right *from the* START

AN INSTITUTIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION REFORM

Adopting and Adapting Compression Strategies

A Practitioner Brief

MDC

Achieving the Dream™

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About Achieving the Dream

Achieving the Dream, Inc. is a national nonprofit that is dedicated to helping more community college students, particularly low-income students and students of color, stay in school and earn a college certificate or degree. Evidence-based, student-centered, and built on the values of equity and excellence, Achieving the Dream is closing achievement gaps and accelerating student success nationwide by 1) guiding evidence-based institutional improvement, 2) leading policy change, 3) generating knowledge, and 4) engaging the public. Conceived as an initiative in 2004 by Lumina Foundation and seven founding partner organizations, today, Achieving the Dream is leading the most comprehensive non-governmental reform network for student success in higher education history. With over 200 colleges, more than 100 coaches and advisors, and 15 state policy teams—working throughout 34 states and the District of Columbia—the Achieving the Dream National Reform Network helps 3.8 million community college students have a better chance of realizing greater economic opportunity and achieving their dreams.

About MDC

MDC, a nonprofit with an extensive history working to improve the effectiveness of community colleges around the nation, was established in 1967 and manages programs across the U.S. that connect education, employment, and economic security to help people "learn, earn, and save" their way to a place in the middle class. MDC's strategies, aimed at removing the barriers that separate people from opportunity, include: using data to define gaps and mobilize leaders to create a will for change; demonstrating sustainable solutions and developing them into effective models; and then incubating them so they can be replicated at scale for maximum impact.

Right from the Start: ATD and MDC's Approach

Broad access to quality education and training is essential to a robust economy, and an engaged society. With affordable tuition and campuses in big cities and small towns, community colleges make that education and training accessible to thousands of citizens every year. We developed the *Right from the Start* series of practitioner-focused, evidence-based briefs to highlight strategies that support the significant number of students who arrive on campus underprepared for credit-bearing coursework. Serving these students, who often undertake adult basic education and developmental education courses, is an important part of the community college dual mission of access and success.

What Colleges Can Do

Developmental education shines a light on broader issues of access, success, and equity. Colleges can improve equitable outcomes by addressing several underlying issues:

1) Understand the diversity of developmental education students.
Colleges need to carefully consider the varied experience of underprepared students when assessing the support those students need to succeed in credit-bearing courses. It may be necessary to have multiple developmental education strategies that are tailored to different student groups.

2) Emphasize teaching and learning. Focusing attention on teaching and learning is a critical thread in all of the successful developmental education reforms featured in this series. That means colleges address academic content and structures as well as non-academic topics, such as navigating college culture and student self-efficacy.

3) Build whole-college solutions. Lasting, scaled change is most likely when efforts engage a broad range of college practitioners in examining student outcomes, designing the change process, mastering the skills required to implement new approaches, and refining these efforts over time.

It is our hope that these briefs will spark new ideas for practitioners who are committed to helping their students succeed — *right from the start.*

Adopting and Adapting Course Compression Strategies

This brief summarizes efforts to reform developmental education at Zane State College and the Community College of Baltimore County. Focused on accelerating student success and progress, the two schools pursued distinctive approaches to reform that aligned with their institutional missions and student populations. Recognizing that the majority of its students will not succeed with only "skill and drill" work on academics, Zane State pursued a holistic, student-centered approach to help students build academic, social, and cultural skills; that work is detailed here. Supplementary information is provided about the work at the Community College of Baltimore County, focused on its landmark Accelerated Learning Program. The two reforms can be both categorized as compression strategies. At Zane, compression means shortening the overall duration of a course but maintaining the same number of instructional hours; at CCBC, the compression strategy pairs two courses with complementary content, which students take simultaneously.

Zane State College

Zane State College, a community college that joined Achieving the Dream in 2005, enrolls roughly 3,200 students, most of them on its main campus in Zanesville, Ohio, about an hour east of Columbus. Courses are also offered at the college's campus in Cambridge, Ohio. The college offers a variety of associate degree and certificate programs and also serves students seeking to transfer, often to Ohio University-Zanesville, which adjoins Zane State's main campus. More than half of students (55 percent) attend part-time and 58 percent are Pell grant recipients.

