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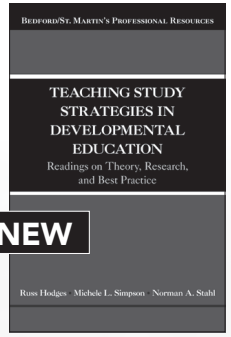
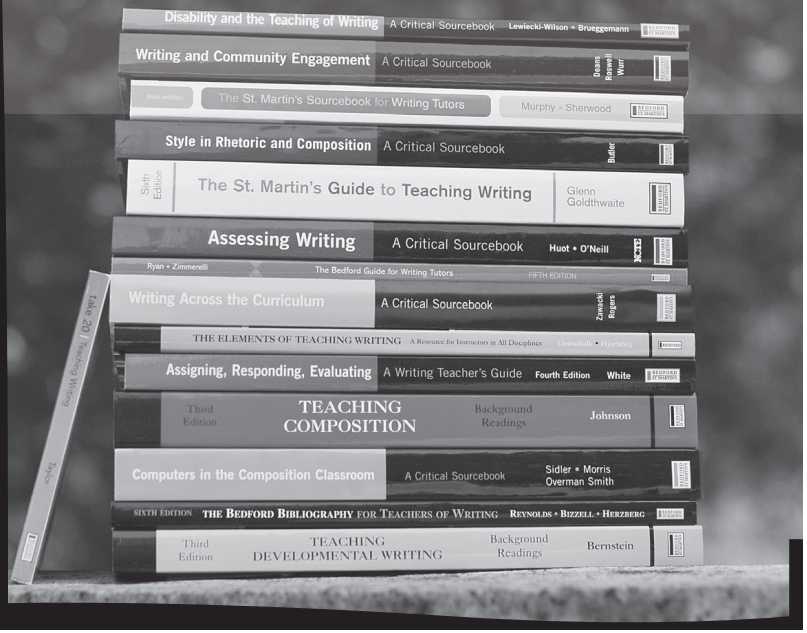


NEW

Teaching Study Strategies in Developmental Education
Readings on Theory, Research, and Best Practice
Russ Hodges, **Michele L. Simpson**, and **Norman A. Stahl**

This text examines past and present practices to provide a foundation of theory and research in teaching college students to be efficient learners. Topics include effective learning strategies, assessment, and psychological principles that affect student learning.



An Authentically Simulated Approach to Disciplinary Literacy Instruction In a Study Strategies Course

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This manuscript describes a first-year college study strategies course designed to introduce students to literacy practices typical in academic settings. Given constraints imposed by institutional requirements on students' schedules during their first year, an authentic course pairing with a content area course is rarely possible; therefore, the study strategies course described in this manuscript is intended as a possible alternative by providing authentically simulated instruction in three disciplines (biology, psychology, and history).

Scholars have increasingly added to the body of literature on disciplinary literacy practices (Hynd, 1999; Hynd, Holschuh, & Hubbard, 2004; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008). Within this larger body of scholarship, much work has been focused on the field of postsecondary transitional (see Author, 2010 for a discussion of this term) or developmental literacy (Briscoe & LeMaster, 1991; Chase, Gibson, & Carson, 1994; Holschuh, 2003; Nist & Simpson, 2000; Simpson & Nist, 1997). Despite this emphasis on the discipline-specific nature of academic literacy practices within the scholarship, a significant divide remains between what is endorsed in the theoretical literature and what occurs in practice in developmental reading and study strategies classrooms. Notably, many study strategies courses continue to have as their curricular focus a very limiting emphasis on generic strategies or a one-size-fits-all approach (Reynolds & Werner, 2003).

In effective reading and study strategy classrooms, strategy-focused instruction moves beyond the confines of basic procedural aspects of strategic reading and studying (for example, identifying the various steps involved in SQ3R) and delves into issues of

metacognition and self-monitoring (Simpson & Nist, 2002). What is often lacking has to do with the conditional knowledge (that is, when to use a particular strategy and why) needed for active, effective use of these strategies within authentic academic learning situations (Simpson, Stahl, & Francis, 2004). Within the field of transitional literacy, many have called for a more comprehensive approach to reading and study strategies instruction that emphasizes issues of strategy transfer across disciplines (Simpson & Nist, 2002; Simpson, Stahl, & Francis, 2004). In spite of the urgings of these scholars, discipline-specific literacy practices are typically not taught—at least not explicitly—in most high school or college settings. Beginning college students, being in the midst of a literacy transition, need opportunities for explicit discussion of when, where, and under what conditions particular reading and learning strategies ought to be employed.

Some have argued that an ideal situation for providing students with explicit instruction on disciplinary literacy practices would involve pairing a reading or study strategies course with a single content course, such as an introductory psychology or humanities course. (Commander & Smith, 2003; Hodges & Agee, 2009; Johnson & Carpenter, 2000). However, this is not always possible, especially for first-year students enrolled in developmental courses and programs. This manuscript describes such a situation and outlines one possible alternative: an authentically simulated approach. In the next section, we begin by explaining the context and need for the development of such an alternative approach. Next, the overall structure of the course is explained, followed by a description of the types of assignments and assessments included in the course.

The Need for an Authentically Simulated Approach

While an authentic pairing is desirable, many practical and often institution-specific barriers make scheduling such pairings unlikely or impossible for students enrolled in developmental courses and programs. For example, at Northern Illinois University, students gaining alternative admission through the CHANCE (Counseling, Help, and Assistance Necessary for a College Education) program are usually enrolled in a full load of developmental courses for the first year of their academic

careers. Their exact course schedules depend on the outcomes of departmental placement measures, but generally, first-semester students are enrolled in an English composition, a reading or study strategies, a mathematics, and a communications course. This means that very few are enrolled concurrently in a literacy-based study strategies course and a content area course, making an authentic pairing for purposes of disciplinary literacy instruction impossible. Despite these constraints, a need remains for a course that provides students with practice and experiences using study strategies within authentic academic situations, specifically, introductory-level general education courses like those students will be taking following their work in transitional literacy.

In the absence of an authentic course pairing, an alternative was developed by providing authentically simulated instruction in three disciplines. That is, students read and practice strategy applications on whole chapters from actual introductory-level biology, psychology, and history textbooks with the goal of taking discipline-specific exams on the material in these chapters; however, because this authentic reading, strategy-application, and exam-taking occur within the context of a study strategies course, an element of simulation is still involved (hence the term authentically simulated). The purpose of this course is to facilitate the transition to typical college-level literacy practices across the disciplines. The course focuses heavily on procedural, metacognitive, and conditional aspects of strategy usage (Nist & Simpson, 2000; Simpson, Stahl, & Francis, 2004).

The next section will describe the overall structure of the course, followed by a discussion of the specifics of the course, including the assignments and assessments.

Overall Structure of the Course

The course is structured as five modules (see Kellner & Paulson, 2006, for a similar modules-based study strategies course) with each module focusing on a different learning context or situation. The first module is situated within students' most immediate course context, the study strategies course. In this module, students are introduced to a variety of reading and study strategies with an emphasis on the cognitive and metacognitive

processes underlying the strategies. The first module is followed by three discipline-specific modules: one for biology, one for psychology, and one for history. In these modules, students are reading authentic textbook chapters typical of these courses and are taking authentic exams created by experts within the respective disciplines. The final module is a self-selected academic context, which allows students to practice the concept of transfer by identifying some current or future course situation and anticipating and designing strategies appropriate for that situation (see also Kellner & Paulson, 2006).

Course Text

The course textbook is a custom text which is divided into two main sections (a study strategies instruction section and a content-area section). The first section contains individual chapters from several well-respected and often-used study strategies textbooks (Carter, Bishop, & Kravits, 2007; Hazard & Nadeau, 2009; Sellers, Dochen, & Hodges, 2005) on topics such as learning and knowledge, metacognition, textbook-studying, and listening. The second section contains individual chapters from typical introductory-level textbooks in biology (Campbell, Reece, Taylor, Simon, & Dickey, 2009), psychology (Ciccarelli & White, 2009), and history (Goldfield, Abbott, Anderson, Argersinger, Argersinger, Barney, & Weir, 2008).

During the first module, students read and practice strategy use on the chapters from the first section of the textbook. In this way, students are both reading about and applying reading and study strategies. Then, students read and practice strategies on the biology chapter for Module 2, the psychology chapter for Module 3, and finally, the history chapter for Module 4. The final module does not involve any textbook readings.

Module 1. The first module is an overview of various types of strategies and is set within the context of the immediate study strategies course; that is, students practice applying various strategies to the required course readings from the first section of the course textbook. During this first module, students are introduced to an overview of the theoretical aspects of reading and study strategies, including metacognition and schema. In addition, the first module offers an overview of the types of strategies students will be practicing throughout the semester (e.g., active reading, note-taking, rehearsal, test-preparation, and vocabulary-development).

Modules 2-4. The next three modules provide opportunities for students to experiment with the types of literacy practices used in particular academic disciplines (biology, psychology, and history). Each of these modules is set within the context of a simulated introductory-level content area learning situation, thereby helping students to prepare for courses in those disciplines. During each module, instructors model and students practice previewing textbook chapter readings. The modules begin with a close-analysis of a representative introductory-level course syllabus from that discipline, followed by application of vocabulary-development strategies, active reading strategies, note-taking strategies, written rehearsal, or test-preparation strategies within the given discipline. These modules are set up so that students will read a representative chapter from an actual college-level textbook (one chapter for each discipline) three times, each time practicing different strategies discussed and modeled in class. Each of these modules concludes with an examination on the material in that module's content area chapter. Because all examinations are designed by a member of the respective academic department and are in formats representative of those disciplines, students are able to experience the types of test situations they will encounter in their next-level courses.

