Engaging Faculty in Reform to Support Instructional Improvement

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Community College Research Center
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CCRC and partner colleges work to adapt and scale promising developmental education reforms at new institutions

Faculty-driven effort, with intentional focus on professional learning and classroom practice

For more information visit www.scalinginnovation.org
Accelerated Learning Program: Enrolls developmental writing students in introductory college-level English course along with a companion support course.

California Acceleration Project: Statewide network of colleges engaged in reforms that shorten developmental English and math sequences through revision of curricula.

Concepts of Numbers: Pre-algebra content is organized by concepts rather than topics and employs a discovery based approach to teaching.
Why examine faculty engagement?

- To be fully optimized, promising reforms may require faculty to make changes to classroom practice.
- Little research on the experiences of faculty teaching in reformed contexts.
- Greater understanding of faculty experiences can facilitate:
  - More informed implementation process.
  - More meaningful faculty learning opportunities.
## Data Collected at 9 Community Colleges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Source</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Interviews</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrator Interviews</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation Activity Observations</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting Minutes</td>
<td>34</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conference Call Notes</td>
<td>2</td>
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Guiding Questions

How do faculty members respond when asked to participate in a new reform?

What questions do faculty raise when preparing to teach and teaching in reformed course structures?

What do their experiences suggest about professional learning opportunities to optimize reform implementation?
Faculty Orientations Toward Reform
It’s really hard to get faculty to look at teaching differently or changing curriculum in drastic ways when they’ve invested their identity in that way of teaching. ‘You’re not challenging a certain curriculum; you’re challenging me or the essence of who I am.’
Faculty Orientations Toward Reform

Ready to Act  Ambivalent  Reluctant to Change
I’m no longer using [grammar] worksheets, but I’m perplexed on how to deal with grammar in this class.
Faculty Orientations Toward Reform

Ambivalent

- Engaged with other professional priorities
- Awaiting evidence on effectiveness
- Uncertain about own ability to change

I’m not sure I have the disposition for all that group work. I’m not a group work kind of guy.
Faculty Orientations Toward Reform

I feel my students need those two levels. Some college-level instructors have no patience for them.
Faculty Questions Vary Over Time
Faculty Questions Evolve Over Time

**Nature of Reform**
- What is the evidence of success?
- How will this reform address student needs?
- How is it better than the current system?

**Reform Implementation**
- How is the new course structured?
- Which students are eligible and how will they be enrolled?
- What are course policies?

**Classroom Practice**
- What are the course materials, assessments and assignments?
- How will I use class time?
- What will I do in class tomorrow?

**Pedagogy and Student Learning**
- What instructional techniques are most effective?
- What are students learning?
- How can I support struggling students?
Implications for Faculty Learning
## What does faculty learning typically look like?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</table>
| Occurs in isolation       | - Professional norms of autonomy  
- Few opportunities for adjunct engagement |
| Decontextualized          | - Designed for broad appeal across disciplines  
- One-time workshops  
- Sharing strategies in the abstract |
| Unrelated to pedagogy     | - Focused on fostering disciplinary expertise  
- Lack of instructional leadership within departments |
Typical Talk about Pedagogy

Highly Prescriptive

Sharing Strategies
Keep Engagement Purposeful

**Purpose**
- The learning objective is clear and relevant to participants.
- *Introducing a new pedagogical approach*

**Activity**
- The activity is designed to help participants meet the learning objective and is grounded in classroom practice.
- *Observing a teaching demonstration*

**Venue**
- The venue is aligned with the purpose and activity.
- *Monthly meeting of a faculty inquiry group*
Design Varied Engagement Structures to Meet Varied Needs

- Ready to Act
- Ambivalent
- Reluctant to Change
Share Information to Dispel Fears and Misconceptions

**Unconvinced of effectiveness**
- Reform purpose and theory of action
- Outcome data
- Evidence of student performance

**Uncertain of ability to implement**
- “Vision of the possible”
  - Videos of classroom practice
  - Peer observation
  - Curricular materials and student work
Ground Professional Learning in Classroom Practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LESS CONNECTED TO CLASSROOM PRACTICE</th>
<th>GROUNDED IN DAILY TEACHING WORK</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Designed for broad appeal across disciplines and/or colleges</td>
<td>• Infrastructure for ongoing collaboration, experimentation and refinement</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Presentations by consultants</td>
<td>• Examination of course materials, including classroom activities, assignments, and assessments</td>
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<tr>
<td>• One-time workshops</td>
<td>• Review of wide array of data including course outcomes and student work</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Descriptions of “best practices”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Generalized descriptions of context</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Sharing strategies in the abstract</td>
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For more information

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http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu

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