The college is located at the western edge of Appalachia, a racially homogeneous, low-income region. Demographic data show that the bulk of Zane State's students are high-risk for not completing college for several reasons:

🔧 *Poverty is pervasive.* Nearly 90 percent of Zane State students qualify for financial aid.

🔧 *"College knowledge" is limited.* Only 22 percent of area residents hold even an associate degree, so few families have college-going experience. [i]

🔧 *Academic preparation is poor.* Only about one in four students are college-ready when they enter Zane State. Nearly three in four, 72 percent, require at least one developmental education course.

🔧 *Non-academic impediments persist.* As Provost and Executive Vice President Chad M. Brown points out, "When other non-academic risk factors are considered—things like motivation, family support, reliable transportation—this brings the total of our high-risk population up to nearly 80 percent."

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[i] Data from the Census Bureau's 2011 American Community Survey show that, on average, 22 percent of residents in Muskingum County and its six contiguous eastern Ohio counties who are between 25-64 years old hold an associate degree or higher (as reported in the 2013 issue of *A Stronger Nation through Higher Education*, Lumina Foundation).

Student profile: Zane State College

58% female

42% male

90% white

3% African American

3% multiracial

1% Hispanic
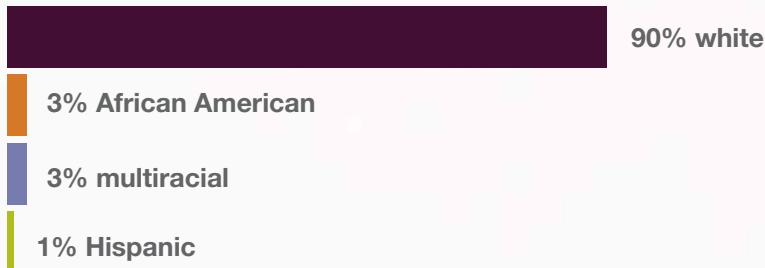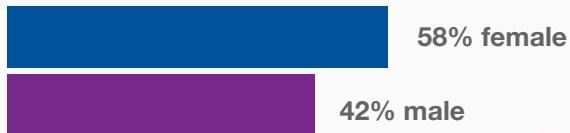
Note: All figures reflect 2012–2013
Source: Institutional Research Department, Zane State

Given the challenging demographics of Zane State's service area, officials at the college have long recognized the necessity of developmental education. They have worked hard to underscore its value, thanks largely to the leadership of Paul R. Brown, Zane State's president since 2004 and an active member of the college's Achieving the Dream core team. The college's unwavering commitment, at all levels of the institution, to student success and their exceptional efforts in reforming their developmental education offerings resulted in the college achieving Leader College status within the ATD network in 2009 and again in 2012.

Still, one of the college's signature developmental education programs, QuickStart to College, began not as an effort to reform developmental education but as an effort to boost enrollment. QuickStart was forged in 2007 to help the college capitalize on a rapidly growing population of adult students, many of them displaced workers who had been laid off from area factories.

A hybrid program that combines cultural and social supports, computer literacy, and academic skill-building, QuickStart soon proved successful. It significantly improved academic outcomes among the college's most challenged students, including last-minute registrants who display little knowledge of, or comfort with, the routines of college life.

Results

Since the college began offering QuickStart in fall 2008, nearly 250 students have participated in the program on the Zanesville campus. Results are promising.

"These are high-risk students, probably the most high-risk group of people we have," says Rebecca Ament, the college's dean of developmental education. "But our data show that the students who come out of QuickStart do as well as or better than the general student population who participated in the regular first-year experience program."

Since QuickStart began in fall 2008, nearly 250 students have participated in the program on the Zanesville campus, with an overall course completion rate of 56 percent. Persistence rates among those who complete the course are strong, with 70 percent persisting to the next term. The long term results are promising too, with 45 percent of students persisting year-to-year and 22.5 percent of those who complete the course graduating.