The activities and tasks students are assigned in each of the modules are intentionally designed to simulate similar situations within these content areas. This not only provides students with an introduction to disciplinary literacy differences, but it also enables students to learn how, when, and why to transfer, adapt, or modify strategies. Students first learn about the strategy, then they practice the strategy with a specific purpose while reading their assigned textbook chapter, and finally they do a self-reflection and self-evaluation on their use of the strategy.

Module 5. The fifth module is the culmination of everything the students learn in this course. After trying out a wide variety of strategies all semester, students are asked to design their own

strategy and explain how, when, where, and why to use it (see also Kellner & Paulson, 2006). This is their opportunity to create a strategy of their own and to explain their rationale for the use of this strategy in an academic situation of their choice. In this module, students teach their colleagues about their self-designed strategy and write a paper explaining their process and decision-making while creating the strategy.

Assignments and Assessments

Within each of the first four modules, students are asked to apply various types of strategies, including course analysis, vocabulary development, active reading, note-taking, and written rehearsal or test-preparation in the context of a particular reading and learning situation.

Course analysis applications. The purpose of the first strategy application is to provide students with practice "reading" various types of syllabi. In the first module, the course syllabus for the study strategies course is analyzed in a brief essay. For Modules 2, 3, and 4, actual course syllabi from representative content-area courses are reviewed and analyzed. This application emphasizes the importance of a course syllabus in general, but also demonstrates for students how to use a syllabus as a tool for success in their other courses. It also provides some experience reading syllabi across disciplines and asks students to infer from each syllabi what the individual course/professor values.

Active reading applications. Several active reading strategies (e.g., SQ3R, text annotation, comprehension monitoring) are introduced in class and modeled for students over the course of the semester. Students are asked to choose one and apply it to the assigned reading for each module. Following this strategy application, students reflect on their experience with the strategy in that module's particular learning context. This reflection allows students to determine whether the strategy is appropriate for texts typically associated with that discipline, and whether all, part, or none of the process is something they might use again or adapt for another context.

Note-taking applications. Students learn about a variety of note-taking strategies (e.g., Cornell, the outline method, the charting method, split-page notes, T-notes, and formal sentence outlines) and, again, are asked to apply one note-taking strategy to each module's reading before reflecting on their experience. Although issues specific to note-taking during class discussions and lectures are introduced, the focus of the applications is on taking notes while reading a course text.

Written rehearsal/test-preparation applications. Several rehearsal strategies are introduced in the class with the emphasis on written, rather than oral, rehearsal strategies (e.g., concept cards, concept maps, charting, question/answer strategy and timelines). In addition test-preparation strategies, including basic testwiseness, and creating a study guide, are discussed and practiced.

Strategy-mastery assessments. At the conclusion of each of the first four modules, students demonstrate their mastery of the strategy practice by taking an examination on the material within the textbook reading associated with that module. The first strategy-mastery assessment is a concept-based exam that allows students to demonstrate their understanding of major concepts from their study strategies reading (e.g., metacognition, schema, and Bloom's Taxonomy). The discipline-specific examinations for Modules 2, 3, and 4 are designed by the specific departments and are reflective of the exam format often associated with that discipline (i.e., the biology exam is objective; the psychology exam is mixed format; and the history exam is essay-based). This provides additional authenticity to the structure and content of the exam, and also familiarizes students with what will be expected from them in an actual biology/psychology/history class.

Conclusion

Although a simultaneous, authentic pairing between a study strategies course and an introductory-level content area course may be preferable, it is not always a realistic or practical possibility for first-year students enrolled in multiple developmental courses. However, as isolated, one-size-fits-all, or generic study strategies are shown to be ineffective for students (Reynolds & Werner, 2003), a situated approach that allows students to explore reading and study strategies within particular academic learning contexts

is essential. The course presented in this manuscript is one possibility for circumventing practical issues of scheduling while still maintaining an emphasis on the disciplinary nature of reading and study practices through an authentically simulated approach.

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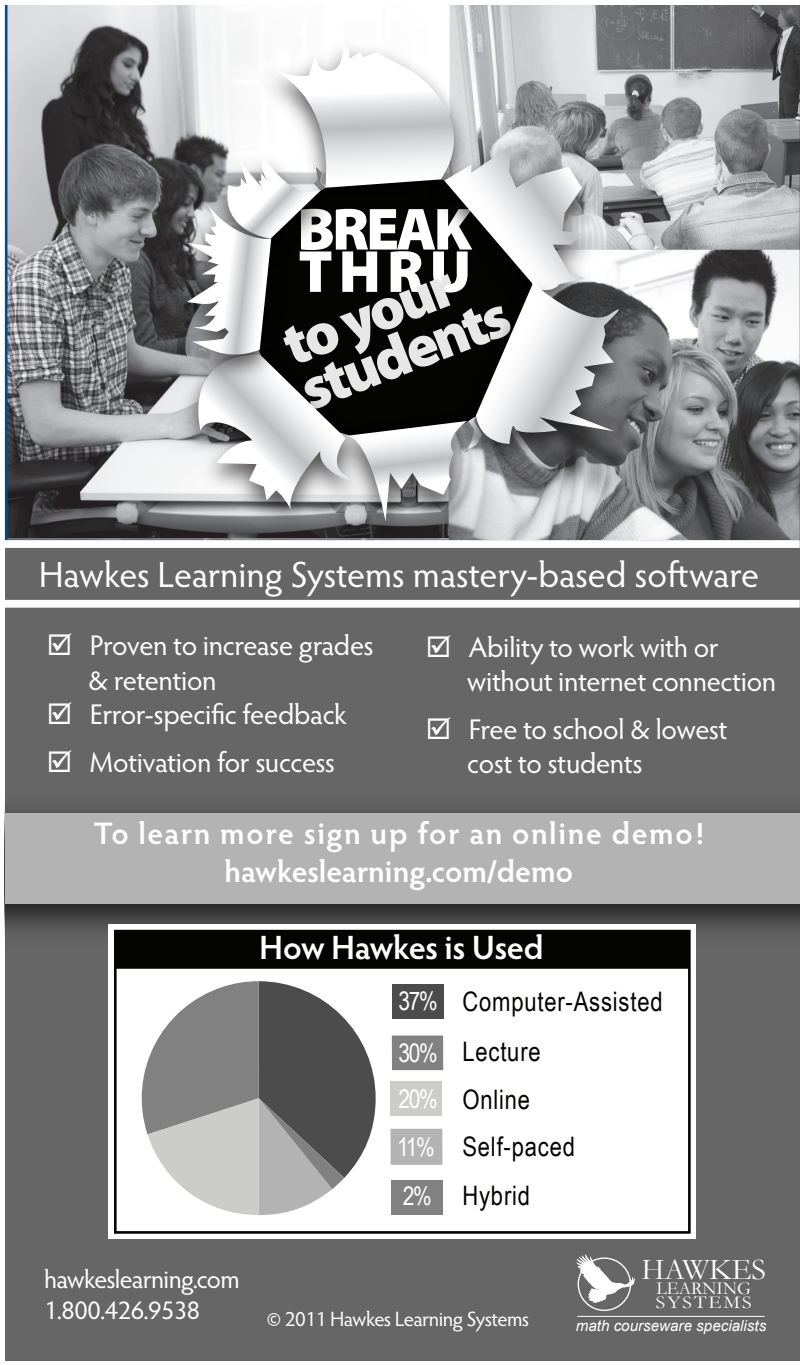

The Ambiguous Nature of Bilingualism and Its Ramifications for Writing Instruction

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This hypothetical case of a freshman wrestling with her identity as an English user demonstrates that the old categories of native and non-native speaker do not adequately describe today's college population. The lack of informed strategies in college writing courses to deal with students possessing different degrees of proficiency in English leads to both personal and educational consequences. Recommendations for college instructors are discussed.

The educational and linguistic literature in the last 10 years has documented the changing linguistic nature of the typical first-year college student. More and more incoming students bring with them home dialects of English that are influenced by other languages (Harklau, 2003). This is especially true in certain parts of the country where population shifts have added to the linguistic diversity of the surrounding communities. High-school students from these cities and towns are sometimes the first in their families to attend college, and they register at local community colleges, in city and state university systems, and at small liberal arts colleges such as ours. The result is that what teachers might once have taken for granted—being able to ascertain whether a student is a native English speaker or not—is no longer an easy task, and the disconnect between perception and reality has an impact on writing instruction in colleges (Trimbur, 2008).

As instructors of developmental and first year-college composition, we have encountered many such students. We believe that the current college placement and evaluation systems

are not set up to handle situations in which students use various home "Englishes." To investigate this phenomenon, we introduce a composite student, Maria, who represents various facets of the dilemma we as educators face. We first encounter our student Maria in college in the United States after she moved here from the Dominican Republic as a 9-year-old with a good deal of fluent, informal English but little skill in reading and writing formal, standard English.

Maria and her teachers in her first year of college wrestle with the issue of native fluency. Their struggles involve such questions as, "What does it mean to be a native speaker of a language?" and "What are the educational ramifications of being a first versus second language user?"

To address these questions, the following issues will be discussed:

1. Factors that make defining "bilingualism" and "native fluency" difficult.
2. Academic and emotional consequences for students whose teachers have vague and conflicting definitions of bilingualism.
3. Recommendations to help students whose weak academic language skills appear to be barriers to their academic success.
4. Potential impact on the social and emotional well-being of the student.

Entering College: The Placement Exam

Maria's college asks all incoming first-year students to take a writing placement exam to determine the writing class for which they should register. Students are given 60 minutes to read a text and write a two-page essay about this text. Exam results place students into an English-as a-second language (ESL) writing course, a developmental writing course, or a first-year composition course. Consider the following writing sample from Maria's placement exam, presented in Table 1. Her reading selection dealt with the sexual nature of male locker-room talk. After reading the excerpt, contemplate how you would place Maria and whether she is an ESL student or a native speaker with developmental issues.

