

The Changing Role of Developmental Education and Gateway Course Faculty: How to Keep Your Head When All around You Are Losing Theirs

Robin Ozz

Director of Developmental Education and Innovation, Phoenix College, Phoenix, AZ
President, National Association for Developmental Education

Knowing ideal educational change involves a long process beginning with input from all stakeholders (including students), and then researching, goal setting, identifying learning outcomes, sequencing of skills, designing curriculum and assessment, selecting materials and formative and summative assessments in a *pilot, revise, scale* cycle, and realizing that new reforms are not always going to follow this path, what is the classroom faculty to do? Here are some ideas:

- 1. Remember who you are.** Despite curricular change or process, you are still a teacher, and good teaching is what developmental education is about. In whatever forum or format it may occur, remember that active learning, problem-based learning considering Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development and Angelo and Cross assessment techniques all belong in your classroom.
- 2. Remember why you got into this business in the first place.** When things get tough, and you are resisting change, remind yourself of your mission and your priorities. Also remember that some of the best lessons we learn are through experiences that we would not guess would give us our best moments. Embrace the change—at least until you see how it works. Everything is a gift. These changes may be glass-half-full moments if you give them a chance.
- 3. Learn more.** You are going to be dealing with a more diverse range of abilities in most corequisite models of reform, so get ahead of the game and add to your toolbox. A great way to do this is through Universal Design for Learning (UDL), a model that addresses a wide range of needs. Complete student-centered, and incorporating both cognitive and affective tasks, UDL helps you design lessons that use multiple means of representation, expression, and engagement to tackle multiple levels of ability. See <http://www.udlcenter.org> for more information.
- 4. Form a professional learning community.** One of the best ways to navigate through change is to rely on our fellow travelers. Set up a time when you and your colleagues can get together (preferably with food) to talk about issues, success, practices, problems, and anything else on your mind. Social networks are underrated as far as support through change. The wisdom of the community can help you guide you through the rough spots and you will get chances to return the favor.

5. Do not drink the proverbial Kool-Aid®. It is very easy to get very excited when success rates are tripling as a result of your new reform. However, try to keep your success in perspective. Is a success rate of 20% going to 60% all that great? How about the 40% left behind? Celebrate the 60%, yes, but do not ignore the greater work that still needs to be done. There is always more work to do, and there is no silver bullet.

The only way to make sense out of change is to plunge into it, move with it, and join the dance. --Alan Watts

Selected Bibliography

Angelo, T., & Cross, K. (1995). *Classroom assessment techniques*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.

Diamond, R.M. (2008). *Designing and assessing courses and curricula*. 3rd Ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Fitzpatrick, J., Sanders, J., & Worthen, B. (2011). *Program evaluation: Alternative approaches and practical guidelines*. (4th Ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.

Horspool, A., & Lange, C. (2012). Applying the scholarship of teaching and learning: student perceptions, behaviours and success online and face-to-face. *Assessment and evaluation in higher education*, 37(1), 73-88. doi:10.1080/02602938.2010.496532

Wlodkowski, R. (2008). *Enhancing adult motivation to learn: A comprehensive guide to teaching all adults*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.