



DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION REDESIGN IN OREGON

This is the second newsletter in a series that will highlight the efforts of Oregon's 17 community colleges to redesign developmental education and increase student success. These efforts address recommendations the Developmental Education Redesign Work Group consisting of teams from the 17 campuses developed between November 2013 and June 2014. [Click here](#) to read the report.

October 9 Team Lead Meeting Update

Developmental education redesign team leads from Oregon's 17 community colleges gathered in Salem on October 9th for their quarterly meeting. They outlined for each other progress each campus is making to address the 2013 recommendations of the Developmental Education Redesign Work Group. A majority of campuses are now implementing or planning to implement new math pathways that are rigorous but do not require a mastery of algebra. And many are anticipating the recommendations of the redesign effort's Placement Work Group and changing the way they place students. For instance, Blue Mountain and Oregon coast reported that they are now using high school grades and transcripts to place students in mathematics. Of the redesign work going on across the state, Elizabeth Cox Brand of the Oregon Community College Association remarked, "I am amazed at the progress campuses are making to decrease attrition and time to completion. While we still need more data to confirm we are making a difference, I have no doubt that far more Oregon students are achieving success as a result of campus efforts."

Campuses will receive additional support this year as they build on their early successes. Cox Brand announced to team leads that she has assigned a coach to each college. While the support offered by each coach will be at the discretion of team leads, coaches will visit campuses this fall and then again in the spring, supporting planning and implementation efforts. Darlene Geiger, team lead for Clackamas looks forward to working with her college's coach: "As the team lead for Clackamas, I am looking forward to having a professional coach help me hone our project plan and create a structure for engaging our campus community in the change conversations."

Team leads will meet again in January to share information, discuss progress and trouble-shoot problems as necessary. "I can't wait to hear about the progress campuses make over the next three months," Cox Brand said.

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-Darlene Geiger, Clackamas Community College

Mathematics PD at Portland

Faced with low student success rates in developmental math, Portland Community College's (PCC) math faculty embraced the challenge from college leaders to do better. With the flexibility provided by new state policy that no longer mandates an algebra pathway for all students, the faculty reviewed a number of curriculum models that offer rigorous developmental math alternatives. They adopted the Math Literacy Pathway program. Led by Portland's dMarie Carver, a working group wrote the curriculum for two new math courses (MTH 58 and 98) and made the administrative changes necessary to enable the new math program's success. PCC piloted the courses at the end of the 2014-15 academic year.

But developing the new curriculum was only the first step. The designers knew that the structure of the pathways courses—starting class with an introductory quote, asking students to share personal positions on topics, applying skills through group work, using computer technology and Excel—would require a significant adjustment for instructors used to spending most of their time lecturing. The work group knew that math faculty would need training on the new curriculum and on instructional techniques to deliver it. And with 40 full-time and 140 part-time faculty, the task would be substantial.

So in September 2015, 53 faculty attended an all-day professional learning session. The faculty were trained to address low reading skills among students, effectively use the technology and Excel components of the program, and manage the small group learning approach. PCC is planning more sessions and is also producing a video of one of the new classes to show instructors, students and advisors what to expect and how to enroll.

Kurt Simonds, Dean of Instruction at Portland Community College's Cascade campus, notes that the new curriculum has not come without challenges. Oregon's historic prohibition of majors at the Associate's degree level has made advisors reluctant to advise students to take the new track, rather than continue on the algebra track, in order to keep more options open to them. The college hopes to overcome this problem as it implements majors for Associate's degrees, consistent with a recently approved rule change by the HECC. The college plans to create

guided pathways to clarify which students would be best served by the new math track. This will require even more collaboration between math and other disciplines.

It's likely that many community colleges will find it necessary to address the professional development needs created by the implementation of new developmental education approaches. Simonds and Carver recommend that campuses identify a faculty champion or group of champions to lead the work. They also highlight collaboration with other departments as a key to success: both to get buy-in before starting implementation and to identify how best to support student success.

Online Placement Workshop at Oregon Coast

While working to understand the high dropout rate of students from developmental math courses, Oregon Coast Community College (OCCC) discovered that students often didn't understand the high-stakes nature of placement tests. The college determined that it needed to do more to prepare students for these assessments.

A team of developmental education faculty, staff, and administration led by Ben Kaufmann, Academic Advisor and Cindy Carlson, Dean of Students and Instruction, researched practices from other states but didn't find a program that fit the college's specific needs. So OCCC decided to create its own test preparation workshop. Using ProProfs software, the team built practice tests in math, reading and writing. Written resources developed by instructors accompany each question.

"The online placement workshop is mandatory for all new students," said Kaufmann. "While this adds an extra step in the admissions process, students have responded positively. To maximize awareness and participation, Oregon Coast deliberately communicates the new requirement to incoming students. When students call to make placement test appointments, OCCC staff explain the process and send reminders via email. The ProProfs software tracks the names and email addresses of students who have completed the practice tests."

Oregon Coast hasn't yet completed a full term with the new placement workshop, but data so far is promising. Students are spending on average 30 minutes on the practice writing test, 20 minutes on reading and 45 minutes on math. In writing, 66 percent of students who took the online prep tests placed into college-level

writing, compared with 50 percent of students who did not. Taking the practice tests has also increased college-level placement rates in reading and math.

Given multiple student success initiatives underway at Oregon Coast, finding faculty willing to commit time to developing the placement workshops was a challenge. The cost of building the online workshop was another hurdle; OCCC opted to design the online workshop in-house with the help of its computer technology instructor, rather than hire an external developer.

Many colleges may be considering strategies to improve placement outcomes similar to Oregon Coast. Kaufmann advises colleges interested in developing online test preparation programs to obtain buy-in from faculty. OCCC, reports Kaufmann, has achieved that buy-in and it appears that more students will achieve success as a result.

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