Table 1

Maria's Placement Essay

If Tommy would have interrupt or any men in the locker room the spokesman would probably have felt disrespected which could lead to a conflict between spokesman and interrupter. Also the spokesman might not feel disrespect and change the conversation which it would be a more comfortable place for the other men in the locker room who feel comfortable in their conversation. An other situation could have been someone could tell the spokesman that they don't feel like hearing about his love life. Maybe the spokesman as respect would change the conversation and tell his story to his friend on his own time.

Continuing in College: Developmental Writing Course (WS 01)

Not surprisingly, Maria's score on the placement test was too low to allow her to enter the composition course. Yet she was not identified as needing ESL. Maria was enrolled in Writing Skills 01 (WS 01), a non-credit bearing course in basic academic writing. This course was designed to ease the transition to academic English, and while it was not an ESL course, it was open to native and non-native speakers depending on their scores on the placement exam. The course syllabus listed the following student objectives:

At the end of this course, each student can expect a working knowledge of various writing and reading skills, including:

1. A working knowledge of grammatical structures.
2. Understanding the inter-related processes of speaking, listening, reading and writing.
3. The ability to pre-write, plan and formulate critical questions, interpret and discern facts for reading and writing purposes.
4. The ability to proofread, edit and revise.

The professor, who encouraged the students to call him Max, was a young man still in graduate school working as an adjunct at Maria's college. He seemed very relaxed and accepting of all the students. On her first paper, Maria received a B+ and a "Good!" This was a first for Maria as a writer.

Maria grew more confident and began participating in class.

She also started to enjoy the class and the weekly assignments, consisting of 1-2 page papers on such topics as "My Favorite Hobby" and "My Dream Job." Instead of those old, familiar comments like "AWK" in the margins of her high-school essays, her college papers came back with suggested revisions. Max took a great deal of time on each student's paper, suggesting re-writes for unclear sentences and re-organization strategies for disorganized paragraphs. He believed in validating the writers' ideas and de-emphasizing errors of spelling, grammar, and punctuation. Max felt that his students were in WS 01 to uncover and organize their thoughts and that Spell Check and tutors would take care of the rest.

Later in the semester, Max introduced texts for students to respond to, but usually the response was a personal reflection, opinion, or connection to the text. Maria's writing level was still poor, even after revisions and sessions with Max, as seen in the excerpts from Table 2 below.

Table 2
Excerpts from Maria's WS 01 Papers

Paragraph from a revised paper I

Birth order in family does not always influence you personality. Alder who believed in the psychological of birth order was right, but also depends on your culture. I believe your up bringing can influence your personality and that siblings can alter your personality. I come from a family of three, I have a sister who is the oldest, a brother who is the middle child, and I am the youngest. Although my sister is the oldest she never display leadership qualities. She never had the responsibility of watch over us when we were children. While my parent were working my grandmother was always there for us. My sister never had responsibilities such as baby sit or do chores, nor did she want any responsibilities. My brother took on more of a leadership role, and I believe he felt obligation because he was male.

Paragraph from a revised paper II

Many two years colleges accept student without their high school diploma. Most of those students receive help from the government. Gov. George E. Pataki disagree, he believes that students who don't have their diploma shouldn't receive help from the government until they complete 24 credits. The government discovered that some colleges gave students financial aid to those who don't qualify so that they would collect their money. Then students would drop out and cancel their students' loans. So this won't occur, now students need to take a test in order to get government help by the Department of Education.

Max saw progress. His course empowered Maria as a thinker. She didn't seem to hesitate as much when putting a sentence down on paper. Less worried about grammatical or mechanical errors, she let her ideas flow. Although her revisions focused on grammar and writing mechanics, she also was dealing with complex issues in her writing. She developed more confidence in using her voice. At the end of the term, Maria received a B+ in the course. Max rewarded Maria's efforts over the 14 weeks with a high grade to encourage her to continue to practice her writing.

The writing samples in Table 2, however, show Maria to be ill-prepared for more academically-rigorous courses. Professors she would face in future semesters would assume that her writing skills were adequate and that WS 01 had "fixed" any problems she might have had. However, these samples show that Maria had failed to identify and correct a variety of grammatical and mechanical errors, and she continued to write about subjects that are somewhat concrete compared to more abstract material she would face in other courses.

College: Credit-Bearing First-Year Seminar

Earning a B+ in WS 101 allowed Maria to enroll in First-Year Seminar (FYS) in the spring term. On the first day, her professor, Dr. Clarkson, handed out a 12-page syllabus for the course which required students to write three 10-page essays and read five books during the term.

The learning goals and objectives of FYS were listed on the

syllabus as follows:

At the end of this course, you will be able to:

1. Participate more fully in the rigors of collegiate academics.
2. Appreciate the value of in-depth exploration from several disciplinary perspectives.
3. Read college-level texts with increasing confidence.
4. Engage in intensive critical thinking and writing.
5. Understand the composition process.
6. Compose effective academic essays.

Maria left that first class meeting shaking. This was not the atmosphere she had come to associate with writing in Max's class. The next meeting, Maria sat as far back in the room as she could and remained quiet. Everyone in the class seemed to speak an educated, academic style of English. Professor Clarkson kept emphasizing the rigors of the college-level material they would cover, how this class was not going to be a repeat of high school. She assigned a 4-page summary and critique of an article by a sociolinguist on the conversational patterns used by native and non-native English speakers in advisement sessions with their college professors.

"Is Dr. Clarkson trying to tell me something?" Maria thought. "Is she saying that I am still a foreigner in this country, that I am not a native speaker of English?" Despite these doubts, Maria worked hard to read the assigned article and write a paper, an excerpt from which is given in Table 3.

Table 3 Excerpt from Maria's Summary

> In "Cross-Cultural Interviews" an article written by Susan Landau identifies verbal and nonverbal strategies of rapport. In the article Landau examine nonverbal and verbal strategies between two foreign advisor and their students their students were non native and native students. She used non native and native students for her research to discovered what strategies can be use in order to built a rapport conversation. According to Landau, "rapport is a harmonious relationship" (3). Landau studied the conversation of the advisors and their students. Landau noticed that different rapport strategies were used by the native speakers than the non-native speakers.

The Landau essay assignment included an intellectual component that did not allow Maria to reflect personally on the issue, and her confidence waned as a result. The paper was returned with a big "See Me" across the top. In a private conference, Dr. Clarkson told Maria that she shouldn't be in FYS and that she should have registered for WS 01. She also asked if Maria had signed up for ESL tutoring. Maria burst into tears.

After the conference, Dr. Clarkson checked Maria's transcript and was very concerned that this student, so weak in writing and reading skills, not to mention critical thinking, received a B+ in WS 01.

What went wrong here? Why did Maria, Max, and Dr. Clarkson have such different expectations?

Ambiguous Nature of Native Fluency and Bilingualism

As this scenario illustrates, Maria, Max, and Dr. Clarkson held different expectations about the nature of fluency. This is not surprising as the term "bilingual" has multiple definitions, and one universally agreed upon set of criteria does not exist. For example, must a truly bilingual person be able to read and write in two languages, or is spoken fluency sufficient? What if the person can write in the second language, but only informally, not well enough to fulfill academic assignments?

Disputes over definitions of the term "native speaker" have yet to be resolved. Trimbur outlined the pivotal debate during the 1966 Dartmouth conference which focused on who should teach English. The conference produced a discouragingly large and disparate group of definitions:

- A native speaker is someone whose utterances are samples of L [target language].
- A native speaker is someone who has no language acquired prior to L. Here nativeness is explained in terms of priority in the learning process.
- A native speaker is someone who can understand all varieties of L. The limits and extent of his comprehensibility define L.
- A native speaker is someone who is by nature curious about L (Trimbur, 2008, p. 58-59).

As more educators consider writing across the curriculum

and incorporate writing pedagogy into their classrooms, they might well encounter issues raised in Maria's case. One potential issue is the lack of widely accepted definitions for native fluency and bilingualism. Even among linguists, there are conflicting definitions. For example, while Bloomfield restricted the term "bilingualism" to those possessing near native fluency in two languages, others, like McNamara, required only minimal competency in a second language (Kayser, 1995). Differences in these definitions raise other questions: Must a truly bilingual person be fluent in all the modalities of language--speech, oral comprehension, reading, and writing? And what degree of fluency is adequate? Further, while the person might be fluent in an informal style of the language,he or she might not have the competence to use the second language successfully in an educational setting. Some cases of bilingualism are ambiguous because the form of the second language the person possesses is not considered the standard dialect. So a person might "know" English, but it could be Ebonics. Or a person might "know" French and Haitian Creole French, but consider those two language forms the same thing, the latter an informal style of the former. (For a discussion of this issue, see Romaine 1995.)

Generation 1.5 Versus the ESL Learner

The status of bilingualism has become even murkier with the evolution of immigration patterns in urban America. Over the last twenty years, the label "generation 1.5" has increasingly been applied to students whose English language performance exhibits both native and non-native traits. Harklau (2003) characterizes this diverse group, by saying:

> Some of these students immigrated to the United States while they were in elementary school; others arrived during high school. Still others were born in this country but grew up speaking a language other than English at home. They may see themselves as bilingual, but English may be the only language in which they have academic preparation or in which they can read and write. At the same time, these students may not feel that they have a full command of English, having grown up speaking another language at home or in their community. Equipped with social skills in English, generation 1.5 students often appear in conversation to be native English speakers. However, they are usually less skilled in the academic language associated with school achievement, especially in the area of writing.

