will any other approach truly succeed with such students. In fact, this framework may have a greater chance of engaging students and fostering a climate in which their attitudes about writing and learning can begin to change. Whether or not this occurs lies largely outside the teacher’s control, but there are some things one can do. Being explicit about the goals and process of the course, as well as the rationales that underlie them, at the least gives students the responsibility to either accept or reject those goals explicitly. In general, teacher practices that emphasize the role of student choice and that place the locus of control within the individual are essential. The process approach defined here also allows students to build success incrementally, and to receive recognition for engaging with the work of the course, even as their writing improves more slowly. Finally, all of this work on developing process strategies must be situated within a course content that is engaging and that enables students to do work that is challenging and academic in nature.

The ultimate goal of the teaching framework outlined here is to make the teacher irrelevant, and to put students in charge of their own progress and development as writers. This will not occur within a single course, and certainly not at the developmental level. But if students can end a semester understanding better how writing works as a cognitive activity and a communication tool, more self-aware about themselves as learners and as writers, and aware of the kinds of strategies and instruction that work best for them, a foundation will have been laid for true writing development.

**References**


International Students and Academic Assistance: Meeting the Needs of Another College Population

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Abstract

International students are attending U.S. colleges in large numbers. They often must work in a non-native language, English, and adjust to a new academic culture containing unfamiliar tasks, approaches to learning, and new patterns of relationships if they are to achieve. An emphasis on educating the whole student and a focus on the development of self-regulated learning in students make developmental educators and learning assistance professionals uniquely equipped to help these students make their transition across language and culture successfully.

International students, also called overseas students or foreign students, represent an important population within higher education in the United States. Although some observers believe that their numbers will remain fairly constant at about three percent of the total undergraduate and graduate student populations (Barber, 1984), others expect their numbers to increase with the highest prediction being one million by the twenty-first century (Jones, 1988, citing American Council on Education, 1982). Whatever their actual numbers, it is reasonable to assume that they will remain a continuing presence on American college campuses. Indeed, one
author (Hughes, 1992) states that “international students in the United States are an important barometer of the new global interdependence” (p. 202).

**International Students Benefit the United States**

Students from other countries who attend college in the United States influence and benefit the U.S. and its higher education system in several ways. International students make a meaningful contribution to the scholarship, globalization ability, and finances of U.S. institutions of higher education (Woolston, 1995). Indeed, their financial impact is so great that higher education has been called an export commodity because of its ability to attract international students who bring new money to both their U.S. institutions and communities (Woolston, 1995). In addition, international students who return home following a successful sojourn in the U.S. are expected to become both good customers (Chandler, 1989) and political allies (Rao, 1979). Because of these benefits John F. Reichard, Executive Vice President of the National Association of Foreign Student Affairs, has said that “Competition for foreign students among the ‘economic summit’ countries is increasing—each nation seeing in educational exchanges strong national interests and opportunities to enhance global competence and intellectual influence” (Altbach & Wang, 1989, p. v).

International students also directly benefit their individual U.S. universities in several ways. For example, projected falls in the number of domestic undergraduate and graduate student enrollments need to be offset by increased international student enrollment if faculty positions are not to be lost (Solmon & Beddow, 1984). While focusing on the international student policies in other nations, Chandler (1989) addresses similar situations in the U.S. for comparative purposes: “In several of the most advanced technological countries, foreign students are also becoming invaluable in sustaining otherwise nonviable graduate programs. The picture in the United States where large numbers of doctoral programs, especially in engineering and the sciences, would collapse tomorrow were it not for their foreign students is familiar to everyone” (p. 93).

The presence of international students also promotes campus diversity. There is a need to educate ourselves and our students to become world citizens (Hughes, 1992) and yet “many Anglo-Americans learn and understand very little about the cultures of minority groups” (Wallerstein, 1983, p. 5). However, Casazza and Silverman (1996) suggest that international students can be a resource for learning about cultural diversity. They suggest as one method that personnel in campus learning assistance programs provide workshops in which international students can share information about cultural issues. Indeed, learning assistance and campus diversity have long been linked. Boylan and White (1994) describe the beginnings of developmental education as rooted in an effort to help members of different groups (including the middle class, women, and African Americans) prepare themselves for successful higher education experiences. Thus, developmental education has been contributing to the diversity of American higher education since its inception and continues to fill a role in this endeavor (Knott, 1991; Schear, 1992; Sundberg, 1992).
International students vary by every conceivable characteristic of race, religion, preparation, language, background, academic goal, and personality trait (Bulthuis, 1986; Rao, 1979). However, all “overseas students have a pressing need, perhaps above all else, to return home with the inner satisfaction and the outward measure of successful academic achievement” (Elsey, 1990, p. 46). It is in helping them meet these two important goals that academic assistance professionals can serve this college student population.

Challenges Facing International Students

When international students arrive in the U.S. to study they face many challenges. Some of these are associated with their English language proficiency, some with their adjustment to their host country’s academic culture (Rao, 1979), and some challenges are associated with living in a new community culture (Liddell, 1990; Mallinckrodt & Leong, 1992; Parr, Bradley, & Bingi, 1992). The remainder of this chapter will focus on the first two challenges, in language and academics, and on the methods that developmental educators can use to help international students succeed in their studies.

Issues of Language

Not all international students face the same type of language challenge. Some are native speakers of English who find themselves confronting a dialect or accent difference when they come to the United States (Stalker, 1997). Other international students may speak a language that shares the alphabet and many root words with English (Maylath, 1997), and still another group of international students may speak a language that is different in all particulars from English.