The short QuickStart course accelerates college readiness for students. In 2012–13, 42 percent of students who completed QuickStart tested into college-level English, 63 percent of those tested were shown to be reading at a college level, and 33 percent tested out of the lowest-level developmental math course.

Lessons Learned

It's not all about academics. A program with exemplary curriculum and inspired pedagogy can still be ineffective if it does not address students' non-academic needs. The best programs offer tactical training and affective support.

The personal touch is paramount. Although technology can produce many vital efficiencies in both pedagogy and student support, it cannot fully supplant personal interaction in either area. It's important to structure programs to foster genuine bonds between instructor and student.

Students aren't the only ones who need support. Developmental education instructors—whether adjuncts or full-time faculty—must be valued, respected, supported, and rewarded. Faculty development needs to be built in from the outset.

Follow the leaders … even if they're not in charge. Dedicated champions can be found throughout the college. It's essential to seek out, encourage, and enable those individuals and provide channels within systems to express creativity and develop innovations.

QuickStart students meet twice weekly in small classes—10–12 students is optimal—with an instructor who helps orient them to campus routines and processes. The students get assistance with FAFSA preparation and their financial aid application and receive a student ID card and an e-mail account. They are taught how to use Blackboard and the basic Microsoft applications suite, and how to navigate the student services area of the Zane State website. They get basic advice on career planning and develop personal connections with faculty, staff, and peers.

QuickStart significantly improved academic outcomes among the college's most challenged students, including last-minute registrants who display little knowledge of, or comfort with, the routines of college life.

To complete the course successfully, students must solve basic math computation problems involving whole-number operations, fractions, percentages, decimals, ratios, and proportions. They must also demonstrate knowledge of the writing process by crafting a cogent five-paragraph essay. Members of the college's developmental education faculty join the class regularly for math and English instruction. All of this developmental instruction is aimed at preparing students for QuickStart's final step: taking the College Board's ACCUPLACER exam.

In sum, QuickStart combines critical academic work with valuable "college survival" information, delivered in a structured setting by a caring, involved instructor. All of this happens before students pay any tuition or even officially enroll at the institution.

Because QuickStart is a free, pre-enrollment program, it lowers the stakes for adult students, easing their concerns about failure. "We're giving folks a low-risk opportunity to test the waters," Ament says.

Students who choose to leave the program do so without incurring any debt, using any financial aid, or even creating an official student record. However, for the 56 percent of students who *do* complete QuickStart, the rewards are significant. In addition to solid preparation for the placement test and a greater familiarity with campus life, those who complete the course earn three college credits. That means they hit the ground running upon official enrollment.

Adoption and Adaptation: Developmental Education Reform at Zane State

The Community College Research Center's "adoption and adaptation" framework provides a useful tool to describe the process of reform at the colleges featured in the *Right from the Start* series.[ii] The framework lays out six components that can generate the activity and relationships necessary to sustain true reform:

Adoption
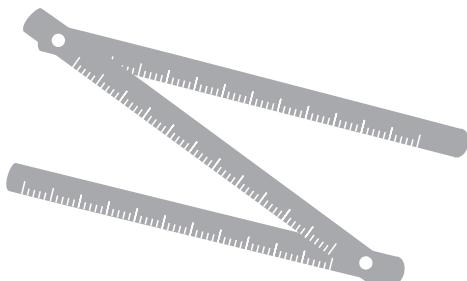
Diagnosis

determining the particular challenge students are facing, identifying institutional barriers, and gathering evidence to demonstrate the need for reform

Selection

choosing a reform model that responds to challenges identified during the diagnosis phase and that will work well within the college's context
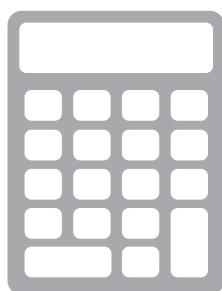
Preparation

conducting activities necessary for a successful reform launch—from curriculum development to space allocation to recruitment

