Kathleen Gabriel, Ed.D.

Teaching Unprepared Students:

Strategies for Promoting Success and Retention in Higher Education

Kathleen F. Gabriel, Ed.D.

Overview of Unprepared Students

Growing numbers of underprepared, unprepared, and/or at-risk students…

Myth or Reality?

What do you think? True or False

___ 1. ACT testing results showed that 49% of high school graduates do not have the reading skills needed for college success.

___ 2. At 4-year colleges, 15% of first-time students require at least 1 year of remedial courses.

What do you think? True or False

___ 3. Once admitted to college, 55% of the students who have to take at least one remedial class will go on to obtain a degree or certificate within 8 years of enrollment.
Unprepared and/or At-Risk Students

What do you see in the classroom?

Characteristics &/or Behaviors

Write-Pair-Share

3 x 5 card or 1/2 sheet of paper

What do you see in the classroom?

Seven Risk Factors That Threaten Persistence & Graduation from College

1. Being Academically underprepared for college-level work
2. Not entering college directly after high school
3. Attending college part-time
4. Being a single parent
5. Being financially independent (relying on own income)
6. Caring for children at home
7. Working more than 30 hours per week
8. Being a first-generation college student*

What to do?

No Magical Solutions
No Quick Fixes

Philosophical Foundations

• It is never too late
• Commitment and time are required
• Struggle (possibly pain) is involved
• Responsibility for goals & dreams goes to...
• “Never do for the students what they can do for themselves”

It ain’t nothing to find no starting place in the world. You just start from where you find yourself.

--August Wilson
1945-2005
Chapter 1

As educators, we have an obligation to all of our students…. …we must use a myriad of actions that will provide … real opportunities for success. …If we don’t, we are simply setting these students up for failure and, … only pretending … that we are providing opportunities (p. 4).

Faculty (that is YOU)

Make the Difference!

Community of Learners: Sharing A Mission

First week of class…

Reach Out

Begin with a detail and explicit syllabus

SYLLABUS:

Course Objectives = LEARNING OUTCOMES

Defining Roles & Expectations

Clarifying how students will be graded

Learning Outcomes:

What…

Why?

How this will be useful?

Relevancy
Syllabus Checklist

Essential Beginnings:

- Setting the Scene: Welcome message
- YOUR enthusiasm
- Your interest the students

The First Principle for “Good Practices in Undergraduate Education”:

1) Encourages Faculty-Student Contact


LEARN YOUR Student’s NAMES...

Let’s share strategies on how to ACCOMPLISH THIS TASK

NAME PLATES

Using Office Hours for “Interviews”

2nd Principle for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education...

1) Encourages Faculty-Student Contact

2) Encourages Cooperation Among Students


Four major reasons for academic Difficulty:

1) Poor Management of Time
2) Continue to organize (and study) the same way as they did in high school
3) Selection of courses
4) They studied alone...

Author, Richard J. Light (pgs. 36-49)
Learner-Centered Teaching & The Interactive Class Sessions

Keep a constant eye on both ends of the bridge.

High Expectations

- All participate
- Put expectations on your syllabus
- “Respect”--how we will treat each other
- Responsibilities & “Preparation” for class meetings

Actions of individual faculty members improve the chances of success…

“regardless of individuals’ prior academic history…”
When professors treated the students as academically capable and held them to high standards in an environment of respect and integration, students--all students, even those who were admitted as underachieving or unprepared students—achieve an increased level of performance. Blose (1999).

Ask for a Commitment!

Bain (2004) notes This is a practice among the “Best Teachers”!

Engagement = Academic Discourse

THE GOAL:
Developing in your class or in the program, a “Community of Learners”

Setting up student groups . . .

NAME PLATES

#1 color

STRATEGIES TO ACCOMPLISH THIS TASK
Ground Rules for Groups:

- Random-Selection of groups
- Keep groups small—three to four people is best—(never more than four).
- TIME ALL ACTIVITIES (have a timer and/or a bell: keep to the time—even if all groups aren’t done.
- Individual accountability is a must.

20 MINUTE LIMIT

Interactive

Voting:

A True

B False

C

D

Write-Pair-Share & SQUARE

THE LECTURE

Video Clip from Declining By Degrees

The Yellow Ribbon Strategy

Moving to students to a circle of closer contact!

#1 Red

#4 BLUE

#6 Yellow

8 AM

7 AM

5 PM

32

33

34

35

36
Increasing Attendance:

- Learn your students' names
- Help students learn their classmates' names
- Require a respectful classroom atmosphere
- Reward Student Engagement with a point (grade value)

Think-Pair-Share (or write-pair-share)

As you design, plan, and prepare for your courses, what actions can you incorporate?

What other actions or steps have you used? Please Share with neighbor.

Challenge

If there is no struggle, there is no progress.

A Story

Thank you for having me and for participating in today's opening session.

TEACHING UNPREPARED STUDENTS

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