



# Math: The Bridge to Success

## Polk State College's

### Quality Enhancement Plan

May 2013 Newsletter

#### Meet the Professors

Mathematics professors attend weekly Bridge Building sessions to discuss strategies and share learner-centered activities. The following mathematics professors participated in the QEP during the spring term and will continue in the fall:

#### Winter Haven and JDA Professors

Larry Albright	Paul Pletcher
Roger Aleman	Ken Rosever
Steve Drier	Cindy Scofield
Joyce Lee	Mostafa Zamani

#### Lakeland Professors

Anna Butler	Steve Frye
Megan Cavanah	Richard Leedy
Joy D'Andrea	Mike Malone
Richard Decker	Penny Morris
Lorne Fairbairn	Jim Rhodes
Nerissa Felder	

#### Joining the QEP in the Fall:

Marsha Copeland  
Deborah Kindel  
Carrie Toreky



#### Workshop: *Raising Your Game*

In preparation for fall, an adjunct faculty workshop is planned for Friday, June 7. The workshop will incorporate learner-centered teaching strategies and is



designed for faculty who teach Developmental Reading, Writing, Mathematics, or College Success.

*Thank you for your continued support of Polk State College's Quality Enhancement Plan. We have begun extending our efforts to College Success and Developmental Math, Reading, and Writing courses. As part of our college-wide strategic plan, QEP principles are also being applied in other areas of the College.*



Kaye Betz  
QEP Director

## Mathematics Faculty to Present at AMATYC Conference

Four mathematics faculty from Polk State College have been invited to present at the annual conference of the American Mathematical Association of Two-Year Colleges. Anna Butler, Richard Leedy, Penny Morris, and Jim Rhodes will present *Learner Centered Teaching: Take It to the Next Level*.

Abstract: Learner-centered teaching purposefully creates an environment that engages students as active partners in their own learning processes through meaningful interaction with course content, the professor, and each other. This session offers new modes of curriculum delivery through dynamic activities. Take your teaching to the next level!

### Project ACCESS



Jim Rhodes is a member of a cohort of new mathematics faculty participating in Advancing Community College Careers: Education, Scholarship, and Service (ACCESS).

Project ACCESS is an AMATYC fellowship program for professionals in their first, second, or third year teaching full-time college-level mathematics. Many of the fellows, like Rhodes, have been in the education field for many years but are new to the area of college-level mathematics. The Project ACCESS program requires a two-year commitment that culminates in an action research project presentation.

Professor Rhodes stated, "Project ACCESS is a great way to develop professionally and create professional bonds." According to the AMATYC website, Project ACCESS is intended to help new mathematics faculty become more effective teachers and active members of the broader mathematical community. Out of 25 Project ACCESS members for this cohort, Rhodes is the only fellow representing Florida.

### Empowerments for Student Learning

QEP Campus Liaisons Lynda Wolverton and Becky Pugh have begun sending teaching tips to adjunct faculty in the areas of College Success and Developmental Reading, Writing, and Math. The teaching tips are e-mailed twice a month to offer ideas on how to motivate or engage students.

## Developing Independent Learners:

### Are we supposed to coddle our students?

(Bridge Building Thoughts by Kaye Betz)



One QEP goal is to provide a supportive learning environment. Last week a colleague asked, “Does this mean we should coddle or pander to our students?” No. We are helping our students develop into responsible, independent learners. Coddling and pandering do not help students to develop their own skills.

Robert Bruner, Fellow of the Samberg Institute for Teaching Excellence, explains that a pandering teaching style is "an attempt to ingratiate the student by ...canceling assignments and tests, relaxing classroom norms, and/or inflating grades aggressively and selectively—this behavior does nothing to promote student learning and may worsen it. The teacher who panders is very reluctant to criticize students, enforce rules, or deliver bad grades. ...the teacher who panders to students isn't student-centered at all."<sup>1</sup>

In fact, independent learners are put off by pandering instructors who do not have high expectations and do not allow students the opportunity practice their skills. According to the *Community College Survey of Student Engagement SENSE* report, “Students do best when expectations are high *and* they receive support that helps them achieve at high levels. Lower the standard, and quality suffers. Eliminate the support, and students flounder. But colleges that demonstrate both high expectations and high support give their students essential tools to succeed.”<sup>2</sup>

When my daughter was 2, I tied her shoes, prepared her food, and washed her clothes. She is now 32, and has been successfully tying her own shoes, preparing her own food, and washing her own clothes for quite some time now. How did she become self-sufficient? When she was 2, she could not prepare her own lunch, but with my help, she learned to unzip her lunch box and put food in it, which helped her learn to do it herself. Both my support and her practice were essential to learning and independence. It is similar with our students. There are fine lines between



coddling, providing support, and offering no support. We need to help our students develop skills so they can be self-sufficient both now and in the future.

Wellness instructor Kari Sabin said about the skills students learn in her class, “Not only do I want students to satisfy the student learning outcomes associated with my course, but I also want them to be successful in other classes and in their personal lives as well. I do not want students to learn simply to pass the class, but I want them to get much more out of really experiencing the class and applying the things they have learned as well.”

If we shouldn't be coddling and pandering, how do we create a supportive learning environment? Here are three ways. There are many more.

- Recognize and call the student by his or her first name in class, around campus, and in the community. This creates a sense of belonging which promotes engagement and learning. This is not coddling. It is developing good rapport and a warm atmosphere for learning.
- When practical, and definitely not in a mean way, rather than spouting off an answer to a student, help the student locate the answer to the question. Frequently answers can be found in the syllabus or on the college website. Helping the student locate the answer will give the student the necessary tools to locate other answers.
- Model the behaviors you expect from your students. If you expect them to prepare for class, then model being prepared for class. If you expect them to turn their work in on time, then hand back graded assignments on time. If you expect them to produce error-free work, then your syllabus and other handouts should be error free.

Think about additional ways you can combine warmth with high expectations to be more supportive and help students become more independent learners.

**For updates on the QEP, visit the QEP web page: [www.polk.edu/qep](http://www.polk.edu/qep)**

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<sup>1</sup> Bruner, Robert F. (2005, June). 'Do you expect me to pander to the students?' The cold reality of warmth in teaching. *Social Science Research Network*. Retrieved from <http://ssrn.com/abstract=754504>

<sup>2</sup> *Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE)*. (2008). High expectations and high support. Austin, Texas: The University of Texas at Austin, Community College Leadership Program, p. 3.