



IDEA Reader's Corner

Iowa Developmental Education Association Newsletter, February 2018

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Jennie Doke-Kerns, Ph.D.



On October 26-27 I had the pleasure of attending the IDEA Fall Conference in Cedar Falls, Iowa, where I also had the honor of assuming the role of president of our association. I'm excited to serve all of you—and our students—this year. The conference was a great success. We almost doubled our number of registered attendees compared to last year, and the large group conversations, presentations, and breakout sessions were truly top notch. I am always heartened when I attend our conference because I am reminded of how many dedicated, talented professionals we have in Iowa working with our developmental education students. We talked about the challenges that we face, and we talked about the importance of what we do. This year, we also talked a lot about the future.

In light of recent state-level scrutiny of developmental education in Iowa, the Department of Education has convened a group called The Developmental Education Working Group, which brings together representatives from each of our community colleges, as well as others in education and government, in order to examine how we are meeting the needs of this student population. (For more specific information about this group, please see my article about the DEWG.) Because of these conversations, the Department of Education sent representatives to our conference so we could share our insights and concerns with them as they move forward and possibly develop policy that could affect our institutions and programs. The association welcomed the representatives from the DE, and we had many substantive conversations about our experiences, our concerns, and our successes in working with these students. This conference was a great step toward opening a clear line of communication between the association, its members, and the Iowa Department of Education. It was my impression that all of the players involved in this conversation truly want what's best for our students.

In addition to those important conversations, the conference offered an insightful and passionate keynote address by NADE president Robin Ozz, as well as many informative and thought-provoking breakout sessions. For information about these presentations, take a look at the session summaries included in this issue.

And now it's time to start thinking about the coming year. With all that is happening at the state level and even within our own classrooms, there's no question it's going to be an important and exciting year in developmental education in Iowa. It's imperative that we, as educators and practitioners, have a voice as the powers-that-be talk about these important issues; these discussions are going to happen with or without our input, and I, for one, choose to be part of the conversation. Please feel free to reach out to me or other members of the organization with your thoughts. It's also a great time to get others involved in IDEA. Invite others to join. Share the newsletter, or—even better—write an article to share with us about your thoughts and experiences in developmental education. Like the Facebook page and ask others to do the same. Let's make sure that our voices are heard at this important time.

November 28, 2017 Updates:

It's been a busy November in Developmental Education. The DEWG subcommittees have met multiple times, each exploring their assigned topics. Additionally this month, I've met with representatives from the Iowa Association of Community College Trustees to talk about the issues facing the Developmental Education Working Group. Additionally, I had the opportunity to reach out to State Representative Wes Breckenridge to talk about the complexity of the challenges facing developmental education in Iowa.

I emphasized many of the points Robin Ozz made at our conference, particularly the fact that there is not going to be one "magic bullet" that is going to fix developmental education. I also talked about the fact that there is no typical developmental education student: these students come with various abilities, challenges, and obstacles that make them under-prepared for college.

I encourage all of you to reach out to your local legislators to put a face on the issues facing our students, faculty, and staff. Let them know that developmental education should not be politicized or subjected to the latest untested educational fads; instead, we need to be given the freedom to meet our students where they are with what they need. And no one is better able to make those judgments than our teachers in the classrooms every day.

FALL CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS



IDEA President Dan Nelson, DMACC-Ankeny, receives an award for his leadership in 2016-2017, as Jennifer Doke-Kerns, DMACC-Newton, begins her term as IDEA's 2017-2018 President.

CONFERENCE BREAKOUT SESSION SUMMARIES

Key Note Breakout Discussion

Facilitator: Dr. Robin Ozz, President of the National Association of Developmental Educators

Written by Amanda Rodenborn

In addition to her keynote presentation at this year's IDEA Conference, NADE President Robin Ozz led a follow-up session about trends and transitions in developmental education. She noted the continued emphasis on co-requisite models across the nation as well as the elimination of developmental education altogether in states like Florida and Connecticut. Ozz encouraged Iowa educators to continue letting our voices be heard by sharing our and our students' stories.

After an overview of the trends, Ozz invited us to discuss transitions occurring on our own campuses. Some participants voiced concerns over meetings that resulted from a letter the governor's office sent out to community college presidents and deans at the end of the summer. Participants who were just learning of these conversations questioned if and how developmental education would be affected. Those who were involved in the meetings explained that they knew of no immediate changes but the Department of Education was invited to share more information during a large-group session the next morning.

These questions and concerns prompted discussions about current publications in circulation regarding the past, present, and future state of developmental education. Participants described some of the studies as misleading, propagating a perceived "problem" with developmental education, and promoting a one-size-fits-all model as a solution.