In addition, another group on American campuses faces language challenges: those Americans who speak English as a second language (ESL). We will focus here on international students who learned English as a foreign language (EFL), but Reid (1997) suggests that it is important to differentiate the problems of the international student from those of the American with a language minority background. Teachers need an understanding of the sources of these students’ English difficulties, especially given that both international students and language minority American students may be enrolled in English language support classes at a university. In addition, the United States is home to an astonishingly diverse population that will have a large impact on the university’s future. “Students in the Los Angeles Unified School District speak at least 90 first languages, in the Chicago city schools: 88, and in New York City: 114. Many of them expect to go on to higher education and then to professional jobs” (Peitzman & Gadda, 1994, p. xi).

Reid (1997) contrasts the characteristics of ESL students who have come through at least part of the American kindergarten through twelfth grade (K-12) school system with those of international students who learned their English in their home countries. According to Reid (1997), the characteristics of international students usually include being literate and fluent in their first language and having a classroom background where they have learned English principally through their eyes, studying vocabulary, verb forms, and language rules. These students know, understand, and can explain English grammar,
and often their reading skills are substantial. Usually, however, their listening and oral skills are hampered by lack of experience, by non-native English speaking teachers, and by the culture shock that comes from being immersed in a foreign culture, the language of which sounds different from their studied English language. Their writing skills are also limited because their prior English education has not provided opportunities to write formal compositions; rather it required them to complete exercises in written grammar or to answer reading questions in single sentences (p. 20).

Other researchers have agreed, at least in part, with her descriptions (Jones, 1988), as have teachers from EFL situations (Balhorn & Schneider, 1987). Because of the wide variety in the strengths and weaknesses of international students’ English proficiency, teachers need to put assignments and changes to assignments, especially due dates, in written form because of student difficulties in listening comprehension (Lee, 1997).

In most of the academic settings found in the United States a student must be able to use English for all language processes: listening, reading, speaking, and writing. At a university listening to lectures and instructions (Cammish, 1997; Constantines, 1992), reading textbooks, tests, overheads, and chalkboards (Starks-Martin, 1996), asking questions (Ferris & Tagg, 1996), speaking during class discussions (Kao & Gansneder, 1995) and presentations (Light & Teh-Yuan, 1991), and writing for papers and exams (Canseco & Byrd, 1989; Crowe & Peterson, 1995) are all important proficiencies connected with academic success that have been found to be problematic for some international students. Some of these proficiencies operate in tandem, such as listening and speaking during class discussions or listening and taking notes. The latter is an especially crucial academic skill that is very difficult for many international students (Benson, 1989; Dunkel, 1988; Ferris & Tagg, 1996). Unfortunately, their lesser fluency also affects international students’ relationships with American faculty members. “The students [nine case studies of successful university ESL undergraduates] we interviewed sometimes felt that their teachers and their counselors discounted their overall intellectual abilities because they did not have nativelike command of English” (Brinton & Mano, 1994, p. 20). This observation has been mentioned in the literature several times (Burrell, Kim, & Bartlett, in press; Daher, Brathower, & Malott, 1991).

Despite this list of language-related difficulties, most international students have taken an English proficiency test, usually the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), before being admitted to an American college or university, although the score requirements may differ with each institution. Graham (1988) found in her review of the literature in this area that, although some studies have found little correlation between scores on this test and the academic achievement of international students (Light, Xu, & Mossop, 1987), others have found that it can be used as a predictive measure when proficiency is low (Johnson, 1988). Indeed, Arnaudet and Barrett (1984) produced a book designed to provide models of English academic text for readers and writers that they suggest should be used only by students receiving a TOEFL of 550 or higher, thus lending credence to the argument that such a score is insufficient to show preparation for common academic tasks in English. In addition, the TOEFL is a test of general language proficiency and may not measure the proficiencies required by the discipline-specific
Another language-related challenge facing the international student is the use of English idioms and Americentric examples in classes during discussions of content material. For example, Lee (1997) describes a business class assignment comparing Kroger and Piggly-Wiggly that would have been similar to the difficulty of comparing, for most of us, Lotte and Funny (department stores in Korea about which we probably have no prior knowledge). Similarly, the first author was told by an international scholar once that he had had comprehension problems in a class because of the Americentric examples that the professor used to explain and illustrate the concepts presented even though he himself previously had taught a similar class using the same textbook (Personal communication, Dr. Cho).

**Issues of Academic Culture**

To be successful, international students in the U.S. must adapt to an academic culture where the teaching, the testing, and the amount and type of work necessary may be unfamiliar (Rao, 1979). In addition, underlying these new practices will be new assumptions about what constitutes knowledge, the appropriate ways to display knowledge, and how the individuals involved should interact. Most of the colleges and universities in the United States have grown out of a Eurocentric tradition that still shapes many of the assumptions about teaching, learning, and the appropriate behaviors of the academy (Stage & Manning, 1992). For example, “classroom communication often reflects traditions of standard English and writing, direct eye contact, and controlled emotions” (Stage & Manning, 1992, p. 37).

The way that a student approaches learning is conditioned by the context of learning. For example, Rao (1979) suggests that the rote learning popular in many cultures is a result of the numerous languages that were present, officially or unofficially, in the classrooms in these countries. Unfortunately for those students from such cultures who move to the United States, rote learning is not held in respect here (Tinkham, 1989) and new study skills will need to be learned. New attitudes may also need to be developed in conjunction with the new skills. For example, one support program in the United Kingdom “was based on the recognition that rote learning, didactic teaching in a ‘spoon-fed’ system and a lack of hands-on experience were at the root of many overseas students’ study and learning difficulties...” (Elsey, 1990, p. 58).

