

Facilitating Student Success: Developing a Tutoring Center for Reading, Writing, and Mathematics at Baltimore City Community College

By Katana L. Hall Banks and Michelle Harris Bondima
dr.K.L.hall@gmail.com

Background/Overview

As part of the Baltimore City Community College's Strategic and Academic Master Plan, (2005-2010) the Developmental Education Task Force was formed in January 2005. The task force's two initial goals were to create an exemplary and effective model for developmental education" (Strategic Plan 2005) to send its Co-Chair's, Dr. Michelle Harris Bondima and Dr. Katana L. Hall Banks, to the four-week advanced professional training and acquire certification at the nationally recognized Kellogg Institute during the summer of 2005. In May, 2005, the Developmental Education Task Force became the Developmental Education Standing Committee.

Practicum Experience

There were 45 members in the Kellogg Institute's 2005 cohort. Participants hailed from colleges and universities across the nation and from New Zealand. The cohort's occupations included Full-time and Adjunct Faculty, Administrators, Deans, Coordinators, Committee Chairs, Department Chairs, Program Managers, Learning Center Directors, a Title III Director, and an Adult High School Specialist. The program consisted of two components: the first was an intensive four-week summer residency program of study. The second component was a year-long supervised practicum following the residency and carried out at the participant's home campus. Dr. Barbara Bonham graciously served as our advisor.

The residency seminars focused on topics like Assessment and Placement, Designing Learning Environments, Leadership and Academic Support Services Relating to Developmental

Education, Outcomes Assessment, and Program Evaluation. Each seminar was led by one or more recognized experts and included Dr. Hunter R. Boylan, Dr. Ed Morante, Dr. Barbara Bonham, Dr. Frank Christ, Dr. Anita George, and Dr. Gamba Tafari. Despite the rigors of the Kellogg's Institute's training schedule, participants had the opportunity to socialize and engage in activities encouraging an exchange of institutional, academic and experiential insights.

The Challenge

The importance of developmental education to BCCC cannot be overstated. In fall 2004, only 38 (4 percent) of the 866 students who took placement tests in all three skills areas did not need remediation in any area; 576 (67 percent) needed remediation in all three areas (BCCC Institutional Research and Advancement-IMAR Report, 2005). Additionally, evaluative assessment of the college's current strengths and challenges were delineated in both the Abell Report (2004) and Dr. Hunter R. Boylan's, "Recommendations for Developmental Education Report" (2005). According to the findings of the Abell Report, approximately 94% of students at BCCC required some developmental education course work (2004).

Theoretical Underpinnings for the Practicum

In keeping with the college's mission "to provide quality, affordable, and accessible educational opportunities with comprehensive programs that meet the professional and personal goals of students", the Center for Academic Achievement (CAA) was created. Exemplary developmental education programs and services operate within established instructional environments where value and high expectations for positive student outcomes take precedence (Sheldon, 2002).

Eight primary sources formed the theoretical underpinnings for the development, scope, and methodology selected for the practicum. The National Center for Education Statistics

(NCES) published a report in 2003 that provided significant information about the extent of remedial education at the postsecondary level as of fall 2000. Just as interesting, research also illustrated that the majority of institutions provided remedial courses through traditional academic departments in 2000 rather than creating departments specifically for remedial education (NCES, 2003).

Access to developmental education coursework has been shown to enable under-prepared students to persist towards their goals more effectively. *Yes We Can - A Community College Guide for Developing America's Under Prepared*, written by Robert H. McCabe, says of developmental education that “No educational program is as misunderstood or underappreciated....yet, it is essential to the nation’s well-being....it is cost effective, and productive....they [community colleges] are agents of democratization, with a core mission to provide opportunity to all” (13).

What Works - Research Based Best Practices in Developmental Education was written by Hunter R. Boylan, Ph.D. in collaboration with Continuous Quality Improvement Network and the National Center for Developmental Education to identify best practices (Boylan, p. 30).

Teaching the Language Arts– The Making of American Education, written by Cathy Collins Block, suggested that the “Language arts include speaking, listening, reading, writing, reflecting, observing, viewing, and technological literacy” (2). Block explores the concept of a “student centered” language arts classroom.

Schooling in Capitalist America: Educational Reform and the Contradictions of Economic Life penned by Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis (1976) is revolutionary in the way it challenged the school system’s claims of nondiscriminatory fair practices and opportunities,

holistic development, and the inconsistencies in creating and achieving unbiased scholastic reform (11).