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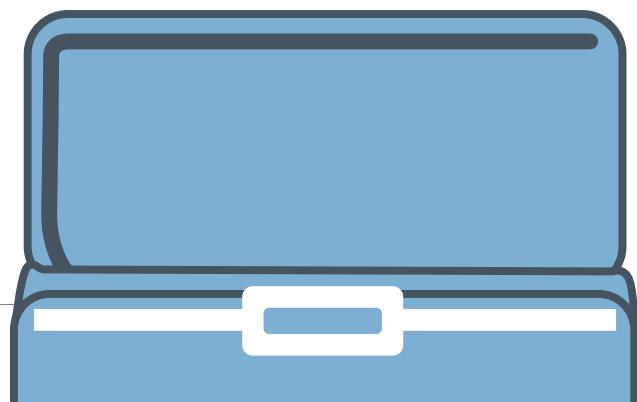
[ii] Edgecombe, Nikki, Maria Scott Cormier, Susan Bickerstaff, and Melissa Barragan, "Strengthening Developmental Education Reforms: Evidence on Implementation Efforts from the Scaling Innovation Project." Community College Research Center Working Paper 61, Columbia University, 2013.

Adaptation

Assessment

collecting and analyzing data about reform
implementation and outcomes

Refinement

converting data gathered from quantitative and
qualitative assessment into action, improving
instruction, streamlining processes, and
addressing unexpected obstacles
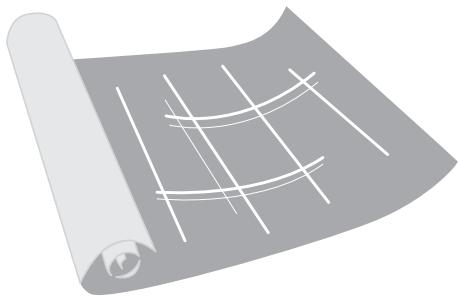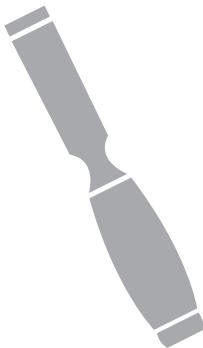
Scaling

institutionalizing the reform with the resources needed to sustain it so
that it serves all of the students who can benefit

All of these components inform each other as colleges go about the complex
work of reform. Rather than a prescriptive process for a specific "best practice,"
the framework clears a path for colleges to design and implement new practices
and programs that meet the needs of students, respond to institutional constraints,
and build capacity for continuous improvement. The following narrative details
key aspects of two colleges' reform efforts according to the adoption and
adaption framework. CCRC researchers found that that when colleges conducted
assessment early on in implementation, they were able to involve more people in
refinements, which led to more successful growth and development of the reform.
Thus, in the *Right from the Start* briefs, reform implementation is discussed
between the "preparation" and "assessment" phases.

Adoption

DIAGNOSIS

Diagnosis is the process of determining the particular challenge students are facing, identifying institutional barriers, and gathering evidence to demonstrate the need for reform.

At Zane State, reform began with several structural changes that moved developmental education into the center of the institution, rather than pushing the issue of college readiness to the edges, including:

- Creating an organizational structure that fosters professionalism, academic rigor, and collaboration across disciplines

- Integrating the first-year experience (FYE) curriculum with developmental education

In 2009, President Brown made an important structural and symbolic change on the Zane State campus, shifting developmental education out of the student support area and making it a discrete academic department. Developmental education instructors, previously considered tutors, were officially reclassified as faculty, and Rebecca Ament was named associate dean. In 2013, developmental education was elevated further, becoming an academic division, and Ament was promoted to dean. Those top-down moves clearly raised developmental education's visibility on campus and subsequent on-the-ground efforts created many opportunities for developmental education faculty and faculty in other disciplines to work jointly, all of which has forged a unified pedagogical spirit at Zane State.

Given Zane State's institution-wide commitment to developmental education, it is perhaps no surprise that college officials approach developmental education in a student-centered, holistic way. They know that the majority of their students will not succeed with only "skill and drill" work on academics; students also need significant help building social and cultural skills.