The new host academic culture also will have different standards for student-professor interactions. For example, Elsey (1990) describes situations where overseas students in the U.K. were reluctant to speak with their professors even though the term had started with an invitation to do so. “Many were not sure either when they ought or when they needed to approach their supervisor. Some interviewees had felt deferent and had not liked to approach their supervisor at all!” (Elsey, 1990, p. 71). In another instance, pin-pointing the traps possible for students undergoing an academic culture transition, students from Latin American countries brought with them attitudes toward attendance (not important) and exams (studying only just before the yearly exam) that are contrary to American faculty expectations (Jones, 1988). It is also important for international students to understand the faculty cultures in their U.S. university and discipline area if they are to make sense of their university experience by correctly interpreting
their professors’ intentions. Faculty culture has a direct impact on the behaviors and attitudes of individual faculty members (Love, Kuh, MacKay, & Hardy, 1993) and thus on students. For example, the tri-partite responsibilities of teaching, research, and service make the observance of office hours important to faculty time management, and international students who are unaware of these responsibilities may interpret faculty reluctance to meet with them outside such hours as evidence of non-caring instead of as a productivity issue. Strict adherence to office hours has often been described to us as uncaring by international students who were unaware of the “publish or perish” pressures on faculty members in the U.S. because the faculty in their home countries focus almost exclusively on teaching. Moreover, different cultural patterns related to cheating and plagiarism can complicate the relationship between the university and the international student and between the professor and the international student (Brilliant, 1996; Kuehn, Stanwyck, & Holland, 1990; Pennycook, 1996).

Interaction patterns with fellow classmates also differ across cultures. Sometimes international students are confused by smiles and other signs of “friendship” from Americans that are meant merely as friendly, or polite, behavior (Bulthuis, 1986). Similarly, different communication patterns can lead to misunderstanding as described in a filmed conversation (Hodne, 1997, citing Scarcella, 1990, p. 103) in which “in the course of a conversation, an American student asks one question after another, and a Vietnamese student responds with one brief answer after another. Each expresses frustration afterward, the American because the Vietnamese showed little interest in the conversation, and the Vietnamese because the American ‘kept firing questions at her without giving her time to respond’” (p. 88).

Changes in academic tasks also occur from one academic culture to another and put additional demands on international students who may have no experience with a particular task. Rao (1979) discusses how their academic background impeded the progress of Asians studying in Australia, where the educational approach resembles that of the United States,

In most Asian countries, students are overrespectful to teachers and look to them for both guidance and ideas. They emphasize rote learning and rely on notes taken in classrooms. So they are likely to lack an analytical outlook and critical assessment of what they are taught and find it difficult to adapt to the Australian educational system (p. 72).

A similar cross-cultural transition is illustrated by the move of some students from Hong Kong to Britain for study. A respondent in a United Kingdom survey describes the changes she expected (Elsey, 1990):

In Hong Kong we were taught by the teacher. During primary and secondary education teachers taught us what he wanted us to learn. The work I needed to do for studying was to remember all the things which was told by the teacher and finish all the exercises that they told me to do...Now it is quite different...The lecturer will not teach all the subject knowledge...I need to find many references from the library and study them myself. I will discuss with other schoolmates...We will learn from each other... The most important point from studying at universities is that I must learn by myself...No more teach by the teachers[sic] (p. 54).
Elsey (1990) also highlights the differences in the practical aspects of study in the U.K. as opposed to Hong Kong:

overseas students tend to have learned in a theoretical and paper-oriented way about technical subjects, while in Britain they are expected to know what things do and how they work and to have a general three-dimensional practical feel for the subject (p. 69).

According to one interview study (Burrell, Kim, & Bartlett, in press), Korean international students working on graduate degrees in the United States describes the similar American emphasis on the practical application of knowledge as a different, but attractive, feature of the U.S. approach to higher education.

The form of academic tasks also changes from culture to culture. Some international students have never completed a research paper or a report (Kinnell, 1990) and essays may be required to follow unfamiliar rhetorical styles (Crowe & Peterson, 1995). Although language proficiency is at the heart of writing, sometimes the “real problem with a poor piece of writing is not language-related errors but the fact that the student has not met the expectations of the English-speaking academic reader in terms of audience, syntax, figures of speech, sentence structure, and idiom” (Koffolt & Holt, 1997, pp.53-54).

Group work is another area in which cultural differences may appear. Students will bring different goals to their group participation based on their cultural background. For example, Chinese students might be more concerned with maintaining group harmony than with the ostensible purpose of a peer editing group: correcting errors in writing. American students, on the other hand, might be comfortable using the group input for individual gain and, therefore, use the editing group as expected (Nelson, 1997).

Major differences in communication styles across cultures can impact class behavior in whole class discussions or question-and-answer periods, in group or pair work, and in class presentations. Different students will have different levels of experience and “cultural permission” (Johnson, 1997, p. 50) for each of these activities. Some of the cultural influences include turn-taking, pausing, and speech volume and amount guidelines as well as epistemological influences (e.g., Why should I engage in peer work when the only valuable knowledge comes from the professor?) and the influences of authority, gender, and cooperation derived from the students’ cultural background (Johnson, 1997). It is interesting to note that proverbs from a culture often highlight some particular cultural assumptions. For students from a culture like America where “the squeaky wheel gets the grease,” it can be imagined that assertive and direct communication activities like questioning the professor or stating one’s own opinion would be comfortable. However, for students from a culture like China where “the high nail gets hammered down” (personal communication, Dr. Tao) such individualistic behaviors may feel inappropriate and these students may be more comfortable discussing material in small groups or pairs.