As we saw, Maria did not consider herself a foreigner. She was bilingual and had been speaking English for most of her life. She was incredibly frustrated. Maria was also insulted by Dr. Clarkson's assumption that she needed ESL classes. Holten's work confirms that Maria's emotional reaction to being labeled an ESL learner is not unusual. Holton found that the resentment generation 1.5 students feel at being placed in ESL undermines their ability to make progress (2009, p. 171). In addition, generation 1.5 students have little in common with ESL learners. Most ESL students have studied English grammar for years and know complex terminology, such as present perfect, modal verb, and relative pronoun. Generation 1.5 students have learned English through immersion and possess little overt grammatical terminology, mirroring their native-speaking peers.

Another glaring difference is academic preparedness. Many international students are better prepared for college because they have already mastered literary skills in their native language and are able to apply critical thinking and argument development learned in their native language environment to assignments given in English. The same cannot be said for students from underfunded public schools in the United States. Therefore, as Holten concludes: "It is difficult to address these differing student needs, backgrounds, abilities, and expectations in one course" (2009, p.172). Unfortunately, small colleges rarely have the student numbers needed to provide separate developmental courses for native speakers, generation 1.5 students, and international students.

What Should Teachers Do?

A review of some of the issues covered by this hypothetical case in light of the linguistic and pedagogical research that has been discussed results in some recommendations:

The Concept of Native Fluency: Dr. Clarkson fell into the trap of assuming speakers of accented English with poor writing skills are non-native to the language, even though, as mentioned previously, linguists would disagree among themselves on whether

Maria was bilingual. Teachers should increase their awareness of, and sensitivity to, language differences. Teachers should talk with students, share perceptions, and compare them. Labels are crucial to self-identity. Maria clearly saw herself as bilingual. In the twenty-first century, Latinos are the fastest growing population in the United States, and more students like Maria will be be coming to college in the future.

Goen-Salter, et al. (2009) list activities teachers and their students can do to uncover language backgrounds, perceptions, and emotions about linguistic history/language identity. Their book offers such survey questions as, "Which language do you feel is your best language and why?" and "Which language are you most comfortable writing in and why?" (238-240). Dr. Clarkson could have worked through such exercises with Maria to arrive at a more realistic view of Maria's abilities. At the same time, Maria could choose her own label, for while academic success is within Dr. Clarkson's expertise, self-identifying is personal and within Maria' purview.

Emotional Consequences: As teachers, we must address students' own beliefs about themselves as language users and not make assumptions about students' English skills across genre and modality. Hasson (2008) writes, "Student perceptions of their (language) skills… do not always match the student's true abilities in the language, particularly in the written mode" (139). Students who see themselves as bilingual might or might not be biliterate.

Academic Strategies: Typical in academia are the assumptions students are either monolingual speakers of English or speakers of English as a second language. Consequently, students are assessed with an exam that puts them in a sequence of writing courses for "native" speakers or a sequence for second language speakers. In the twenty-first century, educators must challenge these assumptions. The dichotomy of native and non-native English users has broken down; better assessment tools and processes are needed for colleges to place students in appropriate writing courses.

For Maria, once in a class, her failures in writing critical response essays on sophisticated material did not need to be framed as failures in English. Maria's professors could have discussed her need to improve critical analysis of texts and the acquisition of the academic register. In general, developmental writing courses need

to build on the personal essay and develop the academic skills needed in college, such as critical thinking, logical argumentation, addressing complex and abstract topics.

Summary

This hypothetical case offers a profile of a young woman wrestling with her identity as an English user. The ambiguity of the term "bilingual" and the lack of informed strategies in college writing courses to deal with students possessing different degrees of proficiency in English led to consequences at both the personal level and the educational level for Maria.

In the set of encounters described, the problems of a writing pedagogy that does not look at the larger picture of bilingualism and biliteracy are illustrated. The disparity between students' command of academic English and college professors' expectations can only be resolved through clearer understanding of linguistic competencies. It is essential to realize that language skills are not an "all or nothing" acquisition. Instead, language facility is something individuals work on throughout their lives. Furthermore, the old categories of native and non-native speaker do not adequately describe today's college population. A continuing lack of awareness of the nature of bilingualism results in stakeholders blaming one another for challenges and failures, in programs that are not prepared to address student needs, and with ill-prepared students caught in the middle.

Adapted from Behrens, S.J. and Mercer, C. 2008. What is Native Fluency? A Case Study of the Ambiguous Nature of Bilingualism and Its Consequences for Writing Instruction.

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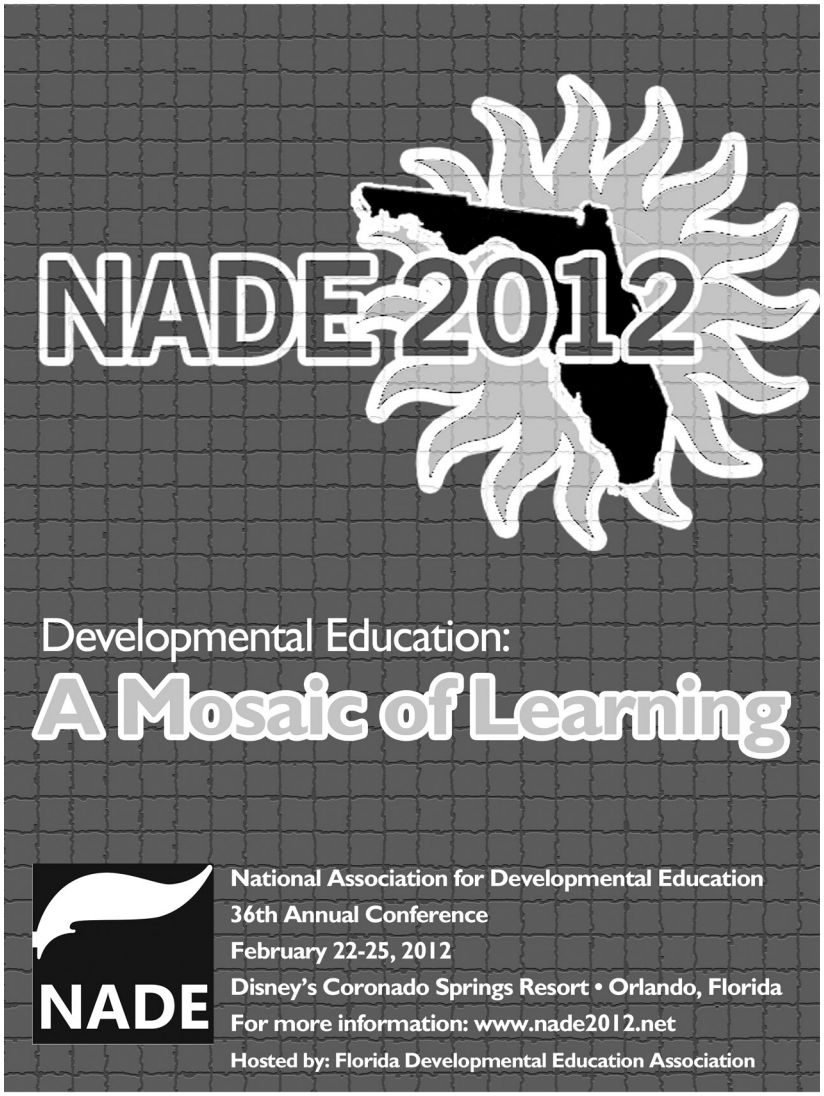

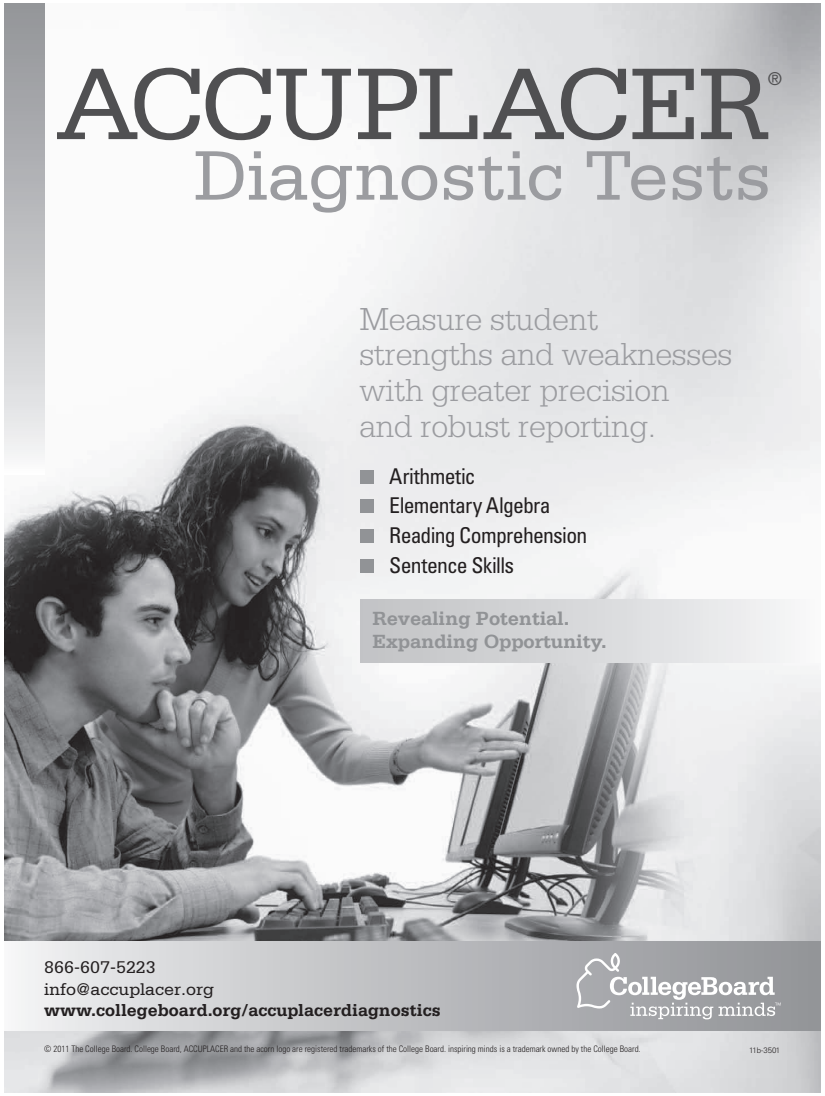

Effective Teaching Circles: Support for Math Anxious Students

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Teaching circles are an innovative mechanism to support faculty and improve student learning. This article describes the use of instructor teaching circles to support math-anxious students at a mid-sized urban university, including the purposes, formation, and sometimes surprising outcomes associated with using this method. Teaching circles for supporting math-anxious students provide a specific case study exemplifying potential uses of circles to solve other types of instructional problems.

