

Math: The Bridge to Success

Polk State College's Quality Enhancement Plan

February 2013 Newsletter

Thank you for your continued support of Polk State College's Quality Enhancement Plan. In addition to Intermediate Algebra, we've begun extending our efforts to developmental math classes. Another extension of the QEP this term will be in developmental reading and writing courses and College Success. QEP principles are also being applied in other areas of the College as part of our college-wide strategic plan.



Kaye Betz
QEP Director

Classroom Enhancement Grant



In December, theatre Professor Paul Carbonell was announced as one of the 2012-2013 Classroom Enhancement Grant recipients. Sponsored by The Polk State College Foundation and administered by the QEP Implementation Team, a \$1,000 grant is awarded to the faculty member to purchase materials for learner-centered activities in the classroom. Professor Carbonell has been implementing learner-centered strategies into his theatre and communication classes for several years. Learner-centered strategies were used in the production of plays such as William Shakespeare's *The Tragedy of King Richard the Third* and the recent production of Nilo Cruz's *Anna in the Tropics*.



The Tragedy of King Richard the Third photos courtesy of Christopher Miller

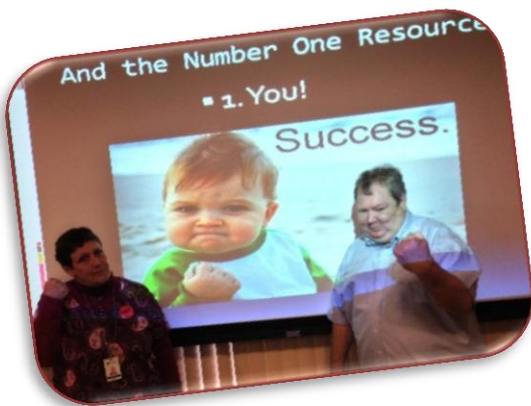
Coming in April:
Joe DiPietro's *All Shook Up*

Find Your Wings and S.O.A.R.

Now in its second term, S.O.A.R. (Student Orientation for Academic Readiness) began as a faculty initiative to help students develop skills for succeeding in college and beyond. Challenges of college can be overwhelming, so many students, especially first-time-in-college students, can benefit from learning relevant skills. Weekly sessions addressing study skills, communication skills, time management, and the responsibility of learning are offered the first six weeks of the semester to help our students develop strategies for success.

Professors Jim Rhodes and Penny Morris present a S.O.A.R. session on “Math is not a four-letter word: Tips for success in math.”

Photos by Telisa Cross



Professors Rafaela Ellis and Megan Cavanah present a S.O.A.R. session entitled “U Talkin’ 2 Me?: Improving Communication on Campus.”

Photo by Gregory Johnson



S.O.A.R. sessions have been organized by Professors Aaron Morgan and Mary Selph along with the support of Lakeland Provost Stephen Hull and Lakeland Academic Dean Donald Painter.

S. O. A. R.

Connecting Study Skills to Content in the Classroom

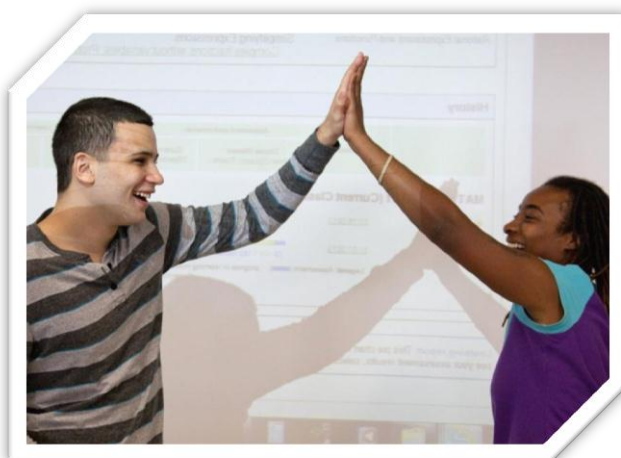


YaYa Liston shares a study strategy.

Professor Steve Frye has been part of the QEP mathematics teaching team from the beginning. This term he asked his Intermediate Algebra students to peruse a math study skills workbook and find something of interest to them to share with the class on Wednesdays. Professor Frye also encourages students who have found a shortcut or anything else that helped them with their math assignments to share it with the class. Students enjoy hearing from their peers and can present in any way they choose. Because it's an ungraded activity, presentation stress is minimized. This activity has been well received in both of Professor Frye's Intermediate Algebra classes.



Students Alex Candelario, Kayla Carpenter, Damaris Dziedzic, Tim Payne, and Demi Grasso-Morey learn study skills from their peers.



Alex Candelario and YaYa Liston are proud of what they've learned.