Of course, the difference in communication patterns and the stresses involved in trying new ones are exacerbated because many international students are also using a non-native language during these processes and may have concerns about making errors in grammar or pronunciation (Johnson, 1997). There may also be a difference in what the words used in
instructions mean to the professor versus to the student, thus requiring clarification. For example, problems can occur with the use of analogies. An American professor may suggest students approach this test “like a game” meaning “use strategy to improve your performance” but the Egyptian international student may conclude from “like a game” that the test should be regarded as an “unimportant pastime” (Lee, 1997).

As has been mentioned previously, international students may need to make changes in their learning strategies or studying approaches in order to successfully perform the tasks of the new academic culture. Because strategies are situation specific, proper strategy choice depends on the characteristics of the content, task, and learner (Sherman, 1991). Therefore, an international student’s previously successful strategies may not work with the new tasks assigned by U.S. professors, so that student attempts to modify old strategies and develop new ones. Burrell, Kim, and Bartlett (in press) illustrate this process in the following interview with a Korean international student:

The teacher [in Korea] will write down democracy and the meaning of democracy, and the characteristics of democracy 1-2-3 and I would memorize those things...[for tests like] multiple choice or short answer like one or two word....But here I had to write the essay. I have to put it in my mind and organize...I realized...it’s not working...I have to understand. Also I need to memorize so I read...[points at notebook]...here I put the key points. These are the exact words from books...the exact words because I have a hard time to make sentences. And then I wrote down and read one time and think about that in Korean...actually it’s mix of Korean and English. And so I’m still memorizing but...this time I’m thinking about it, too. Both in Korean and English.

Learning assistance professionals are in a position to help international students meet both the challenges inherent in studying in the medium of a non-native language and in crossing the borders of academic cultures. Although not the focus of this chapter, educators can also help students ameliorate, at least through referrals and sympathetic listening, the negative experiences of being an overseas student when it is complicated by affective factors such as homesickness, loss of social support networks, and general culture shock due to the stresses of adaptation (Furnham, 1997).

**International Students Within Our Mission**

Generally, the mission of developmental education and learning assistance is to support students’ learning, although the approaches and delivery systems designed to do this job differ across institutions (Simpson, Hynd, Nist, & Burrell, 1997). Carbone (1987) provides a definition of learning assistance that clearly has room for international students as a service population: “various activities designed to advance the arts of learning and teaching. The goals of all activities are...development of the student’s abilities to acquire and use information and enhancement of the teacher’s ability to facilitate that development” (Carbone, 1987, p. 24). These inclusive words are probably echoed in the mission statements of most of the learning support units in U.S. universities. For example, the mission statement used at The University of Georgia includes the following language: “The Mission of the Academic Center is to assist students in developing strategies to meet the challenge of the institution’s academic standards” (in-house memo, n.d.). This institution does include some class, tutoring, and workshop programming.
designed especially to meet the needs of international students, thus supporting the breadth of its mission statement. In fact, models exist in learning assistance that are designed to support its expansion so that a wide range of students can be served (Commander, Stratton, Callahan, & Smith, 1996).

The argument that learning assistance should be considered developmental rather than remedial is also supported by the inclusion of international students within the field’s sphere of influence. Of all students, those struggling to adapt to a new academic culture need to be taught the process of learning rather than just a focus on skill development because they need to be able to adapt their old learning methods to the new tasks confronting them. And this focus on process rather than just product is one of the hallmarks of developmental, rather than remedial, education (Higbee, 1993). Similar distinctions, which support the inclusion of international students, are made by Casazza and Silverman (1996) in the preface to their practitioner-oriented book; their philosophy reflects a positive, inclusive approach to learning assistance. Rather than focusing solely on students who need help with basic skills—a focus that has traditionally fought a negative connotation—this approach seeks to provide assistance to all learners, from the underprepared to graduate students. The goal in all cases is to maximize the individual’s potential so that his or her goals can be met. The philosophy...assumes that the learning process takes place in a meaningful context and is sensitive to the cognitive, emotional, and social needs of the learner (p. xii).

In fact, the rationale for including international students within our service population is so apparent that one guidebook for international students currently recommends that they come to the campus learning center for academic support (Moore, Oliver, & Veady, 1992).

**Programs to Serve International Students**

Learning assistance professionals and developmental educators are already adept at supporting students as they make transitions across academic cultures (i.e., moving from high school to college). In her case study of a Lao college freshman, Johns (1992) describes the transitions of the freshman year for all students as incorporating learning to read, study, and write in new ways to meet new purposes inherent in the academic culture of higher education. In addition, she notes that although the previous teachers in high school were likely to have scaffolded student learning, this was very unlikely to occur in college, an environment where some professors feel that showing a model paper is lowering academic standards (Johns, 1992). The high school to college transition parallels that of most international students as they adjust to academics in the United States. Those working in academic assistance are able to help international students with this process by helping them understand the expectations of the new culture, teaching them how to analyze their new academic tasks, and helping them develop effective learning strategies to meet their new tasks. This is in essence the same support that helps students move successfully from high school to college.

For international students English language proficiency is also an area of concern that can be addressed through learning assistance programming. This is one of the major areas in which
Developmental education programs are currently meeting the needs of the foreign and domestic language minority populations. These programs primarily occur in the areas of writing (Hu, 1995; Watkins-Goffman, 1991) and conversation (Geery 1995; Haas & Smoke, 1990). The "'conversation groups'...improve their communication skills as well as promote a better understanding of the cultural differences they experience in the classroom” (Casazza & Silverman, 1996, p. 28). In addition, language courses linked to content courses are also offered in some programs (Smoke & Haas, 1995).