In the fall of 1998, the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO) implemented an innovative teaching support mechanism called "Teaching Circles." UNO is a midsized land-grant university in the Midwest that considers student-centered education to be at the heart of its mission. Teaching circles were created to further that mission. This paper describes the process of developing a teaching circle to support faculty of math-anxious students and, indirectly, the students themselves. The goal is to provide a model for faculty support that may be useful to other institutions.

History of Teaching Circles at UNO

The university's teaching-focused Center for Faculty Development was the original sponsoring unit of the Teaching Circles in 1998. Since that time, these circles have continued as an extremely successful process in promoting faculty development. Hundreds of UNO faculty members have participated in teaching circles in the last ten years. Initially, there was a $300 stipend for every faculty member who participated by meeting at least seven times in one academic year. As state budgets tightened, however,

the Center for Faculty Development was temporarily eliminated, then restructured. Stipends were cut to $50 and then were not funded at all for a period of time. Teaching circles, nevertheless, continued without faculty remuneration throughout this difficult period of budget cuts, indicating that the faculty highly values this process.

What is a teaching circle?

Faculty teaching circles feature in-depth discussions centered on teaching-related topics and are composed of small groups of faculty (approximately 3-10) who commit to meet regularly over a period of time to address questions and concerns related to their teaching and to their students' learning. Teaching circle faculty have an opportunity to interact with colleagues across disciplines, to exchange ideas about teaching in an informal setting, to build a teaching portfolio, and to feel more positive about teaching. At the beginning of each academic year, all faculty members are invited to a Teaching Circles organizational session where various topics are suggested and/or faculty can form their own group around a topic of interest. Sample topics have included active/collaborative learning, case study approaches to learning, biology teaching experience, on-line teaching, service learning, "clickers" in the classroom, assessment issues, and relieving anxiety in math-related courses.

Formative stages of a teaching circle in math anxiety

Shortly after the implementation of the teaching circle concept at the university, budget shortfalls eliminated learning assistance programs for both faculty and students. The math anxiety teaching circle filled a resource gap for faculty and, indirectly, for their students because a primary support center for students, the learning center, was permanently closed during this time.

Five years ago, this teaching circle started with five members: three statistics teachers from psychology, sociology, and criminal justice; the director of the university mathematics laboratory; and the former director of the learning center, now an advisor of math-anxious students in a multicultural scholarship program.

Not only were the academic backgrounds of the faculty diverse, but through the course of the teaching circle, shared experiences revealed even greater diversity among the university's math-anxious students. They spanned all ages, both sexes, a variety of race and ethnic groups, different levels of mathematics preparation, multiple disciplines, and varied experiences with math anxiety or anxiety in general. According to Ashcraft (2002), "Math Anxiety is commonly defined as a feeling of tension, apprehension, or fear that interferes with math performance"(p.181).The mathematics teaching circle came together because, regardless of differences in disciplines and the diversity of students, faculty involved shared a common dilemma and sought solutions jointly.

Meetings took place at various times and in various locations, often on campus during the day. One year the location shifted to a local restaurant for breakfast. Coordinating meeting times for several faculty members from different departments proved challenging, but with creativity and determination, participants found a common time. A certain amount of dedication for the goal is required and each member was committed to making a difference for math-anxious students.

Processes used in UNO's Teaching Circles

For the first year, the group spent a lot of time sharing stories of the frustration involved in dealing with math-anxious students. It was helpful to all circle participants to gain perspective from each professor's point of view. Similar stories surfaced from each of the disciplines represented, and it was enlightening and encouraging to discover that faculty experiences with math-anxious students were so similar across disciplines. The former director of the learning center, who now served as a student advisor, also related a number of frustrating stories she heard frequently from mathematics and statistics students.

After the initial stage of sharing classroom experiences about math-anxious students, the focus shifted to seeking as many different strategies as possible. At each meeting, strategies were shared and discussed among the remaining four members (one professor chose to drop out). In order to accomplish its goals, the members of the teaching circle began by determining that a literature review of the existing math/statistics anxiety literature

would be useful. Each member decided to explore the literature of her own discipline to determine what research had been done, what tools were available, and which strategies had been used by others to help students deal with their anxiety. Members also researched the nature of math/statistics anxiety compared to other types of anxiety. Each member brought summaries of current research and especially good articles and bibliographies to meetings for sharing with the others. The second year of this teaching circle was well underway when the group, which now met monthly, decided that a number of strategies were being generated by group members that had not been described in other literature. The group identified the need for a handbook for both teachers and students to provide tools to identify and deal with math/statistics anxiety. Discussions began to focus on the specific tools: a diagnostic section for students to describe their mathematics history, a mathematics anxiety measure, and a series of quick diagnostic tests which group members would design that would assess the baseline skills that students need to be able to succeed in the current mathematics or mathematics-related course.

After discussions with publishers of mathematics support textbooks, the group decided not to focus on a handbook, but instead to maintain the original focus of providing support to students and each other. However, the handbook idea had lasting benefits to the group by helping to identify classroom needs and by suggesting that the circle could serve as a mechanism for production of multiple outcomes, such as research projects, presentations, and publications.

Strategy Development

Members mutually determined how important it was to assess the mathematics skills of individual students. Some math-anxious students simply lacked critical prior knowledge and entry-level skills; their anxiety was based in reality. First-day diagnostics such as "quick 'n dirty" premeasures of minimum basics skills were needed for a variety of levels of mathematics/statistics classes. Each instructor would be forced to predetermine the minimum mathematics skills a person needed in order to learn the new skills in the class. At that point, students lacking mathematics skills critical for the course were counseled to drop the course and

obtain the background they needed for success at a later time. This was particularly important for the students enrolled in statistics courses. Although the faculty were willing to help as much as possible, students reluctant to drop a course were strongly encouraged to obtain tutoring outside of the classroom. It was also necessary to assess the level of existing math anxiety, and a simple measure was developed by the developmental psychologist in the circle (See also Onwuegbuzie & Wilson 2003 for other measures).

The strategies came from multiple sources. Group members' own classroom experiences, formal training, and trial-and-error were important components. One professor used immediate reinforcement strategies such as games with candy rewards for correct answers. One used mastery learning techniques to lower anxiety; another formed study groups to meet outside of class for extra credit and held test reviews outside of class. The group developed lists of uses for mathematics to add relevance to the learning process, designed exercises with examples of mathematics or statistics in the news, and incorporated journaling—the use of diaries to learn about the circumstances that resulted in anxiety. The group sought out resources to enhance its knowledge and increase effectiveness (see, for example, Ritchey, 2000). These included a short course on teaching math-anxious students (Ritchey & Petee, 2004), books on using humor in the classroom (Pyrczak, 1996, 1999; Krantzler, 2003), and a workshop on maximizing retention in college.

The literature review revealed other techniques such as using diagnostic exams, understanding different types of anxiety, and gathering mathematics histories to facilitate self-exploration among students with regard to the genesis of their attitudes toward mathematics. Another important strategy was the use of relevant study skills. Two members had experience teaching study skill workshops, so other members benefitted from their expertise. A third member was a developmental psychologist who provided guidance on the developmental appropriateness of strategies. The fourth member, the director of the university mathematics laboratory serving over 1,000 students a semester, provided an ongoing reminder of the scope of the problem.

The sharing of these specific strategies among circle

members resulted in others in the circle trying these strategies in their classrooms. Group reflections revealed that not all were equally successful, but this broadened their views of potential strategies and facilitated a creative problem-solving process among the group so that members could learn from one another.

Research as a Strategy

After conducting the literature review and sharing strategies on a regular basis, the group became interested in doing original research in this area and broke into research dyads for these classroom projects. Hypotheses to confirm or reject anecdotal evidence became a focus of the group. The two statistics professors designed and conducted a diary study to track statistics anxiety over the course of the semester in several statistics courses—both at the undergraduate and graduate levels. One component of this study was a before and after quantitative mathematics anxiety assessment. This study revealed early on that both the causes of mathematics anxiety and the solutions for coping with it were diverse. While research revealed several types of math-anxious students, it also reinforced the need to avoid "cookie cutter" approaches to its resolution.

Another research project was started on the importance of obtaining students' mathematics histories as well as information on different teaching styles of instructors as a follow up to previous research that was published by Rech and Harrington (2000). This work was a qualitative and quantitative study that explored variables that affect students' mathematics performance, and data were gathered from personal interviews which included extensive mathematics histories.

Conclusions

The mathematics teaching circle met monthly over a five-year period and served several useful functions. During that time, group members presented this project at a national developmental education conference in October, 2004 (Harrington, Powell, Rech & Tilton-Weaver, 2004). The group also won the Outstanding Teaching Circle Award at the university and used its insights gained to improve classroom instruction and to provide better support for math-anxious students.

