Dev Ed Remix: Emerging Models in Developmental Education Course Redesign

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With its high referral and low success rates, along with a considerable price tag, developmental education is experiencing unprecedented reevaluation and change. Considering the following, it's no surprise that everyone is taking a good, hard look at developmental education:

High Referral Rates  Low Completion Rates
Students are referred to developmental education at a rate of 40% at all colleges, 60% at community colleges

(Bailey & Cho, 2010)¹

On an 8.5 year timeline, students will earn a degree or certificate at a rate of 28% for students who took at least one developmental education course, 43% for non-remedial students

(Attewell et al. 2006; Lu, 2013)²

**High Cost**

$5.6 billion estimated total cost for addressing developmental education needs throughout a student's time in college, including $3.6 billion in direct education costs and $2 billion in lost lifetime wages

(Amos, 2011)³

Some of the response to this crisis has been far-reaching and extreme. Amid concerns that they are paying twice to educate students—once in high school and once again in developmental education programs—many state legislatures have passed mandates that eliminate state financial aid, overhaul gateway courses, or eradicate double-funding in student education. Some institutions have responded with a new interest in innovation, exploring new models—and looking at old models through new eyes—to improve readiness, persistence, and completion rates.

After a whirlwind February that took us from the American Association of Community Colleges’ National Summit on the Redesign of Developmental Education in D.C., to Achieving the Dream’s Annual Institute in Baltimore, and finally to the annual National Association for Developmental Education conference in Greenville, South Carolina, we wanted to highlight a few of the redesign models that were popping up in our developmental education conversations.
Accelerated Learning Program (A Co-requisite Model)

When Dr. Peter Adams, Professor of English at the Community College of Baltimore County, discovered in 1993 that only about 33 percent of the institution’s students who started in upper-level developmental writing courses ever completed English 101, he set out to determine why. He found that it wasn't the complexity of writing concepts and writing tasks that were holding students back; it was the complexity of their personal lives. While they might need help with some of the cognitive tasks in a writing course, it was more often metacognitive issues that caused them to drop out of school. With this knowledge, Adams and his colleagues developed the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) with the primary aim of addressing these metacognitive issues.

ALP is a co-requisite “mainstreaming” model for basic writing in which ten basic students who are placed into upper-level developmental writing are invited to voluntarily enroll in a special section of first-year composition. This section comprises ten basic writing students and ten students whose placement is first-year composition. The ten basic writing students also enroll in a companion course taught by the same instructor, which meets the hour following the first-year composition course. The small class size; the bonds formed among the developmental and non-developmental students, as well as their instructor; and attention to metacognitive issues are some of the unique characteristics of this model that greatly reduce the number of students who drop out. After more than eight consecutive semesters of offering the ALP model, 65 to 67 percent of the ALP developmental students were successfully completing the first-year composition course.

Similarly, co-founders of the California Acceleration Project Dr. Katie Hearn, English Instructor at Chabot College, and Dr. Myra Snell, Mathematics Professor at Los Medanos Community College, have found that reducing the sequencing length of the developmental education progression through an accelerated mainstreaming approach effectively reduces exit points leading to an increase in students enrolling in and completing college level courses.

Integrated Reading & Writing

A natural connection between reading and writing might seem like a given, but in reality, literacy education has persistently treated the two as entirely separate processes. Before Dr. Kim Flachmann arrived at California State University, Bakersfield, where she now teaches English, this separation was
exactly what she encountered. “I came initially from a school in Chicago that divided up reading and writing. But I instinctively taught writing in my reading classes and reading in my writing classes. When I went to California, [reading and writing] were integrated in the curriculum which was so much more natural for me to teach them integrated.” (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iYriG4MmKFQ) The Integrated Reading and Writing model recognizes the reading-writing connection through a course, or sequence of courses, that are designed to teach both critical reading and writing skills. Students learn both sets of competencies and use writing to demonstrate their comprehension of their reading.

In Dr. Flachmann’s experience, this integrated approach can lead to some powerful discoveries. “What I finally came to realize is that if students can understand and truly deconstruct and discover how the reading works as half of a circle, they can use that discovery in their writing in the other half of the circle,” she says.

Pathways

“Developmental math is a burial ground for the aspirations of myriad students.” These are ominous words from Dr. Uri Treisman, Founder and Executive Director of the Charles A. Dana Center at the University of Texas at Austin quoted in a 2013 presentation (http://www.google.com/url?q=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.utdanacenter.org%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2FNCSM_DanaCenter_AddressingCrisisinDev-Math_2013april20.pdf&sa=D&sntz=1&usg=AFQjCNFntIVkuefmxaaqjihFFIC4UzPwx). With 67% of community college students being referred to one or more developmental math courses, it’s hard to argue. With the New Mathways Project, a high-profile Pathways model for redesigning developmental math, Dr. Treisman and his team are working to help more students keep their aspirations intact.

The New Mathways Project is rooted in the idea that college math should focus on preparing learners for careers. As Dr. Treisman put it in this National Journal article (http://www.google.com/url?q=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.nationaljournal.com%2Fnext-america%2Feducation%2Fredesigning-remedial-math-20140912&sa=D&sntz=1&usg=AFQjCNGI78D6onnN6KxAER7meK8fuCRWdA), “The idea that they should be broadly prepared isn’t as compelling as organizing programs that help them get a first [better-paying] job, with an eye on their second and third.” This emphasis on relevance to fields of study that connect
to careers is a foundational principle of the New Mathways Project. The Project aims to dramatically shorten the time it takes for students to earn college credit in mathematics and meet the requirements of specific academic programs and careers.

Follow Katie McClarty at @KatieMcClarty. For more information and resources on these and other developmental education course redesign models including the report Developmental Education: New Approaches for the 21st Century by Katie McClarty, Peter Conforti and Jonell Sanchez, visit www.PearsonEd.com/Developmental-Ed (http://www.pearsoned.com/Developmental-Ed).

References


Learning through both physical and virtual discovery

(http://www.pearsoned.com/education-blog/learning-physical-virtual-discovery/)
Why ‘what works’ doesn’t: False positives in education research
The future of language learning: Augmented reality vs virtual reality
Reality is messy, labs aren't: How to make research-backed education work

Acceleration Redesign & Readiness (http://www.pearsoned.com/blog-archive/acceleration-redesign-and-readiness/)

Efficacy (http://www.pearsoned.com/blog-archive/efficacy/)

Pearson Student Advisory Board (PSAB) (http://www.pearsoned.com/blog-archive/pearson_student_advisory_board_psab/)

Educator Effectiveness (http://www.pearsoned.com/blog-archive/educator_effectiveness/)

Next Generation Learning & Assessment (http://www.pearsoned.com/blog-archive/next-generation-learning-assessment/)

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