Although there are clearly ESL-oriented components in developmental education, including special interest groups that are part of our national organizations, as a field we need to recognize that most of what we offer can help meet the needs of international students as well as the needs of the students we currently serve. As we have demonstrated, the needs of international students do not lie solely in language training, but in learning how to negotiate cultural barriers and develop new ways of learning and viewing the world, especially in understanding the host country’s higher education and their place in it (Cortazzi & Jin, 1997).

In order to work with international students effectively we will need to consciously examine our current programs in the light of their needs, just as Moser (1993) did when she examined the use of tutoring services by international students, an examination that led to further tutor training and, ultimately, a more effective system. However, many of our current topics and delivery systems are suitable for international students with little modification. For example, academic success workshops covering a broad array of topics are a staple in the academic assistance program at The University of Georgia and a series of them has now been designed to meet the particular needs of international students. This year four American students attended the class participation workshop and one attended the plagiarism workshop, and they liked the workshops and found them as useful as the international students did. If we add cultural information to the design of our programs we are actually deepening the understanding of all participating students, one of the reasons for promoting campus diversity that we addressed earlier in this chapter.

Attendance in study skills, learning strategies, and learning to learn courses would also help international students to develop study approaches that are suitable to the demands of U.S. higher education. Woolston (1995) suggests that mainstreaming international graduate students after the original orientation will give them what they want most: a U.S. education. However, based on the responses of international graduate students to the series of workshops mentioned earlier, academic support at later stages is also welcome. Supporting this assertion are those researchers who have found that “overseas students acutely felt the limited personal attention and guidance given by staff, [and] a lack of study skills courses” (Elsey, 1990, p. 51) and the administrators and theorists who call for such courses. For example, Macrae (1997) recommends that an academic orientation lasting for the entire first semester be developed for international students in the United Kingdom, covering such items as library skills, study skills, assignment and examination types and models, and the roles and responsibilities of all university personnel. Many of the staples of study skills and learning strategies courses, such as lecture note-taking, strategies for creating meaningful rehearsal of content such as maps, time management, motivation, test anxiety, and test-taking skills, address some of the needs of international...
students mentioned in earlier sections of this chapter. Study skills courses containing these elements should be part of any comprehensive support program for international students (Tillman, 1990).

Both courses and workshops can be used to provide international students with the information about and practice with appropriate classroom behaviors like participating in class discussion comfortably, asking questions in class effectively, and talking to professors appropriately, thus helping them learn the manners of the U.S. academy. Such courses can also be beneficial to American students as they make the high school to college transition. The computer facilities in learning assistance laboratories can add ESL practice materials and we, as developmental educators, can expand our outreach into places like graduate dorms and married student housing in order to contact and support international students.

Our comparatively small classes in developmental education and learning assistance also provide major benefits for international students. One of the best indicators of satisfaction with a U.S. study experience is the ability to meet and interact with Americans (Lee, Abd-Ella, & Burks, 1981). In a small class international students will have a better chance to get to know both their American instructors and peers. Additionally, small classes provide less threatening places to practice using English in small group work, project work, and class discussion.

**Conclusion**

Working more extensively with international students can help connect learning assistance units with other campus organizations such as the international student life office, the office of instructional development (e.g., to survey faculty about student needs), the graduate office, the library staff, and any campus intensive English program available. Making connections with other concerned institutional units is important. However, the international students themselves will be the best source of information. Leaders of international student organizations can help facilitate contacts with their constituencies.

It is crucial to reach out to international students and then listen to requests for topics, times, and places for classes and workshops. Do not assume that people understand things like their eligibility to use campus resources. International students may think that peer tutoring costs money, that the database computers in the library are only for staff, or may have no idea of the function of a reference librarian. You do not need to be a cross-cultural expert or an ESL teacher to work with international students, just listen to them (Burrell, Kim, & Bartlett, in press).

As a final note, educators need to be wary of the viewpoint that their programs are “fixing” deficiencies located in the international students themselves. This approach to helping international students function effectively blocks an analysis of the ways in which institutional practices contribute to difficulties experienced by international students and discussed by Elsey and Kinnell (1990) in relationship to the experience of and programs developed for overseas students in the United Kingdom. The true source of the difficulties is the gap between the performance of the students and the demands of the institution for a type of learning that is demonstrated in a particular way. It is instructive to put oneself in the place of an international student. For example, a paper written in the preferred British, or American, deductive style in
which the main idea is stated first would be considered poorly done in China where the inductive pattern is more common, with background material given first to lead the reader to the main point (Cortazzi & Jin, 1997). Both styles are valid ways to present information but are not esteemed equally in either culture. In addition, because “students are assumed to be communicating what they have learnt their discourse patterns are interpreted and assessed as learning, not as culture” (Cortazzi & Jin, 1997, p. 82) using the deductive pattern in China would lead to a poor evaluation.

The focus is on the students in academic assistance. “Increased student diversity, though an educational challenge, enriches and strengthens the institution as a whole. The learning assistance professional and developmental educator can help bring out the benefits of diversity in higher education...” (Casazza & Silverman, 1996, p. 265). Elsey (1990) states:

it is both a matter of professional pride and marketing integrity that university education for overseas students must be a high-value experience. A great deal of money has changed hands and many overseas students have placed themselves in a high-risk position, with the fear of failure looming large in most minds. Overseas students have a compelling need to succeed academically and the university has a moral duty to teach effectively and to enable them to learn effectively. News of failure or even dissatisfaction travels fast and the overseas recruitment policy is soon at risk. But more importantly, ineffective teaching and learning betray the ideals of university education, which is the pursuit of excellence through the development of knowledge and critical thinking (pp. 46-47).