Members of the circle continue to communicate and meet occasionally. Not only has the group surveyed the field for techniques and approaches to mathematics/statistics anxiety and shared its findings, it has also acted as a support group for dealing with the difficulties students have with the material, with their attitudes toward the material, and, often, their negative projections onto the material or the instruction. In-depth diagnosis of mathematics anxiety provided ongoing discussion which resulted in faculty becoming more sensitive to the ways to assist students. A positive outcome was that the survey of the field brought a number of strategies to the fore as detailed throughout this paper and in the appendix. Everyone took something back from each meeting that was immediately useful with current students.

Perhaps the biggest impact this teaching circle project had on all participants is that it made faculty members look closely at both viewpoints: the teacher's and the student's. The anxiety that is so closely associated with mathematics cannot be ascribed simply to either "too tough teaching" or to "work-avoiding, whining students." This is a complex issue, but some strategies can be utilized to improve the climate in mathematics-related coursework on college campuses. The faculty involved thinks this teaching circle has provided the opportunity to help not only in their own classrooms but also perhaps those of colleagues at universities around the country.

The University of Nebraska at Omaha has now opened several resources for student assistance, including a speech center, a writing center, and a mathematics and science learning center. The Faculty Development Center has been able to reinstitute stipends for teaching circle participation. These resources have certainly been helpful to both faculty members and students. Whether increased resources are available or not, however, teaching circles thrive as a source of support for faculty. As schools across the country experience the fluctuations of the current economy, the implementation of teaching circles can provide great rewards with minimal expense.

Appendix: Lessons Learned from the Faculty Teaching Circle for Math-Anxious Students

Some Tips for Helping Math-Anxious Students:

- Assess preparation and refer to appropriate course or tutoring if needed.
- Acknowledge mathematics/statistics anxiety.
- Acknowledge that students can succeed if they work and that you will assist them.
- Form study groups for in-class and out-of-classroom (extra credit) sessions.
- Make explicit the tie between lectures and homework.
- Provide a detailed study guide prior to exams; go over it in a review in class. Give a short sample exam to familiarize students with question types.
- Build trust by making the study guide coincide with the exam.
- Provide a formula sheet for those that will be on exams—have students annotate it before the review and go over it.
- Use definitional formulas rather than computational formulas to promote understanding.
- Send home practice questions that students prepare, compare, and then present on the board in class (each group presents one problem and explains it). This lowers anxiety by presenting answers that are agreed upon by the group so that at least a student is not "incorrect" all alone!
- Give "test your knowledge" quizzes after each unit—work in small groups, go over in class. Do not grade.
- Play games and give prizes (with humor).
- Let students hand write a 3 x 5 card to use in the exam so that they don't "panic." Instruct them to include the items "I just know I'll forget on the test."
- Emphasize the everyday importance of the subject matter.

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Enhancing the Learning Experience for Millennial Developmental Students

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The values and needs of today's college students are different from the needs of students from past generations. It is important that developmental educators recognize the characteristics of these students in their classroom and develop strategies to address their needs. This article focuses on the characteristics of the Millennial student, as compared to characteristics of students from past generations. In addition, implications of having these students in the developmental classroom and best practices and activities that may be implemented to address their needs are discussed.

Comparison of Generations

Today's generation of traditional-age college students, referred to as the Millennial generation (1980-present), is very different from past generations. These individuals (hereafter referred to as "Millennials") have life experiences and values unlike individuals from previous generations.

The characteristics of the Millennial generation have been organized under seven categories: Technology-savvy, Conventional, Special, Sheltered, Confident, Achieving, Pressured, and Team-Oriented. A brief historical review identifies the ways in which these characteristics distinguish Millennials from previous generations (Howe, 2000).

Persons born during the G.I. Generation (1901-1924) lived through the Great Depression and experienced the stock market crash and World War II. Because this generation dealt with many hardships, this generation was thought to consist of persons with well-developed reasoning and problem-solving skills (Howe & Strauss, 1991). By contrast, Millennials are known to be "technology savvy," developing their problem-solving skills in part through

their interaction with video games and Internet use. The Internet has always existed in their world. Unlike previous generations, Millennials have had access to instant information via extensive cable stations, the media, and the Internet. Consequently, these students have learned to process information by first asking, "How is this relevant to me?" This practice of searching for instant and relevant information can often lead to impatience when Millennials' needs are not being met (Lewis, 2010).

The Silent Generation (1924-1945) is comprised of individuals who were born during the Great Depression and became young adults too late to become involved in World War II. Howe and Strauss (1991) have described this generation as conformists who are adaptive to change and difficulties they may face. In some ways, the Millennial generation is similar to the Silent generation, as Millennials have been characterized as "conventional" and comfortable believing in the values established by their parents. Like members of the Silent generation, Millennials are known to welcome parent involvement and advice, and excel when they have rules to follow (Howe & Strauss, 2000).

The Baby Boomer generation (1945-1964) was named for the large number of births that took place during this time period. Many of these individuals were raised by stay-at-home moms. They were taught to be independent and to believe that they had a hand in shaping their own future (Mitchell, 2005). In comparison, many Millennials have been raised by parents who postponed parenthood to first develop their careers and attain financial security (Decoding the digital Millennial, 2006). This delay and intentional launch of families may have led to the observation that Millennials sense they are "special," both individually and as a group (Howe & Strauss, 2000).

The generation born between 1965 and 1980 (Gen Xers) grew up during a time of political tension and are thought to be skeptical about the world. Many children in this generation stayed home alone after school to take care of themselves while their parents worked, and were tagged "Latchkey Kids." Single-family homes became more common in this generation. Because of the independence of their Gen Xer parents, Millennials have also tended to be independent individuals (Meeting the needs of

Millennial students, 2007-8). Paradoxically, Millennials have also been characterized as "sheltered" and highly protected, perhaps because of the societal changes that occurred during their parents' generation. For example, the Millennial generation has lived with an abundance of child-safety equipment. Surveillance cameras, visitor management systems, and limited access doors are part of increased safety measures that have been implemented in high schools following the Columbine High School attack (Trump, 2009).

Millennials also have a strong sense of self-worth and "confidence" (Howe, 2003). These individuals have been raised by parents who emphasize self-esteem. As a result, many college Millenials are "achieving" students who feel pressured to succeed. They have been encouraged by their Gen Xer parents to study hard and attend college to prepare for a career that pays off (Howe & Strauss, 2000). According to the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems Information Center (2009), 63% of United States 2008 high school graduates went directly from high school to college, up from 53% of 1992 high school graduates. While trends show that this generation has a strong sense of achievement, there is also evidence of a drop in student commitment to course work preparation (Sax, 2003). Regardless, this generation is optimistic about going to college and about doing well academically (Sax, 2003).

In summary, Millennials are characterized as a generation that practices conformity over individualism, and they prefer "team-oriented" activities with friends over creative tasks on their own. They strive to stay connected with their friends by texting and social networking. Most are involved in extracurricular, organized and "group-oriented" activities ("Decoding the digital Millennial," 2006).

Implications and Best Practices

Recognizing these characteristics associated with Millennials --achieving, special, sheltered, pressured, conventional, and team-oriented--can assist developmental educators to use classroom strategies that enhance the learning process for these students.

Achieving

Goal-oriented, relevant activities can be incorporated

into developmental courses to address the desire of Millennial students to achieve. One activity that instructors can incorporate into the first day of a course is to ask students to reflect on their goals for the semester and identify obstacles that might get in the way of achieving these goals. Examples of obstacles that students frequently acknowledge include long commutes, nervousness about doing well in the course, and involvement in a sports team that may require many extra hours of practice, and games that may require the student to miss classes. This reflection activity can be extended to include an additional step in which students work in groups to brainstorm and determine ways to address these obstacles. More often than not, developmental students recognize that time management is the remedy to many of their problems, as well as visiting the college learning center for assistance. Although most of these solutions may appear obvious, the process of engaging students in the problem-solving process fosters more meaningful solutions and reinforces the positive impact that shared practices can have on the learning process.

Similarly, end-of-the semester activities can help students to focus on their goals. In another reflective, application-based exercise, faculty can review the grading scale for the course and assign students to calculate their grades going into the final exam, including determining what score they need on the final to earn the grade they want. By completing this exercise, both instructors and students benefit. Instructors learn of any significant misperceptions students might have and can address student concerns prior to the final exam. This process also helps to eliminate surprises for students when final grades are posted.

Confident

Because Millennials tend to be confident about their strengths, they are not always aware of their weaknesses. Therefore, students benefit from frequent instructor feedback. In addition to administering weekly quizzes and collecting homework, faculty can take advantage of campus-wide programs that provide mechanisms to inform students of their progress.

Some colleges provide an on-line mid-semester grade and progress report with the option of making such comments as "making progress," "low test scores," "poor writing skills," and

"seek tutorial help." Many campuses also have early alert systems to identify students who are experiencing difficulty in their courses. When such systems provide reports to a staff person responsible for advising at-risk students, the impact on student success can be noticeable[1]. If an instructor's college does not have these mechanisms, instructors can still contribute to the success of their Millennial students by providing progress reports in class, via email, letters, or phone calls.

Special

Feeling "special" is another characteristic of the Millennial generation. Millennials feel more special when they sense that their professors care about their performance and success. A first step is for professors to know each of their students' names. Faculty can also build a relationship with students by providing an incentive (such as quiz or homework points) for students who see them outside of class or for students who document use of the learning center to work on correcting mistakes in work that has been graded and returned to them. Students at Virginia Wesleyan have shared positive comments on their course evaluations that these options allowed them to boost their grade, helped them better understand course material, and prepared them for future quizzes and tests.

