

Notes from Exploring Alternatives to Remediation
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Alternative approaches:

1. Freshman seminars (traditionally orientations): spanning the whole semester (as opposed to a few days) and exploring issues in college life, the purposes of higher education, and requirements and expectations of college attendance (as opposed to covering rules and traditions); proven to be highly effective because often developmental students are the first generation in their families to come to college and are unfamiliar with college culture (Fidler & Hunter, 1989; Gardner, 1998)
2. Supplemental Instruction (SI): courses wherein students traditionally have a difficulty passing are designated as “high-risk”; these courses are targeted for Supplemental instruction support. Key: courses are the ones targeted as “high-risk”: not students. Students work in groups with a student who had previously taken the course who’ll serve as a leader of the group.
3. Learning communities and collaborative learning: based on the assumption that classroom is a community; idea extended to the whole college as an academic community. Gives students a place to be part of. Can be done by having courses be linked together by a common theme and instructors teach the courses collaboratively
4. Paired courses: similar to learning communities except that courses are “paired” – course content collaboration go beyond “theme” – they are designed to support each other. (a curriculum course is paired with a remedial course) E.G.=sociology course linked with a reading strategy course. Content in sociology course is used in reading strategy course.
5. Critical Thinking Instruction: engage students in critical thinking. Two approaches: 1) critical thinking courses as stand-alone courses; 2) incorporating critical thinking skills & developmental activities throughout entire curriculum. Latter proven to be more effective. Engaging students in following:
 - a. Solving challenging problems
 - b. Analyzing complex issues and arriving at reasoned conclusions
 - c. Establishing appropriate goals and designing plans for action
 - d. Analyzing complex bodies of information and making informed decisions
 - e. Communicating effectively through speaking, discussing, and writing, and
 - f. Critically evaluating the logic, relevance, and validity of information

6. Strategic Learning: specific courses addressing strategic learning as well as specific applications of learned strategies. Focuses on four main components:
 - a. Skill, or cognitive strategies and study skills
 - b. Will, or motivation and self-efficacy for learning
 - c. Self-regulation, or time management and comprehension monitoring; and
 - d. Academic environment, or social support and the nature of the task

Key to all above approaches: systematic relationship between assessment, advising and placement activities

Other key factors to success of programs:

1. more training for advisors & faculty;
2. more collaboration among developmental educators and curriculum faculty;
3. more resources than are currently assigned to developmental education

My comments:

CCSF should:

- a) Definitely implement No. 1 (Freshman Seminars) - These orientation courses do not necessarily have to be semester long courses; they can be 9-week, half-unit courses. Focus of the course should be college culture and individual character traits necessary for a successful college experience. Instructor in this course should also incorporate approach No. 5. These courses can easily become dreary & unexciting. But if taught properly, it should engage students & allow students to create paths for themselves academically.
- b) Do more Learning Communities as well as Paired Courses
- c) Do SI and hire student tutors (who have taken the class) conduct the supplemental instruction
- d) Ascertain that classes are conducted with critical thinking (Approach No. 5 above) component as an integral part of the curriculum. This is the seed of all teaching no matter the discipline. The art of teaching is engaging students. If this engagement is absent in a class, the class a failure.