International students make a major commitment to study in the U.S. in terms of money, time, and adaptation stress. It is time to consciously include them in the vision and goals of our programs. Developmental educators and others working with academic assistance programs have the expertise to help them avoid returning to their home countries after missed opportunities and failed dreams.

References


Barriers to Higher Education and Strategies to Remove Them: An International Perspective

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Abstract

This chapter reports on the findings of two discussion groups at the 1997 European Access Network Conference. Although not precisely synonymous, access students in Europe share many commonalities with developmental students in the United States. This chapter illustrates that barriers to higher eduction are universal, and provides ideas for their elimination.

The theme of changing social and cultural attitudes in regards to seeking access to higher education was assigned to two working groups at the June 1997 European Access Network (EAN) Conference in Ireland. Over 170 participants primarily from Europe, with representatives from Australia, South Africa, and the United States, considered conclusions and recommendations formulated by the working groups. The intent of this chapter is to introduce American developmental educators to those conclusions and recommendations. Patricia McTiernan from Athlon Regional Technical College (Ireland) and I acted as group leaders. The report Project on Access to Higher Education in Europe (1996) prepared by Maggie Woodrow, University of Westminster, London, for the Council of Europe, was used as a guide for leading the working groups and for preparing this essay.
Barriers

A wide range of barriers was identified. Language policies in some countries act as barriers to higher education. In some places, cultural differences in learning are overlooked. Ethnic groups are poorly monitored in terms of their involvement in education. The increased cost of higher education and the decrease in funding contribute to barriers also.

Predictable access problems appeared across national borders. High in the list of barriers to higher education identified by the working groups were low socio-economic status and poor secondary school preparation. Additionally, access students face a lack of information for gaining entry to higher education and inflexible entry criteria. In some cases, access students face direct discrimination and they are often put off by an ethnocentric curriculum. Many students who do not belong to dominant groups find few role models in higher education. Many are barred by unaccommodated disabilities. Though gender restrictions have been better addressed in recent years, barriers remain.

The conference working groups considered the manner in which higher education places obstacles in the path of access students by its unwillingness to change and by its negative attitude toward access values. Access students often think no opportunities are available, and they feel incompetent and incapable. Higher education seems not designed for them. Often, they are the victims of the idea that mass higher education lowers quality. They are the mass. And they fear social ridicule.

Many in higher education are unaware of their own assumptions, including a belief that access students are unlike the rest of us. On the other hand, the students say, “This won’t get us anywhere.” Students also believe that higher education is not rooted in the real world, that academic culture is irrelevant, that we need the unskilled to do menial jobs. They operate under the assumption that society educates exclusively for the economy rather than for the self.

The discussion developed in the working groups expressed barriers in phrases, abstractions, concepts, common wisdom, angles of vision, and social and political strategies. Many of these approaches are not unknown to Americans, except that there is perhaps more unity and commonality in the American discourse about access. The groups discussed the need to go beyond entrance issues in developing access goals, that is, to deal with retention and program completion, too. There is less concern in the United States with the varying quality of institutions providing access than there may be in Europe. The idea that a key access issue is the matter of blaming victims for society’s deficiencies does not enter the American mind in just that way.

Strategies

The working groups explored a number of ways to break down barriers. One focus was on staff development as a way to foster change. Legislating against discrimination was another. Pedagogical strategies could be used to change student attitudes—particularly those of low
aspirations and low self-esteem. Targeted for using these strategies are policy makers, society, families, peer groups, higher education institutions, educators, students.

A major concern coming from the working groups is the inadequate availability of monitoring for access groups in higher education. Working group members called for a regular and systematic collection of access information. There was some concern expressed about the misuse of such collected information, but it was concluded that the collection of information was necessary, and that it needs to be more than tabulated. It needs to be analyzed and implemented into fruitful access policies. The type of information discussed included information about admission actions, student progress reports, degree completion information, first-year employment after higher education tracking, and statistics about the participation of a wide range of underrepresented groups.

The purposes of collecting this information, it was concluded, strike at many needs. Student success can be increased by guiding students based on facts. Institutional efficiency can be achieved by better understanding new student populations. It is important to be able to predict the student’s successful completion of a program. Student needs must be anticipated. Unequal preparation must be diagnosed. Social and economic class obstacles must be softened. Ethnic groups, mature students, students with disabilities, and women bring their own issues, all of which must be addressed. Profiles of drop-outs and of all access students must be developed. Comparative studies of different student populations must be supported.

The working groups addressed reducing drop-outs as a concern of access. The questions needing to be answered include: Why do students leave? When do they leave? What are the characteristics of leavers? What is the institution’s role and responsibility for noncompletion? In addition to these questions, the concept of drop-out needs to be defined. Should the student leaving to take a job be considered a drop-out? Group participants considered whether it is more efficient to keep a student enrolled than to find a replacement. From the groups’ experience, the causes of drop-out identified were inefficient instruction, poor motivation, academic failure, poor academic preparation, social maladjustment, poor health, and financial difficulties.

The appropriate support for retention was determined to be essential. Faculty need to be made aware of issues. Access programs should be treated as valuable by institutions. Institutions must be aware of the impact on faculty of access programs. Institutions must be able to transport access widely.