"Unlike a lot of colleges, which don't do a first-year experience course until after students have completed developmental education, we feel really strongly that FYE has to be integrated with developmental education on our campus," Provost Brown says. "Dev ed is really the foundational coursework that 72 percent of our students need, so the two things really need to work hand in hand here."

SELECTION

Selection is the process of choosing a reform model that responds to challenges identified during the diagnosis phase

As Zane was making developmental education an institutional priority, a shift in community needs helped to clarify additional ways that the college needed to change its approach to strengthening college readiness, namely:

- Identifying unique challenges of incoming students and designing curricula which help them transition to college study with confidence

- Providing better preparation for placement tests so students can get to the content they need more swiftly

Poverty, a chronic problem in the college's region, deepened during the economic downturn that began around 2007. New rounds of factory closings and layoffs battered the Zanesville region. Hundreds of area residents—overwhelmingly white, predominantly poor, many displaced from jobs, and nearly all anxious about their future—began to see college as a way to build their skills and improve their prospects.

Zane State was eager to serve this influx of returning adult students. As Provost Brown recalls, "This was a way for us to engage a population that we'd never engaged before." To provide these students with transitional help in a supportive setting, Provost Brown and his colleagues developed QuickStart to College. With QuickStart, Provost Brown and Ament created something of a hybrid. They combined the traditional aspects of the developmental education curriculum—that is, basic skills development in math and writing—with the orientation and confidence-building components of a first-year experience program. The project was originally grant-funded, supported by the Lumina Foundation as part of a project established by the Ohio Learning Network (OLN).

Knowing that many potential Zane State students face significant non-academic barriers, Provost Brown and Ament were careful to design the course so that it does not focus too early or too intently on addressing students' deficiencies in math or English. Social and cultural factors come first; academic issues, including preparation for the placement test, are addressed later.

"What we want is for them to experience success early, to increase their comfort level, and get ready for a placement test at the **end** of the course," Provost Brown says.

In other words, and perhaps ironically, acceleration begins gradually with QuickStart; students essentially pause at the beginning of the college-going

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process to make sure they are set up to succeed. Provost Brown says the decision to start students slowly—by linking developmental education's academic approach with the social and cultural aspects of a traditional FYE program–was critical to QuickStart's early success and remains key to its future.

The program's accelerative effect occurs in two ways. First, because experienced developmental education faculty have helped QuickStart students master the necessary math and writing content, they tend to do well on ACCUPLACER when they take it at the end of the course. In 2012–13, 42 percent of students who completed QuickStart tested into college-level English, 63 percent of those tested were shown to be reading at a college level, and 33 percent tested out of the lowest-level developmental math course.

By testing out of developmental courses, many QuickStart students accelerate past them and move more quickly through their programs. Many of these students have existing foundational skills and simply need to review and refresh them before taking on college-level work. QuickStart lets them do this in a shorter time frame than a traditional, semester-long course, in a supportive, no-risk, pre-enrollment environment.

Second, because students earn three credits after completing QuickStart, they have a head start the moment they enroll at Zane State. That early advantage, coupled with QuickStart's high completion rates, can be a powerful motivator, particularly among students who face formidable barriers.

As Chad Brown frames it, "Nearly 60 percent of QuickStart students complete the course. The vast majority of completers enroll at the college, and those who enroll achieve at the same level as other students. So you have a group of very high-risk students achieving at a much higher level than expected. To me, that's a huge success."
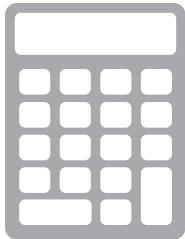
PREPARATION

Preparation means conducting activities necessary for a successful reform launch—from curriculum development to space allocation to recruitment.

At Zane State, several factors proved insightful in this regard:

🔧 Involving information technology and the registrar in the design of enrollment procedures that accommodate the reform

🔧 Designing placement procedures that identify student strengths and simultaneously prepare them for higher-stakes testing

One reason for QuickStart's success was the groundwork completed before the program's launch. In some cases, these preparations were logistical–that is, officials changed institutional procedures or processes to accommodate the initiative. For example, before launching QuickStart, program organizers worked with the registrar's office and the IT department to devise a method by which the college could, in Provost Brown's words, "register students without really registering them." The software used for student intake had to be tweaked to allow QuickStart students into the campus system, but in what Provost Brown calls a "quasi-enrolled" status, so no permanent academic record would be established and no tuition charged.