Photos of Professor Frye's class by Mo McCourt

On Course Workshop

Mathematics Professors Ken Rosever, Anna Butler, Steve Frye, and Kaye Betz were among 28 English, reading, math, and College Success participants in a two-day On Course Workshop on learner-centered teaching earlier this month. Learning structures demonstrated in the workshop will be adapted to each participant's area and used in the classroom. The On Course Instructional Principles¹ include

- Students construct learning primarily as a result of what they think, feel, and do (and less so by what their instructors say and do). Consequently, in formal education, the deepest learning is provided by a well-designed educational experience.
- The most effective learners are empowered learners, those characterized by self-responsibility, self-motivation, self-management, interdependence, self-awareness, life-long learning, emotional intelligence, and high self-esteem.
- At the intersection of a well-designed educational experience and an empowered learner lies the opportunity for deep and transformational learning and the path to success--academic, personal, and professional.

On Course's instructional resources: <http://www.oucourseworkshop.com>

¹ The On Course principles. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.oucourseworkshop.com/On%20Course%20Principles.htm>

Workshops for Math Adjuncts

We are extending the QEP to the developmental math area by sharing QEP principles and strategies with math adjuncts who teach developmental classes. Five full-time faculty who participate in the QEP Bridge Building Sessions for Intermediate Algebra assisted with a workshop entitled *Developing Responsible Learners*. The workshop included four main topics: using a syllabus as an effective tool, creating an environment for learning, processing math concepts, and building a strong math foundation. One Winter Haven and two Lakeland sessions were held in the fall term. This term we continue to share the QEP principles with mathematics adjuncts.

Lunch and Learn

Numbers are not Just for Math: Building Numeracy across the Curriculum

Presented by Jim Haischer

Thursday, March 7, 1:30-2:45 p.m. – LAC 1243

Serving Students with Disabilities: PTSD and ADA

Presented by Kim Pearsall and Michelle Sams

Thursday, March 14, 1:30-2:45 p.m. – LAC 1243



Transitions to Success: Teaching with Purpose

Friday, February 22, 2013

1:00-3:45 p.m.

WST 126

Author and composer Steve Piscitelli, a history professor with more than 30 years teaching experience (primarily at Florida State College at Jacksonville), will discuss student retention and critical thinking strategies for your students. Steve's goals for this workshop are to

- Talk with you about real issues that matter to you—not waste your time
- Provide simple, useable, practical suggestions
- Give you an experience—not a speech



Developing Independent Learners: Helping Students Assess Their Own Work

(Bridge Building Thoughts by Kaye Betz)

A student rushes through an assignment, gets to the last line, and turns it in without ever looking back. Being accustomed to the instructor checking their work, some students do not put forth the effort to review it themselves. Assessing their own work does not come naturally to many students, especially first-time-in-college students.

Instructors can encourage independence in students by helping them to strengthen their self-assessing skills and develop inner feedback. Before turning in assignments, writing students could learn to ask themselves, “Did I make my point clearly?”; “Did I use words precisely?”; “Is there anything that might confuse the reader?” Likewise, math students could learn to ask themselves, “Did I do what was asked?”; “Did I clearly show the steps?”; “Does the answer make sense?” By reflecting on questions such as these and desiring to submit a better product, students can assess their readiness to turn in an assignment.

As instructors, what can we do to help our students learn these skills?

- **Require students to hand in a checklist along with their completed assignment.**

The checklist can be general or specific, but should include questions as to whether or not the various points in the directions were followed.

- **Have students develop a class checklist.**

If you are concerned that providing students with a checklist inhibits their ability to rely on their own self-assessing skills, you might provide a checklist for the first assignment. For the second assignment, ask each student to write a few self-assessing questions and then have all students pool their lists to create a class-developed checklist.

- **Share with your students the rubric you use for grading.**

Ask students to reflect on their work and apply your grading rubric to their assignment. Ask them to write down a few ways to improve their work.

- **Share with your class a list of all the comments written on students' papers on the same assignment from last term.²**

In math, one comment might be prevalent: "Remember to simplify." After seeing that comment multiple times on the list, a student can become more mindful of the need to simplify. Reading the comments also gives a student additional questions to ask and reflect on, such as "Does this comment apply to my work?" Similarly, a writing student can view an instructor's list of comments and consider questions such as, "Do I have a topic sentence?" or "Do I have sufficient support and development?"

By reviewing and revising their own work through reflection and assessment, students develop independent learning skills and are better prepared for lifelong learning.

Think about additional ways you can help students assess their work and become more independent learners.

² Svinicki, M. and McKeachie, W. (2011). *Teaching tips*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

For updates on the QEP, visit the QEP web page: www.polk.edu/qep