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Panel: Professional Development for Adjunct and Tenure-Track Faculty

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Learning Wisdom: Practice Improvement Through Reflection

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Creating Solutions in Challenging Times
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Dr. Gail O. Mellow
By three methods we may learn wisdom:

First, by reflection, which is noblest;
Second, by imitation, which is easiest;
and third by experience, which is the bitterest.

- Confucius
Why Teaching is Important

- Total student enrollment at community colleges nationally = 8,000,000
- (low) Estimate 60% need developmental education = 4,800,000
- Estimate the number of students per class at 28 = 128,571 classes of dev ed each semester
- (low) Estimate that 60% of dev ed faculty are adjuncts = 77,263 adjuncts teaching every semester
If each dev ed professor helped 2 more students per class, pass rates go up 7%

4 more students, 14%

Faculty - the under-supported part of the ecosystem
• **INQUIRY** – getting a real image of one’s teaching, describe it, see it, measure it.

• **REFLECTION** – think about own teaching, individually and with peers, for professional-level advancement.

• **INTEGRATION** – time and space to get better, to try new things, to fail first and succeed later, and move forward in one’s own practice.
Role of Teaching – Our Theory of Change

Intrinsic motivation

Data-driven – World needs teaching-generated data
When Tiffany shows me the x-rays of her tumors, I hug her before we walk to the counseling center. Christian’s third baby is due next month. Latasha’s gunshot wound is healing nicely, and my ballplayers finally turn in their papers after my little talk with their coach.”

Professor Terri Shamblin, Monroe CC, NY
Faculty Leaders Create New Ways to Solve Problems

Professional Practice Improvement

• Reflects Faculty Culture
• Embedded in actual Work
• Backed by Evidence
• Made Visible - Tags & Patterns
• Powered by Social
Faculty Use Technology Affordances to Improve the Quality of their Teaching

1. Watched great faculty in action, captured semester of work digitally, derived **TAGS** from this authentic practice in the field, high inter-rater reliability

2. Refined tags to create **PATTERNS**
Better Teachers, Better Students
How Teaching Seriously Works Today
Start with Reflection

Simplifying and adding radicals

Is this a new instructional approach?
Yes

What was the best thing to happen in class?
The new piece was Bronte’s playmate analogy to simplifying radicals, and students enjoyed it and “got” it.

What were the learning outcomes?
Students will
1) Simplify radical expressions with various root indices that are rational
2) Simplify radical expressions that are irrational
3) Convert radical expressions to expressions with rational exponents and vice-versa
4) Add/subtract like radicals, simplifying first as needed

Lessons
1. Simplifying and adding radicals
As students arrived, the ones who remembered gave me the CAT I had sent home the week before about how we are doing in class and what needs to happen so they will be successful (thank you, Stephanie). (See attachment.) It is always interesting to note...
Show Actual Faculty and Student Work

Lessons

1. Simplifying and adding radicals.
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practice_midterm_exam


Overall Reflection

After two snow days at the end of last week, it seemed that the whole school was retreating what school is about. Initially, students were sluggish in their thinking and their participation. The only way around that, I figured, was to get them active, and, indeed, that helped considerably. Note to self: How long is it going to take you to learn that students are not interested in what you have to say until they have a problem in front of them that they cannot work? (Oh, yes, now I remember.)
Tags and Patterns Guide Improvement

Tags and Patterns
motivators and facilitators of practice improvement
Did you deal with any specific student issues?

A follow-up to last week's student issue: I had a student whose initially strong work had taken a nose dive, and she was no longer on MML. When I checked in with her, I learned that her financial aid had not come through yet, and she had been dropped by MML for non-payment after the 11-day free trial. She said she had contacted the financial aid office several times and had not gotten a reply. I asked if she would like for me to contact them, she replied “yes, please”, so I did. I sent an email on Saturday and received a reply on Monday morning that the student's funds would be available by 3:00 PM that afternoon. The student is now re-enrolled in MML and progressing well. Whether the funds would have been available that day without my intervention, I do not know. What I do know is that the student is grateful and knows I am on her team, and I am grateful for that.

Comments

Joan Smith 3 months ago

I absolutely agree with your tags and would add Mastery because of your depth of knowing why your students would set up #4 incorrectly, planning for that error and intentionally addressing it.

Stephanie 3 months ago

Today you hit a couple of the themes you were trying to work on. Centralization because of the word problems and higher order thinking where you asked them to think about how long it would take the 2 guys working together. You are quite the master of peer engagement.
First Cohort Mathematics Changes over 4 Semesters – Spring ’10 – Fall ’11

Retention

Pass Rates

First Cohort English Changes over 4 Semesters – Spring ’10 – Fall ’11

Retention

Pass Rates
Cohort 2.0
Math & English combined and Adjuncts separated
Changes over 2 Semesters – Fall ’12 – Spring ’13
Participating this year has helped me to be more reflective in every single action. I constantly analyze how each session went...it gave me the tools to think about every minute detail of a classroom. Tagging the lessons helped me to see how each choice, action and event had a purpose and role in the students’ success. I truly believe (and hope) that this reflective action will follow me for the rest of my teaching career. (Eng. Prof, Kentucky)

Worth far more to me personally and professionally than any single professional development activity in which I have participated. Of course this makes sense because it was significantly more substantial than most PD in which we engage. (Eng Prof, CO)

I think the continual self-evaluation and reflection allowed us to work together to brainstorm improvements and positive tweaks to be more purposeful in our classrooms as opposed to just randomly reaching in the dark for ideas and techniques in HOPE of success. (Math Prof, NJ)

Speaking as an adjunct, I also have valued the chance to share my teaching and get ideas from others. I can honestly say that this experience has been a life-line of sorts this year. In a “magic wand” instructional setting, I'd wish for the kind of honest, respectful and professionally challenging discussions we have online at weekly staff meetings. (Adjunct Math Prof, Mississippi)
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