Another hurdle that had to be cleared early on was the development of an effective diagnostic test for entering students. The college contracted with Pearson to create a customized version of the MyMathTest diagnostic instrument that aligned more closely with what students would eventually see on ACCUPLACER. Making the low-stakes diagnostic test comport more closely with the higher-stakes placement test helped reduce students' anxiety about taking ACCUPLACER.

LAUNCH

QuickStart's success was neither immediate nor automatic. In the first year, significant changes were made to the design of the program. With these changes, Zane State learned the importance of:

🔧 Modifying reform characteristics when assumptions about student need or behavior are proven incorrect

🔧 Creating a welcoming environment where students can make personal connections with peers and faculty, while getting practical help with the details of college study

The one that has had the most pronounced impact, particularly on students, was a critical decision made during the first year. "The original idea was to do the class all online," Provost Brown recalls. "Students would come to class once, meet on campus, and then everything else would be delivered via distance learning." The distance learning format was chosen for two reasons. First, it served OLN's ultimate (and still unrealized) goal of creating a statewide repository of online, adult-focused programs from multiple institutions. Second, Zane State officials assumed that time-pressed adult students would prefer the flexibility of self-paced, asynchronous, online delivery.

Zane State quickly learned, however, that the online option was not going to work as well as they had originally hoped. Students reported that they wanted and needed more face-to-face time with instructors. "The students themselves were begging for this change," Provost Brown says. "Even though most of the actual class work was being done via computer, [students] needed that person in the classroom as a resource person." Noting that the QuickStart instructor is more than a teacher—"she becomes an advisor, a mentor, a financial aid counselor"— Provost Brown says students wanted to avail themselves in person of all of those roles.

Zane State quickly switched formats from one course meeting per term, then to two course meetings, and finally to the current structure, in which each class is held in a traditional computer lab, led by an instructor who walks students through their lessons.

A visit to Diana Smith Maxwell's QuickStart class offers ample evidence of the importance of face-to-face time. Smith Maxwell, QuickStart's coordinator and an instructor since 2009, patiently guides her 10 students through the morning lesson on how to use the campus e-mail system. The class includes three young women, including a single woman in her early 20s who is expecting a baby. Most of the students are displaced or underemployed workers in their 30s or 40s. It is early in the term—Day 3 of 24 meetings in this 12-week course—so a few of her charges are still a bit shy. But others are already engaged, asking questions, and a few are even assisting their more reluctant peers.

Fifteen minutes into the two-hour class, Margie Tucker arrives. She's late, as always, because her shift as a bus aide for an agency serving the developmentally disabled doesn't end until 9 a.m., the same time class begins. It's a part-time job, essentially the only one that Tucker can find in her field, even after working 16 years in other social service positions—13 in a group home and another three in a preschool. Both of those jobs ended in a layoff. Tucker, whose son is a high school senior, is eager to get enough education to become certified as a multi-skilled medical technician, and she's encouraged by what she's already learned through QuickStart.

"They've already shown me ways to find resources and get what I need," Tucker says. "This is going to help me brush up on my math skills and my writing—and I need that. I'm 46 years old. I haven't been to school in 25 years."

One key to successfully reintegrating students such as Tucker is an instructor's capacity for empathy and personal involvement. Julia Griffin, an 18-year member of Zane State's faculty who taught QuickStart for many years before taking on a full-time role as a student support advisor last year, puts it this way, "As instructors, we spend about half of the time in that class just convincing students that they can do this. There's a lot of hand-holding and patting them on the back. We're constantly telling them: 'See? You didn't think you could do that, but you really can. You can do this.'"

For Smith Maxwell, QuickStart's coordinator since 2009, connecting with her charges comes naturally. She is a native of the Zanesville area, and she admits she herself was a reluctant, math-averse college student. "I love working with at-risk students," she says. "I can tell them, 'I've been in your shoes. I've *been* a D student in math. But now I do math for fun.' That's because I ran into an instructor who could explain math in such a way that it clicked for me. Now I can *be* that instructor."