Sheltered

In addition to feeling special, today's Millennial college students value their parents' advice and welcome their involvement. With email, text messaging, and cell phones, communication between students and parents can take place on a daily basis. Many Millennials are not only at ease with this relationship, they also expect parents and college employees to take care of any problems they may face (Meeting the needs of Millennial students, 2007-8). It is important that faculty members are aware of the connection between parent and student and acknowledge the role of parents in a student's life. If an instructor is confronted by a

[1]*According to Keith Moore, Associate Vice President for Student Affairs at Virginia Wesleyan College, Norfolk, VA, it is believed that implementing the early alert system in fall 2009 contributed to a 5% rise in the freshman-to-sophomore retention rate. Personal communication, February 16, 2010.*

parent regarding a student concern, the instructor should educate the parent on the course structure and policies and remind the parent that the instructor also wants the student to succeed (Lewis, 2010). Before offering academic information to parents, faculty should reference their college registrar's office to make sure they are in compliance with the Family Rights and Privacy Act guidelines for disclosing student information.

Pressured

This parent involvement often leads to students feeling pressured to succeed, which in turn can lead to increased cheating among Millennials. Research indicates high levels of cheating in high schools (McCabe, 2005). Although today's students are characterized as rule followers, they often try to justify cheating by claiming that high school is simply a hurdle they must overcome to reach college. They may value little of what they learn or believe that because their peers cheat, cheating is acceptable.

These attitudes and habits continue as students reach the college campus (McCabe, 2005) and require campuses to address the issue of academic honesty with students. According to McCabe (2005), a strong correlation exists between high levels of cheating and campuses that do not facilitate active dialog about academic honesty among students. Steps that can be taken include posting the college's honor code in each classroom and beginning the first day of class with an explanation of this code, followed by a discussion on academic integrity. In addition, to decrease incidents of cheating, instructors should reinforce proctoring during tests, and consider allowing a reference sheet to be used during tests (McCabe, 2005).

To offer a balance to the structure-seeking Millennial student, instructors can offer activities that address a student's creative side by implementing a journaling grade component. Journal entries can include reflections related to study skills, mathematics or English concepts and skills, study preferences, and questions such as, "What advice would you give someone taking this class for the first time?" This process integrates writing and reflection, provides a mechanism for the student to summarize ideas, and offers a means of communication between the instructor and student.

Conventional

Millennial students have also been characterized as conventional and tend to be rule followers who prefer structure (Howe & Strauss, 2000). On the other hand, because they feel pressured to succeed and tend to be very self-confident, they are not afraid to question or challenge rules. Millennial developmental students who feel pressured to succeed and confident at the same time are not afraid to question or challenge rules. In addition, they may be vocal when their needs are not being met. The students who exhibit this behavior seem to reflect a strong sense of "entitlement" (Lewis, 2010). To address these behaviors and help developmental students succeed, faculty should provide a detailed syllabus that outlines clear course goals and expectations. Consequences of not meeting each expectation should also be included (Lewis, 2010). For example, if cell phones are not allowed in a class, a statement regarding what would happen as a result of a student using a cell phone in class should also be clearly stated. It is also important for the instructor to show consistency in following through on the consequence. Giving quizzes over the syllabus helps to ensure that students have read these policies.

Team-Oriented

Millennial students are team-oriented. To take advantage of this attribute, faculty should incorporate group work into the developmental classroom setting when possible. Many research studies have shown that students working together to accomplish shared learning goals can be more effective than competitive and individualistic efforts (Johnson, D. & Johnson, R. 2000). Developmental instructors who become skillful in creating and managing group activities will find that they are creating a positive learning environment.

Offering a daily group work grade is one way to take advantage of the team-oriented characteristic of the Millennial developmental student. Giving students credit for successfully completing problems while working in groups each class day, related to material presented in the lesson, provides students with added incentive to attend class each day (rather than serving as punishment for recorded absences), and provides them with an

opportunity to better understand the lesson and enhance their social skills.

Conclusion

Millennial students have characteristics that are unlike students in previous generations. These differing characteristics create unique obstacles that may hinder the academic success of today's college students, particularly those enrolled in developmental classes. Faculty can address these obstacles by being aware of these distinctions and implementing activities and practices in the classroom that address the needs of Millennial students.

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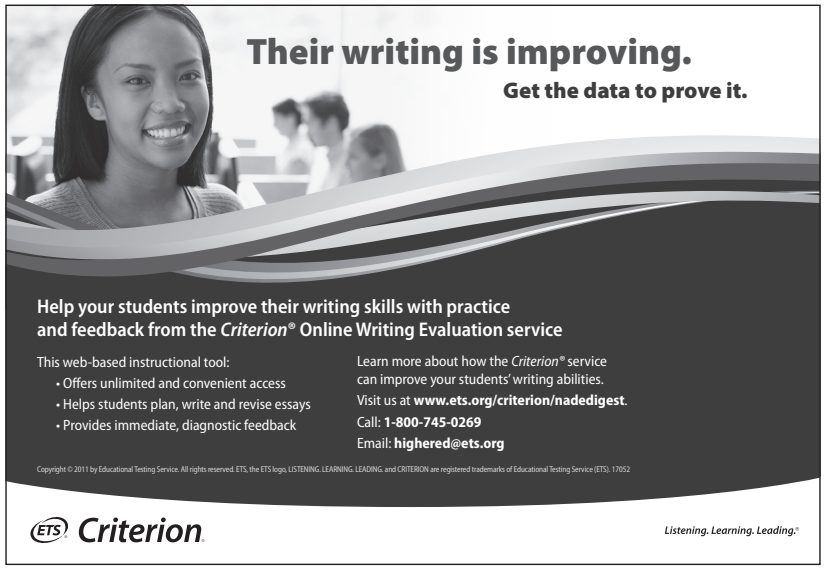

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Because students starting college are not always prepared to succeed, colleges and universities frequently offer courses designed to help students who need remediation in mathematics, reading, and writing. At Utah Valley University (UVU), peer mentors are integrated into the University Student Success course to help first- year students learn the skills needed to be successful in college. This research suggests that the more peer mentors, students, and instructors each understand the peer mentor's role, the more successful the peer mentoring relationship with students will be.

Utah Valley University (UVU) is a large western university with over 30,000 students. For the past 10 years, UVU has been using peer mentors in the University Student Success course which focuses on helping first-year students make the transition to college, and provide learning experiences for students who mentor as well. Over the past 10 years more than 15,000 students have been served by approximately 400 peer mentors. Both the mentee and the mentor have benefited. As Goodlad (1998) suggests, by giving the learners responsibility for their own and their peers' education, students move beyond "compartmentalized" schooling to a place of engaged and empowered pedagogy. The UVU mentors go through a series of training classes throughout their tenure. The first class focuses on the theory of mentoring. After successful completion of this class, they are eligible to apply to become a UVU mentor. If they are selected, they take a second training class during their first semester of mentoring where they learn the application of mentoring. For each semester UVU mentors serve, they attend a practicum class in which their mentoring skills are

continually being sharpened. UVU mentors serve a maximum of 25 students in the University Student Success class where their purpose is to connect students to campus and to encourage them to persist through graduation.

As the peer mentoring program has grown, faculty and staff at UVU have continued to evaluate the effectiveness of peer-student interactions. A particular issue that concerned UVU staff was the potential for confusion about the role that peer tutors and mentors play in higher education classrooms. Colvin (2007) found that sometimes students saw a peer tutor as someone who could help them in the classroom or as someone who was taking over for instructors and who themselves had mixed perceptions. Some instructors saw peer tutors as an asset while others did not know how to use the peer tutors in the classroom. Tutors, on the other hand, perceived themselves as leaders, guides, assistant instructors, and/or friends to students.

In order to provide increased understanding of mentors and how they and others see their role as well as extend Colvin's study of peer tutors, research was conducted to examine peer mentors, their interactions with students and instructors, and their understanding of their role in and out of the classroom. For purposes of this study, a peer mentor is defined as "a student who has learned from experience or has developed skills to successfully guide other students through college" (Sanft, Jensen, and Mc Murray, 2008, p.5). It should also be noted that UVU mentors typically help students with not just academic but also social competencies.

Method

Data collection started in late Spring 2008 and continued through Spring 2009 utilizing observations and interviews.

Observations

As faculty researchers, we engaged in participant observation throughout the entire study and collected extensive field notes. Observations were collected at UVU mentor activities, weekly classes and meetings, and other interactions in both formal and informal settings.

Interviews

The researchers interviewed 12 UVU mentors that had been part of the program for one year or longer, eight newly selected UVU mentors, 10 instructors of the University Student Success course to which the UVU mentors were assigned, and 10 students who attended the University Student Success course with a UVU mentor in their class. The interviews ranged from 10 to 30 minutes. Interviews with UVU mentors and students were held in the UVU mentor lounge, and interviews with instructors were held in faculty offices. Student researchers conducted ten of the interviews. These student researchers first observed how professional staff conducted interviews, practiced with each other using the structured question list, and when they could demonstrate inter-coder consistency, conducted their own interviews. All interviewers used structured questions with unstructured follow-up questions. All of the interviews were transcribed and measures were taken to verify accuracy. Table 1 provides an outline of the interview questions.

Table 1. Outline for interview with instructors, student peer mentors, and students

1.How would you define a peer mentor?
2.Do you see the role of mentor as being any different from that of a TA or peer tutor?
3.Do you see any benefits for being/having a mentor at UVU?
4.Do you see any risks/challenges?
5.What are your impressions of the mentor program so far? (admin?)
6.Have you worked with a mentor before?
7.Is there anything that needs to happen for the mentors to be more effective?
8.What role do you think mentors should play in a university?
9.Can you think of any specific incident where you interacted with a mentor that sums up how you feel about the experience?
10.Anything else that you want to add?