An early alert system was recommended for first-year access programs. Retention techniques should underpin this system. A capacity to deal with racism and alienation is required of access students. Academic support structures should be available, including mentoring, counseling, tutoring, and study skills workshops. Networks should be fostered. The following are needed: a positive attitude toward access students; an ongoing discourse about access student issues; models with which access students can identify; access student topics included in academic programs.
International dialogues should explore various access strategies. Radical changes in higher education are needed. Faculty should be taught how to teach. Learner-centered approaches and collaborative ways of learning need to be included in higher education; new forms of technology like adaptive technology for disabilities are wanted, as are dialogues with learners to uncover their needs. Higher education must not be a prisoner of past knowledge; a mind shift not a paradigm shift is required.

Some participants wanted to start earlier in the school system to prepare access students for higher education. One participant said that higher education should see the world of ideas as it is, not as it was. Another participant spoke of a society that valued every person’s contribution.

Conclusion

Americans examining the discourse from the working groups should feel at home. We also deal with poor preparation of students, with students who lack insider leverage for higher education, with mislearning, with inefficient curricula and teaching, and with unsatisfactory measurement of aptitude and achievement. Access students everywhere seem to be filled with personal fears, poor motivation, and low expectations. These students confront elitist values that are inflexible and universities that sometimes ignore diversity. There may be fewer anti-education and elitist attitudes in the United States, and programs in Europe may be more likely to be under-funded and lack openings, but many groups are marginalized, such as mature students, second-chance students, students with disabilities, and women.

Recommendations from the working groups are not dissimilar to American hopes for access students. Policy makers need to be more proactive. A more creative curriculum and fresh learning methods are wanted. Avenues for adult lifelong learning wait to be created. Americans can learn from the working groups by way of the different angles of vision, the different twists of concepts from different cultures—twists that startle us into seeing in a new way our problems and concerns, which occur in a time of rapid change in knowledge, social mobility, technology, and of new direction for the human family within higher education—starting points for reflection about how we provide access fairly and richly in a new world.

Robert Lemelin serves as co-chair of the NADE International Committee.
The title of this book speaks to its message and answers the question that it poses. Are accommodations for college students with disabilities simply good teaching practice? Might some accommodations be utilized to support all students? Can these support services be employed to the benefit of all, without the lowering of academic standards and intellectual integrity that so many fear? The answer is yes, yes, and yes!

The book integrates definitions, legal requirements, ethical concerns, and practical aspects of working clearly and concisely with students with disabilities. From the first chapter, in which a non-technical definition of learning disabilities is presented in a generally understandable manner, the reader is treated to a systematic overview of some of the most commonly encountered disabilities on college campuses—and the accommodations that may be used to assist students with these specific disabilities.
This book is a must read and must keep for reference in that it includes a clear articulation of the difference between accommodations and treatment of disabilities (Barrett, 1997) and a comprehensive overview of the legal issues (Lissner, 1997). In addition, the book concludes with three worthwhile appendices that summarize the key federal legislation concerning accommodations for students with disabilities, offer an outline of the accommodation decision making process, and propose a model statement of the rights and responsibilities of students with disabilities.

Not withstanding all the above, Accommodations—Or just good teaching? speaks to the issue by supporting accommodations as good teaching practice (Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Elmont, 1997) and calls upon all of us, learners, teachers, counselors and administrators, to work together to facilitate learning and growth.

As a college administrator, counselor, and teacher with significant experience in working with traditional, nontraditional, and at risk students, I found this book to be well written, easy to read and well researched. It speaks to specifics without resorting to jargon or stereotypes. As such, I recommend Accommodations—Or just good teaching? as both an overview and a reference for all concerned college professionals.

References


Jeanne Henry’s delightful description of her developmental reading and writing workshops at Northern Kentucky University deserves a wide audience. Based on the qualitative study of her class that became her doctoral dissertation, her book reflects her efforts to make it more reader friendly, humorous, and practical.

Explaining that few on campus seem to know about the developmental courses she teaches, she writes, “I think the benign neglect the program experiences (unless we do some outrageous things like ask for tenure) is typical of the experience of other developmental programs” and adds that “Developmental teachers should always lobby for equal pay and more recognition given that our salaries seem to be determined by some weird correlation with our students’ ACT scores, but to take a lack of professional recognition personally will erode your life and your work.” (p.20).

This is how she depicts her class: ”I think that teachers everywhere will recognize my students with their backward ball caps, bomber jackets, some single-digit ACT scores and robust hostility toward the act of reading…” (p. xv). Half her class reported they never read for
pleasure; roughly a third came from homes that do not encourage reading, and another third “liked people who read about as much as they like debt-collection agencies.”—In other words, they agree with the statement, “I feel hostility toward people who read a lot.” (p. 28).

You might well ask, “Why in the world do students who hate to read come to college where reading and writing are essential?” Henry answers, “What else can they do right now but go to school since they need to mature a bit before moving out of the family home and obtaining a job that they can’t afford to lose?” She adds “Most of our students associate respect and achievement with earning a college degree, but they go to college because their dreams are of financial security, owning some nice things, and doing interesting work that makes use of their talents” (p. 19).

She calls her students “aliterates”—those who can read but won’t—and views them as folks who are running out of time. How is motivating aliterate college students to read different? She reports, “Bottom line, the difference between my students and first graders amounts to little more than my students are bigger, sexually active and pay bills” (p. vx). Her goal is not to prepare them for college reading, nor make them better readers, but rather to train them to become authentic readers (fluent, flexible, and habitual readers who can read for their own purposes), in the hope that this will enable them to transfer more easily to reading college textbooks.