For students who are unfamiliar with the basics of college, this type of compassionate confidence-building is most effective when the instructor couples it with direct, practical help with the details of campus life. For example, when a few students in her class experienced problems logging in to the e-mail system, Smith Maxwell organized an impromptu field trip to the IT help desk down the hall. A few minutes later, armed with updated passwords and a new, first-hand knowledge of a vital campus service, the students returned to class and the lesson resumed.

"As instructors, we spend about half of the time in that class just convincing students that they can do this. There's a lot of hand-holding and patting them on the back. We're constantly telling them: 'See? You didn't think you could do that, but you really can. You can do this.'"

The shift away from all-online delivery to a more personal, hands-on approach requires Zane State to take care in assigning instructors for QuickStart. Especially in the earliest class meetings, content expertise is less important than the ability to forge interpersonal bonds and build student confidence. That helps explain why the program's original instructors came from the advising ranks at the college: Griffin, from student support, and Keisha Norris, an advisor, from admissions. Of the four QuickStart instructors teaching the course in 2013, two came from the advising department.

Adaptation
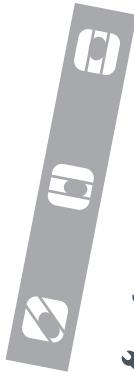
ASSESSMENT

Assessment refers to collecting and analyzing data about reform implementation and outcomes.

Two factors proved especially instructive in understanding the impact of QuickStart:

🔧 Conducting cost-benefit analysis to prove program's financial worth

🔧 Regular tracking of students' progress and outcomes

As noted in the introduction, QuickStart has had a significant impact on students' rapid entry into college-level coursework. Another measure of the program's success comes not from student achievement data or enrollment figures, but straight from Zane State's bottom line. After the program's first year, a cost-benefit analysis showed that QuickStart was generating significant revenue through increased enrollment. Students who completed the program—high-risk, often reluctant students who might not otherwise have considered college—were enrolling in healthy numbers. Since 2008, successful QuickStart students have generated well in excess of $500,000 in tuition for the college.

For President Brown, those numbers constituted a persuasive argument for expanding the program beyond its early grant-funded existence and making it a fixture at the institution. "We didn't start out saying we were going to do this on a grand scale," he says. "It's like a lot of things that colleges do—they pilot something and then scale up. Well, nothing succeeds like success. All you have to do is look at the cost-benefit data and the student success data from QuickStart. It works."
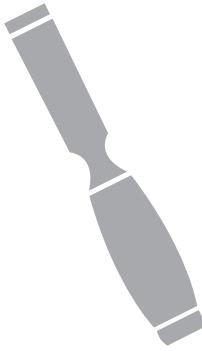
REFINEMENT

Refinement means converting data gathered from quantitative and qualitative assessment into action, improving instruction, streamlining processes, and addressing unexpected obstacles.

Several factors informed Zane State's refinement efforts:

🔧 Modifying course structure to encourage behaviors that increase the likelihood of success

🔧 Recognizing that students not in the original target population could benefit from the program

🔧 Expanding the course to allow time to bolster students' computer literacy

QuickStart's "high-touch" instruction proved even more valuable when, soon after the program was launched, Zane State officials discovered a new target subpopulation for QuickStart: "eleventh-hour students" who show up to register a week before classes, have not applied for financial aid, cannot afford books, and overall are unfamiliar with the college-going experience.

"Best-case scenario, these students are here for four weeks. They get their overage check, and then they're gone," says Provost Brown. "Well, we started funneling those students into QuickStart. It was a tremendous success. Our numbers went up; their success rates were good."

Since this adaptation, he says, last-minute registrants have joined returning adults as the prime candidates for the QuickStart program. By directing the eleventh-hour students into QuickStart, the college has been able to rapidly increase their familiarity with the college-going routine, and thus increase their success rates.

