

# Principles for Implementing State Wide Innovations in Developmental Education

Prepared by the National Center for Developmental Education and  
The National Association for Developmental Education.

*These principles are designed to serve as a guide for state policy makers seeking to improve postsecondary developmental education through mandated statewide innovations. They are based on sound principles of research and policy analysis and should be considered when implementing new policies and programs in developmental education.*

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## **Principle 1. Identify baseline performance before implementing mandates.**

It is essential to identify how well the programs or courses being changed are performing now. Otherwise, it will be impossible to determine whether or not the changes are actually resulting in improvement.

## **Principle 2. Identify what is already working well.**

Some programs and techniques are already successful. Their impact, however, is obscured when statewide data is aggregated. Before making major statewide changes, make sure that institutions and programs that are already working well are not compromised by mandated changes.

## **Principle 3. Pilot innovations before mandating them.**

Wherever possible, innovations should be piloted on a small scale before being mandated on a large scale. Not all innovations can be generalized to all colleges and universities. Each should be subjected to a pilot study to determine the conditions necessary for success before they are implemented on a broad scale.

## **Principle 4. Allow for local flexibility in implementation.**

All colleges and universities in your state have different cultures, resources, students, faculty, staff, and missions. Different institutions should be permitted to implement innovations with appropriate modifications based on local circumstances.

## **Principle 5. Provide for professional development.**

Most of the available innovations in developmental education require training in order to implement properly. Make sure that funding and other support

for professional development is included in the implementation plan.

## **Principle 6. Recognize that there are no simple solutions.**

The reasons for student underpreparedness are many and complex. There is no single solution that will address them all. Multiple approaches should be encouraged and supported in order to accommodate a variety of student problems and issues.

## **Principle 7. Involve those who will be implementing innovation in planning.**

No matter what is being mandated, faculty and staff at local institutions will have to do the actual work of implementation. These professionals should be involved in advisory roles to identify barriers to implementation and actions necessary to overcome them.

## **Principle 8. Identify the impact of innovation on minorities and the poor.**

Not all innovations work well for everyone. Innovations will have differing impacts on different groups. Because minorities and the poor are overrepresented among the underprepared, the impact of innovations on these groups must be considered carefully.

## **Principle 9. Include an evaluation plan.**

Not all innovations are going to work as expected. A statewide plan for evaluating the impact of innovations should be developed at the outset to determine whether or not the mandated innovations are having the desired effect on student performance.



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([www.ncde.appstate.edu](http://www.ncde.appstate.edu))



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