Casazza Silverman's, *Learning Assistance and Developmental Education – A Guide for Effective Practices*, explored ways to identify specific student needs and organization efficiency, as well as tips on research, new and improved models, and ways of implementing them for optimal success.

Instructing and Mentoring the African American College Student: Strategies for Success in Higher Education, by authors Louis B. Gallien Jr., and Marshalita Sims Peterson, Ph.D, serves as a guide for creating an educational climate producing effective and sound academic experiences for African American college attendees. It also stresses the need for white professors teaching African American students at white colleges to utilize these best practices. Gallinger and Sims Peterson affirm that:

Being a teacher refers less to one who gives answers and expects conformity.....and more to one who is capable of providing contexts and stimuli so each learner can discover for him or herself. Such teachers are skillful intermediaries, and guides in the search for meaning and self-understanding. (p. 106).

The final reference used to inform and guide theoretical approaches for this practicum was, *Crisis In the Classroom: The Remaking of American Education*. In the text, Charles E. Silberman explored the way society “educates” the youth. Mr. Silberman articulates that:

Children are taught a host of lessons about values, ethics, morality, and character, and conduct every day of the week, less by the content of the curriculum, then by the way schools are organized, the ways teachers and parents behave, the way

they talk to their children and each other, and the kinds of behavior they approve or reward, disapprove or punish. (p. 9)

Practicum Strategy, Implementation and Demographics

Specific Practicum Goal

To actively involve and solicit representatives from all contingences of the campus community in the pre-planning, planning and design phase-one in the development of the Student Success Center.

Long Range Practicum Goal

To create a Tutorial Center to be called the Center for Academic Achievement that enhances opportunities for students to successfully master foundation skills and competencies in Developmental English, Reading and Math courses at Baltimore City Community College. The CAA would provide walk-in services, individualized tutoring sessions, supplemental classroom presentations, diagnostic surveys, skill guides, support preparation to be eligible for NADE certification.

Implementation

The pre-planning and design of phase-one of the Kellogg Practicum generated yearlong feedback from the, (a) Developmental Education Standing Committee's bi-weekly meetings; (b) monthly academic department meetings and workshops; (c) Faculty Development Day presentations; (d) Student Affairs branch exchanges; (e) dialogues with Continuing Education directors and teachers; (f) data collection review meetings with colleagues in Institution Research and Advancement; (g) e-mail and or blackboard college wide discussions; and (h) student feedback. The 45 member Taskforce comprised of representatives from the President's Office to

student advising. The Center for Academic Achievement was created on September 23, 2005, on the Liberty Campus of Baltimore City Community College.

Baltimore City Community College is located in Baltimore, Maryland. In 2005, the population was 641,943, down slightly from 643,304 in 2004. BCCC is an undergraduate, 2 year urban institution that awards Associate of Arts degrees. In 2005 the College had an enrollment of 24,000 credit and noncredit students. 91.3 percent of minority students were enrolled at BCCC. The average age of students enrolled was 31. The oldest student was 84 and the youngest student was 13. Students enrolled full and part time at Baltimore City Community College represented more than 50 nations (BCCC IRA).

Baltimore City Community College's began as the Baltimore Junior College, in 1947 to provide post-high school education for returning World War II veterans. By 1959, Baltimore Junior College relocated along Liberty Heights Avenue. In 1967, the College was renamed the Community College of Baltimore and restructured as an independent institution of the City of Baltimore government. The College was granted permanent status in 1992 and renamed Baltimore City Community College. In 1997, BCCC celebrated its 50th anniversary. The College primarily serves the residents and business community of Baltimore City (BCCC website; BCCC IRA).

Outcomes and Impact

The immediate goal of the practicum was achieved. Additionally, the long range goals of the practicum which included: 1. Phase II- Year Two (the planning, research and development of tutor training, tutor delivery guidelines and the internal assessment of developmental education successful persists outcomes); 2. Phase III - YearTwo (tutoring training and the preparation to pilot and or develop a working model of the student success center); and 3. Phase IV- Year Three

(components which included the opening of the student success center) were also met.

Resultantly, the College was two and one half years ahead of schedule, based on the timeline Dr. Hall Banks and Dr. Harris Bondima originally identified within their Kellogg Institute Practicum Prospectus submitted in July of 2005.

Post practicum initiatives made by the college in response to student needs include the establishment of the Promise Academy. Developed in the spring of 2011 following recommendations from the 2009-2013 Developmental Education Strategic Plan, the Academy was designed to support and prepare students who tested into the lowest levels of developmental Math and English courses. Lastly, the Center for Academic Achievement remains in place and offers face to face and online tutorial support for students.

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