The discussions concluded with a call to be ever mindful of our students and their best interests. We must all work together with our local high schools, other faculty, administrators, support services, researchers, government entities, and others because despite the ever-changing tides in developmental education, our most important job is to serve the students in front of us.



Engaging and Supporting English Language Learners: Student and Faculty Voices

Facilitators: Dr. Martha Doyle, Dr. Jeannie Matz, and Dr. Kris Owens, Mercy College of Health Sciences

Written by Jennie Doke-Kerns

This session was facilitated by Kris Owens, Marti Doyle, and Jeannine Matz from Mercy College of Health Sciences in Des Moines, Iowa. After working with an increasingly diverse student population, these instructors desired a better understanding of the experience of ELL students on their campus. This led them to establish two separate focus groups on the topic, one consisting of faculty and staff and the other consisting of self-identified ELL students.

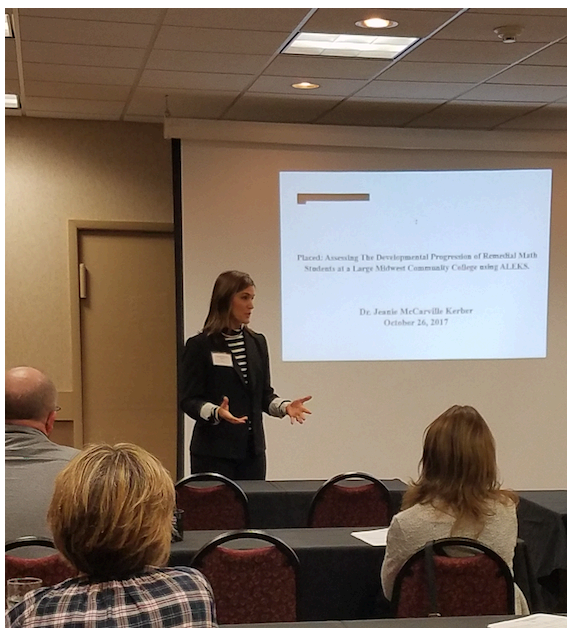
The discussion within these groups yielded interesting data about how the staff and students perceived each other, and what barriers, assumptions, and misunderstandings kept them from connecting as effectively as they might. For instance, some faculty felt that they were protecting or aiding ELL students by not asking them to contribute as much, while many of these students were frustrated by what they perceived as lower expectations for them as a group by both faculty and student peers. The result of the study was a better understanding of the experience of these students, as well as a realization that faculty and staff needed more experiences that might help them empathize with these students and connect with them more effectively.



Placed: Assessing the Developmental Progression of Remedial Math Students at a Midwest Community College

Facilitator: Dr. Jeanie McCarville Kerber – Des Moines Area Community College

Written by Ruth Kunkle, MS



Dr. Jeanie McCarville Kerber presented her dissertation topic: Placed: Assessing the Developmental Progression of Remedial Math Students at a Midwest Community College. As Dr. McCarville Kerber stated, community colleges are often the entry point for many first generation college students who are disproportionately underprepared for the challenges of college. According to NCPPHE & SREB (2010), public postsecondary enrollment numbers indicate the college readiness gap could be as high as 60%; therefore, community colleges have to be ready to meet the needs of this student population.

Community colleges have historically had an open door policy; however, to meet the needs of incoming students requiring academic assistance, many community colleges have implemented entry tests such as ALEKS. ALEKS provides scores and suggests course(s) for areas such as math. As Dr. McCarville Kerber outlined, establishing a baseline and providing the series of college preparatory courses to improve a student's comprehension and readiness to succeed takes

time. Unfortunately, many students do not complete the full sequence in order to reach college level math. Persistence is the goal. Dr. McCarville Kerber provided research available from Hagedorn & Lester, 2006; Hagedorn, Lester, & Cypers, 2010 reiterating students pattern to become college ready – follow the sequential order, enroll, pass, successfully complete, “repeat” until the students successfully reach college level math. Additional research asked the question, “What factors indicate progression from remedial math to college level math?” (1) Students with higher ALEKS placement scores were 1.103 times more likely to progress to college math. (2) Students with higher math grades were 1.199 times more likely to progress to college level math. (3) Students in good academic standing were 3.228 times more likely to progress to college math.

Dr. McCarville Kerber is student centered; therefore, it is no wonder the final questions were directed to educators: (1) What can we (educators) do better? (2) What do students need? (3) How is assessment helping? (4) How is assessment hurting?

For more information pertaining to community college student readiness and college persistence, contact Dr. McCarville Kerber – jamccarville1@dmacc.edu (515-783-2779).