Data Analysis

Using a grounded theory approach (Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967), researchers analysed the data. A grounded theory is developed from data obtained through formal and informal research. Informal observations about practice are used to develop the propositions of the theory. Research is then designed to verify elements of the theory as well as to generate new theory in a cyclical fashion. This type of analytic induction does not use a theory as starting point. Rather, meanings are inferred from the data collected. As Smythe and Nikolai (2002) explain, "For instructional planners, the value of a grounded theory analysis is substantial[,] emergent themes are the products of a specific constituent group's perceived needs rather than assumptions or traditions endorsed by administrators or academics" (p. 165). In using grounded theory to inform the study, researchers were interested in identifying emerging patterns in the data that provided an insider's perspective on UVU mentors.

Coding. Coding was accomplished in stages. Initially, using NVivo©, a qualitative software analysis program, each interview was coded for attributes which were consistent across all interviews. As attribute coding continued, one researcher also began coding for themes and dimensions. Only one person did this type of coding so that intercoder reliability was not an issue.

After coding for themes, researchers implemented axial coding (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), which refers to the process of coding around a single category. In this phase, researchers not only identify topics, but they also examine where, when, and why interviewees feel the way they do as relationships both within and between categories emerge. Finally, selective coding was used. Selective coding validates, refines, and develops a code category (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Throughout the process of this research, the instructor responsible for coding shared results with the other two researchers in order to check and validate categories.

The aim was to find overall themes and to discover the relationship between them. After the initial coding and development of themes, the research focus moved to a review of the following research questions (findings are discussed in the next section):

1. How do peer mentors construct and enact their roles?
2. What risks or benefits are manifest (if any) in these peer mentor relationships?

Results of the Study

Roles

There were a total of 96 comments from students, mentors, and instructors about roles and their implications for mentors. In the process of sorting and labeling the roles, researchers found that roles could be grouped into the same categories identified by Sanft, Jensen, and McMurray in their work on peer mentoring. These five roles are Connecting Link, Peer Leader, Learning Coach, Student Advocate, and Trusted Friend. Because we wanted to know if there is a common understanding of each of these five roles amongst students, mentors, and instructors, the 96 comments were analyzed together. Individual comments are listed by student, mentor or instructor.

Connecting Link. Nineteen of the 96 comments on the role of the mentor related to the role of Connecting Link. The majority of the comments focused on the mentor helping the students feel comfortable on campus and knowing the resources on campus. Almost half of the 19 comments referred to the mentor knowing resources on campus. "A mentor is someone who knows the campus very well (Student #36 Interview)." Peer mentors know "little details about the school, about things [students] would never know about (Student #42 Interview)."

Peer Leader. Ten of the 96 comments directly referred to peer mentors as a Peer Leader. "They're not just leaders to the student [in their class], they're leaders to all students… and they're an example to all students not just the ones they mentor [in their class] (Student #40 Interview)." Peer mentors are not just being viewed by the students in their classrooms as leaders but by the institution at large, "[the mentors] are a huge part of leadership [on campus], that's kind of how they support the university (Student #33 Interview)."

Learning Coach. The role of Learning Coach received the most comments of 29 out of 96. There were 13 references within the 29 comments that referred to peer mentors in the role of

learning coach that helped students want to persist through graduation. Mentors "increase the success rate and lower the dropout rate (Student #32 Interview)," they are "students who are helping another student succeed in school (Returning Mentor #30 Interview)," and are "kind of like a team working alongside [students] helping them to pursue an education (Student # 40 Interview)."

Student Advocate. The role of Student Advocate was the second highest in comments with 24 out of 96. Twelve of the 24 comments relate to the peer mentor being a helper, mostly in helping to mediate the relationship between the student and the instructor. UVU mentors help the students during their first year experience to "assist [the students] in figuring things out (Student #40 Interview)," in being "a personal helper… with what's going on (Student #42 Interview)." Other comments (4 of 12) address the issue that students might need "help to have confidence to approach their instructors (Instructor #24 Interview)," "[but] they can turn to the peer (Student #37 Interview)." Instructors said, "By listen[ing] to [the mentor] we can see how the students perceive things (Instructor #24 Interview)."

Trusted Friend. Ten of 96 comments referred to a peer mentor being a Trusted Friend. Many of the interviewees responded that the main difference between a peer tutor and peer mentor was that a peer tutor mainly "just helps [the students] in class (Student #33 Interview)," and that the relationship with a peer mentor "is to be a friend for [the students] (Student #35 Interview)." A peer mentor is "someone who is a friend… trustworthy, [and] there for the students… to spend time with [them] on campus, there if they have questions (Returning Mentor #22 Interview)."

Benefits

Research, as well as anecdotal evidence at UVU, indicates some sort of benefit to both sides of a peer mentor relationship. Goodlad lists some benefits for mentors as, "increasing attention to and motivation for the task, and necessitating review of existing knowledge and skills. Consequently, existing knowledge is transformed by reorganization, involving new associations and a new integration" (1998, p. 52). Benefits in this study were found

for all three roles: mentors, students, and instructors.

Mentors. When mentors were asked, "What benefit do you see for being a mentor?" three themes emerged: being able to support students, reapplying concepts in their own lives, and developing connections amongst themselves. Thirty-nine out of 77 comments about the benefits of being peer mentors focused on being able to support, help out, or uplift the students with whom they worked. Mentors said such things as, "[Mentoring] is just a great service opportunity to help others …I like seeing that 'aha' moment… (Returning Mentor #9 Interview)." Mentors also liked being able to help others be successful in their class(es).

Mentors also indicated another benefit (22 out of 77 comments), that of being more involved with other peer mentors, developing friendships, and learning how to interact with others. Comments included such things as, "You make more friends and it's able to help you be more social if you're shy (Student #35 Interview)," and "I think that it's such a good support system. You have the other mentors as a support system, and you are continually growing and learning (Returning Mentor #2 Interview)."

Finally, mentors also felt, as Goodlad (1998) suggested, that mentoring allowed them to reapply concepts into their own lives and helped them become even better students themselves (16 out of 77 comments). "There are principles that are taught in the class and by me mentoring, I am able to continually be refreshed on all those items …. that I've learned that I may not be doing that I need to reapply (Returning Mentor #1 Interview)." Interestingly, even though UVU peer mentors each receive a full tuition scholarship for mentoring for two semesters, only 3 of the 77 responses mentioned this as being a benefit.

Risks or Challenges

Not all experiences related to peer mentoring are positive, however. Instructors, peer mentors, and students all saw some risk or challenge in maintaining a peer-mentor relationship.

Mentors. Comments about risks or challenges for mentors focused on their personal lives, interactions with students, and interactions with the instructors. Thirty-eight of the 70 comments on the risks and challenges for mentors were issues of balancing both the

specific requirements and personal desire to do well as mentors with time and other commitments. One mentor commented, "I think [it is a challenge] just maintaining balance in your own personal life and being able to draw the line between helping other people and taking on their other problems and issues.… (Returning Mentor #34 Interview)."

Others saw risks and challenges in interacting with students (28 out of 70). Comments centered on students either being too dependent on the mentor or, conversely, not accepting the mentors. Students who were dependent were seen as needing the mentor too much. "There is a huge risk of depending on that person too much, using them as a crutch… (Returning Mentor #11 Interview)." Students who did not accept mentors created challenges for the mentors who were supposed to be helping and working with them. Some students feel like "they don't really need [help] or they're going to avoid you and don't really want your help… (Returning Mentor #2 Interview)."

Some light can be shed on risks and challenges for mentors by comparing the amount of time mentors participated in the program. Those who were first- and second-year mentors saw the students as being too dependent as the major risk. By the third year, mentors focused mainly on time management as the major risk.

Conclusion

Just as Colvin found in her study with tutors, it is apparent that stakeholders in the UVU Mentor Program have different definitions and expectations of the peer mentoring role. UVU faculty concluded from this finding that students must be informed of the five roles for peer mentors that emerged from the study, that all of these roles are important, and mentors will likely play each of these roles over time with their mentees. In addition, UVU faculty have concluded that the peer mentor and instructor must receive training together to increase understanding of roles, increase the benefits of mentoring, and lessen the risks that are evident in not knowing what to expect or how to work together. It cannot be assumed that peer mentors and faculty have a common understanding of their roles; training and role clarification can alleviate confusion.

Mentors must also understand that the role of trusted friend must be established early on or the other roles are not likely to emerge. The goal is that as all stakeholders understand the role of a peer mentor, the UVU mentors will be able to better serve the students on UVU's campus and help increase retention and learning rates.

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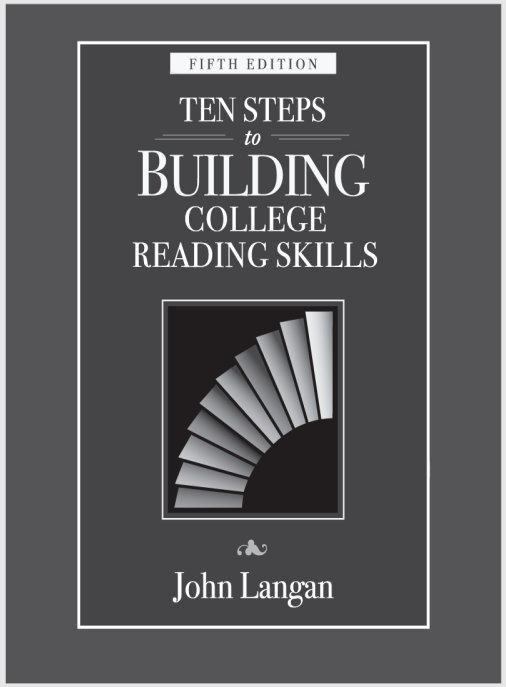

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