**What Did She Do?**

Using the whole language approach, she had her class read any books they wanted, write literary letters to each other and to her, and she gave them individualized instruction. Most of each class period was spent in silently reading books and writing letters about them, but from time to time she presented mini-sessions on topics like Strategies for Selecting Books, Authentic versus Inauthentic Reading, Writing Literary Letters, Oral Reading, and When to Abandon a Book, Models of Reading, Predicting the Endings of Books, Critical Reading, and Metacognition. While the students read their books, the teacher read her own book.

To other teachers who argue that her reading and writing workshop methods will not work at their colleges, she explains that what they really mean is that “it can’t happen here” and insists that “using the workshop method might be controversial, treasonable, or even impossible at your school but it would work.”

Her free-reading approach is reminiscent of the “hooked on books” movement popularized by David Fader and colleagues in the 1960s and 1970s that tried to turn junior high school non-readers into readers by encouraging them to read books that they were interested in, not just those the teacher assigned (Fader & McNeil, 1968).

So what happened between the “hooked on books era “and now, given we still find college freshmen who have never read a book and hate to read and must go through the same total immersion experience to begin to read for pleasure? Somehow the educational pendulum shifted and stuck on overemphasizing basic skills, on mastery learning or programmed reading
materials that condemned slower readers to a dull school experience that drained their enthusiasm so they never got to the point where they could read for pleasure. Perhaps some superintendent opened a door and saw all the kids reading “trash” and concluded that the teacher was not teaching them anything. Obviously, the skills and drill, programmed, or mastery learning approach prevailed, so we still have to introduce almost a third of our entering freshmen to reading real books.

According to Henry, authentic reading relates to what readers do when they read books for their own purposes—for pure enjoyment or recreation or to get information. In contrast, the textbook and exercises that teachers assign require that students read for someone else’s purposes, and she calls this simulated reading that is usually voiceless, passionless, and dull. To the question, “Why do teachers continue to teach subskills rather than wholistic reading?” she answers, “I think it is far easier to teach subskills that give the impression that we (as teachers) know what we are doing than to acknowledge that experience is the only teacher when it comes to constructing meaning” (p. 136). Henry points out that skills practitioners are looking for shortcuts to deliver instruction quickly and efficiently that will teach the majority of students to comprehend what they have to read in school. Teaching authentic reading, on the other hand, is labor intensive and time-consuming unless our students were lucky enough to have been born into critically literate households.

What It Takes to Teach This Way?

In order to teach the whole language approach reading workshop, the teacher must be willing to relinquish control and be willing to give up being an expert and evaluator and assume the roles of collaborator, consultant, and witness. It takes a very intuitive, patient, understanding, and self-critical teacher to use these methods, for you are trying to keep track of 18 different students reading 18 different books while you yourself are reading your book. In her chapter titled “Dirty Laundry,” Henry describes the mistakes she made and how she corrected them.—For example; in reviewing her letters to students she found she had been inadvertently asking questions that called for literal answers—something she had been trying to avoid all her teaching career.

Worried that most of the literary letters her students wrote to her contained summaries of the books they were reading, she realized that they had to describe the plot so she would understand what they were talking about because she had not read their book. On closer examination, she discovered that these were not uncritical summaries, but represented their attempts to select important points, and interpret them—not just summarize the plot sequence—so they did involve critical thinking and interpretation.

Choosing Books for the Class Library

None of her students had a library card so her first task was to stock the classroom library with books that they wanted to read. She found that like the “hooked on books” teachers had earlier, her students preferred the books that teachers tend to hate—horror, romance,
adventure—any book that rated high on the gore score; such as, a book with a bloody, clawed hand on the cover and books that had been made into movies.

**Goal**

Henry maintains that the teacher’s job is to build bridges between what students like now and will read and what they will like in the future that will be more challenging. That means taking on a reading ethic that failed to get them to read what they were assigned in high school but also failed to get them to read what they pleased and left them with a lot of superstitions about reading like feeling that books have to be read from cover to cover, that you can’t skip words, and so on. She argues that skills practitioners are looking for shortcuts to deliver instruction quickly and efficiently that will teach the majority of students to comprehend what they have to read in school. She points out that teaching authentic reading, on the other hand, is labor intensive and time-consuming unless students have been born into critically literate households.

**Results**

Henry’s 18 students read a total of 93 different books of which she herself had only read 15 during the 15 week term and she was able to trace their literary development and their increasing sophistication in using metacognitive processes as they became more mature readers.

On the Nelson-Denny Test, her class scored an average grade equivalent of 8.6 at entry, while their posttest average was 12.2, representing a “gain” of 3.6 grade levels in 15 weeks. However, despite the gain, she claims that the Nelson-Denny does not reflect her goals in teaching and has since abandoned using standardized tests. What was more important to her than the test score gains were the positive changes in attitudes and increased confidence in their reading ability that her students expressed in their class evaluations.

The book’s appendix contains her syllabus, her criteria for grading, a list of book titles including crime, horror, romances, and adventure that she found were popular for a class library, the titles of 51 mini-lessons, and suggestions on how to make this method work. Anyone who teaches developmental reading will enjoy this book and administrators should be encouraged to read it as well.

**References**


Developmental Education:
Preparing Successful College Students

Jeanne L. Higbee & Patricia L. Dwinell, Editors

Monograph 24, National Resource Center for The Freshman Year Experience and Students in Transition

This monograph portrays the many facets of developmental education—past, present, and future. Chapters address the need for equity and diversity in higher education and the important function that developmental education plays in providing educational opportunity. Leaders in the field discuss the integration of skill development with content courses as well as the effectiveness of specific strategies such as Supplemental Instruction, strategic learning, and personal management training. The monograph reflects how the field of developmental education has continued to expand its mission to serve many students at virtually every type of institution.

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