Addressing Barriers, Facilitating Success: Transferring the Experiences of Rural Online Students **Facilitator: Dr. Alysia Peich, Continuing Education Coordinator**

Written by Jennie Doke-Kerns

Dr. Alysia Peich shared the results of her study describing the experience of rural students taking online classes. She explored the barriers encountered by these students and discussed what they appreciated and did not enjoy about their online courses. Dr. Peich began her presentation by sharing population trends and projections for counties in the state of Iowa; this information really drove home the fact that there will be more and more rural students to serve in the coming decades. While the academic levels of her students varied greatly (from community college students to those taking masters level classes) her results were very consistent: students appreciated well-organized, interactive, quality online content from faculty that actively engaged with the class. Unfortunately, classes like that were the exception in many of these students' experiences. It was clear that larger, more established universities were offering better online classes with more qualified instructors than those of the community colleges, whose online classes are often staffed by a rotating staff of adjuncts who lack access to the kind of training and professional development enjoyed by full time faculty. Her study emphasized the need for quality online instruction to serve a growing rural population of students.

Transitioning to College: Adjusting to Culture, Systems, and Identities **Facilitator: Dr. Christian Wimmer, ISU**

Written by Dan Nelson

During his presentation "Transitioning to College: Adjusting to Culture, Systems, and Identities," Dr. Christian Wimmer invited participants to more closely examine the variety of emotional and social experiences students encounter as they integrate into the college environment. As a psychologist working with students on the Iowa State University campus, Dr. Wimmer noted the value of empathy in recognizing the obstacles and challenges students must confront. The college experience provides an opportunity for growth, but in doing so, it forces students to adapt to social groups, academic challenges, and the new pressures of a major life transition. To help create a connection to the student experience, Dr. Wimmer invited participants to share their memories of influential instructors and difficult academic experiences. Establishing these connections through experience allowed Dr. Wimmer to remind participants of the often intimidating and difficult adaptation process. While this sharing process reminded participants to consider the varied points of difficulty for students, Dr. Wimmer further encouraged the group to recognize the positive impact an instructor or staff member may have on a student's direction. Students may encounter a diverse array of difficulties that alter their academic goals, but Dr. Wimmer noted that if instructors practice empathy those difficulties may be recognized and thoughtful effort may make a dramatic difference in helping a student feel connected to the academic endeavor.

Dev. Writing Students: Where They're Coming From Facilitator: Justin Robertson

This presentation covered information from a recent *New York Times* article, "Why Kids Can't Write," by Dana Goldstein, which shares data and arguments about various writing pedagogies being employed at the primary and secondary levels. The article shows that students are increasingly unprepared for success in writing courses and that writing teachers at lower levels often lack proper training and even a willingness to employ varied pedagogical techniques. While many instructional techniques are shown to have their strengths, the lack of flexibility in teaching beyond one or two area of emphasis is a consistent issue with these types of classes, which helps to explain why developmental writing populations continue to grow at the college level.

Some universal truths regarding writing practices are revealed in the article, including the following:

- Students benefit from writing both by hand and by word processor, not just one or the other
- Practicing sentence skills prior to paragraphing skills is an essential step for students
- Clear feedback and exposure to examples of good writing are integral to student success
- Confidence in writing ability usually translates to success on the page

When the article was published in August 2017, it was well received by most, though its use of generalities and dubious sources for some of its data have led to a backlash by some educators who believe the key problems with primary and secondary writing instruction are more tied to systemic or institutional issues. P.L. Thomas, a professor of education at Furman University, argues that students' lack of success in writing courses are a result of Common Core standards, instructors being forced to "teach toward the test," and lack of depth or breadth required by most writing assignments. Collette Bennett, a high school writing teacher, offers her own rebuttal of the Goldstein article. Though she agrees that feedback is a fundamental necessity for writing students, she claims students struggle to improve writing skills due just as much to three other factors: lack of time, lack of student choice in subject matter, and inability for students to relate to the subject matter of a paper in a way that is authentic to their experiences.

The original article and the responses from educators show that teaching writing at any level is a complex process and that employing a variety of teaching strategies, activities, and exercises is paramount to success for students. Emphasizing just one type of learning or practice over another will likely lead to boredom by both students and instructors and limit the potential for all students in writing classes. While we cannot resolve the issues occurring at the primary and secondary levels, understanding where developmental writing students are coming from will enable us to make better decisions in our post-secondary institutions.



Further reading:

“Why Kids Can’t Write” by Dana Goldstein: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/02/education/edlife/writing-education-grammar-students-children.html>

“Why Journalists Shouldn’t Write about Education” by P.L. Thomas: https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/why-journalists-shouldnt-write-about-education_us_5985a573e4b0f2c7d93f5609

“Why Kids Can’t Write’ Without Time, Choice, Authenticity, and Feedback“ by Collette Bennett: <https://usedbooksinclass.com/2017/08/07/why-kids-cant-write-without-time-choice-authenticity-and-feedback/>

Examining the Lived Experience of Adult High School Completion Students: Barriers, Strengths, and Themes

Facilitator: Dr. Jennifer Doke-Kerns

Written by Noël Gibsen

Jennifer completed a research project as part of her participation in LINC (Leaders in the New Century). She looked at female students who had recently completed their High School Equivalency Diplomas through DMACC. (In Iowa, the test changed from GED to HiSET in January 2014).

Jennifer’s statement of the problem is that there is a need for a better understanding of the student experience so that we can create effective interventions and create an environment that meets students’ needs.

Jennifer broke her findings into four themes: Importance of establishing relationships; role of Mother; family/societal patterns and lack of female empowerment.

Students talked about getting into fights at the schools from which they had dropped out. They talked about their mothers being very busy with work and raising families. None of the women interviewed had fathers who were present.

In Iowa, the community colleges are the providers of HSED instruction. Jennifer pointed out that these students represent a sizeable group of potential credit students. One question for discussion was how to get these students enrolled in appropriate credit programs.

Questions to Ask Your Publisher about Accessibility

Facilitator: Jennifer Kolb, Education Courseware Representative, Hawkes Learning,
jkolb@hawkeslearning.com

Written by Jennifer Condon

Access, rules, expectations, accommodations, accountability. Every educator must consider these words when selecting a text and online resources. Hawkes Learning Education Courseware Representative Jennifer Kolb explained Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA compliance to her audience. These guidelines will help us provide the resources that meet expectations from students and outside audiences and agencies.

WCAG 2.0 addresses content accessibility for a broad audience, from those who are blind to those with cognitive limitations and many more disabilities. Some of the tools are simple browser plugins like ChromeVox, which relies on content created in clear alternative text.

If you missed her session, she is sharing these links for us to have the best information to make the best decision when it comes to students' access to course content:

- What to know about web accessibility – Webinar on demand: <https://blog.hawkeslearning.com/what-to-know-about-web-accessibility-in-educational-resources/>
- Web accessibility best practices: <http://www.hawkeslearning.com/Accessibility/index.html>
- Accessibility Checklist: Topics to Discuss with Your Publisher: <https://blog.hawkeslearning.com/2016/12/13/accessibility-checklist-topics-to-discuss-with-your-publisher/>
- WCAG Guidelines: <https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG20/>



REQUEST FROM THE NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Ruth Kunkle, MS



This is your opportunity to get involved!! This is a request to all IDEA members and those who would like to be members. You ask, "What can I do?" or you may think, "There are only a limited number of places on the Board and I don't think there is an opportunity for me."

We need you! The Newsletter Editor needs to expand the editorial section, and this takes your skill and know-how. Representatives are needed from every community college, Regents institution, and private college; consider volunteering to produce, contribute, and participate in the creation of *The Reader's Corner*. With your assistance, the newsletter can be expanded.

Share what your campus colleagues are accomplishing, conference presentations, articles/chapters and books published; best practices on campus and in the classroom. An editorial board can garner much more information than a single editor can gather.

Contact Adjunct Faculty member Ruth Kunkle, MS, at Kunkle@iowacentral.edu or feel free to reach out to any Executive Board member to let us know how you would like to get involved. *IDEA Reader's Corner* needs you!

Join the IDEA Conversation

- Have you recently attended a conference of another professional organization? Summarize a session relevant to our membership for the Reader's Corner.
- Has your institution revamped its placement policies, developmental studies offerings, or academic support program? Provide a quick update.
- Have you located a great academic resource for student or faculty use? Share the wealth.
- Have you transitioned to a new position or received special recognition for your professional accomplishments? Let us celebrate with you!

To submit articles or information for future editions of the *IDEA Reader's Corner*, please send to:

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Iowa Central Community College
Kunkle@iowacentral.edu

IDEA Fall 2018 Conference Website

https://www.dmacc.edu/idea/SitePages/Fall_Preview.aspx

Stay in Touch with IDEA and NADE

IDEA Website:

Check the IDEA website for 2018 conference updates, student scholarship information, and member resources.

<https://www.dmacc.edu/idea/SitePages/Home.aspx>

IDEA Facebook:

Like us on Facebook to receive updates on IDEA and our annual conference!

www.facebook.com/iowadevelopmentaleducationassociation



NADE List Serve:

<https://groups.google.com/a/thenade.org/d/forum/nade-discussion-forum>

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