Other adaptations have been made as well, including the introduction of a point system Ament devised to foster good work habits among students. The course syllabus, which featured little quantifiable assessment in QuickStart's early years, now spells out 51 specific assignments for which students can earn a total of 950 points. For instance, students earn 10 points for making daily entries in their planners. They earn 15 points for creating a PowerPoint presentation and another 15 for presenting the slides in class. A full 100 points are awarded at the end of the class when student complete the final draft of an essay containing their personal mission statements.

Each student is required to earn 760 points to earn the three credit hours awarded for QuickStart. One credit hour is awarded for the first-year experience course and two hours for an introductory course in computer applications.

(Both the FYE course and the computer applications course are required for all degree programs at Zane State.) Even though QuickStart is designed to be low-risk—to "do no harm," as Provost Brown puts it—Ament's point system teaches students that nothing good comes without effort, that credits must be *earned*.

One final adaptation in the QuickStart program—certainly the most obvious and perhaps the one with the most potential for impact—was the decision made in fall 2012 to lengthen the course from eight weeks to twelve. The change was made to give instructors more time to improve students' computer skills.

"This change came from the business and computer faculty," recalls Julia Griffin. "[QuickStart] students were getting credit for the computer course, but faculty told us later that too many of them hadn't really mastered the things they needed to know." Based on that feedback, QuickStart faculty revised the curriculum to include more practical experience with common office software programs.
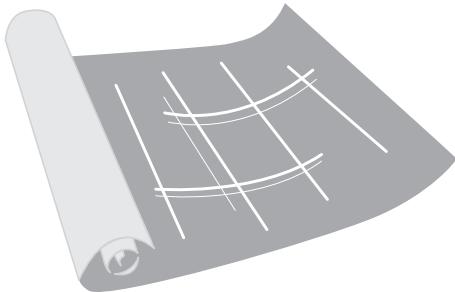
SCALING

Scaling means institutionalizing the reform with the resources needed to sustain it so that it serves all of the students who can benefit.

Several key factors influenced Zane State's work to scale its developmental education reforms:

- 🔧 Being flexible enough to develop creative responses to state policy changes that could have both positive and negative effects on reform

- 🔧 Developing a communications strategy that generates sustained interest and participation

Despite QuickStart's demonstrable successes, the program has hit some snags over the years, and officials see more challenges looming. The biggest snag, they say, came in 2011–12, when the college shifted from a quarter to a semester system. That shift, mandated by the Ohio legislature for all state colleges and universities, inadvertently reduced the pool of likely students for QuickStart and thus cut program participation. Enrollment in QuickStart on the Zanesville campus went from a high of 59 students in 2010–11 to only 26 in 2012–13.

Under the quarter system, students who enrolled late, after developmental education classes had begun, were directed to QuickStart because that gave the college a chance "to engage them immediately," Provost Brown says. Zane State policy bans students from enrolling in any developmental education course after

the first class has met. However, because developmental courses are eight weeks long, a student who enrolls even four weeks into the semester can still be included in a conventional developmental education class. Since the shift to semesters, Provost Brown says, admissions advisors have too routinely been choosing to add students to Zane State's FTE headcount rather than delaying their official enrollment and referring them to QuickStart.

"I've been disappointed with how quickly the change from quarters to semesters has affected QuickStart enrollment and our ability to serve," Provost Brown says. "I can't help wondering about all those students last year who weren't successful, the ones who weren't steered into QuickStart when they could've really benefited from it. So our goal has to be: 'What are our key markers as we're advising a student?' We need to better identify the students who stand to benefit the most from QuickStart."

Identifying and recruiting students for the program is also on the mind of QuickStart's coordinator, Diana Smith Maxwell, who says she is constantly looking for ways to engage the local community and generate referrals to the program. The scope and time-intensive nature of outreach activities represent an ongoing challenge in the effort to scale the program.

Another snag in the scaling effort can be seen in Zane State's attempt to offer QuickStart on two satellite campuses. Though participation has been fairly steady for three years on the Cambridge campus, 25 miles east of Zanesville, that site has served far fewer students, barely a third of those served on the main campus. A second, smaller satellite location in Noble County has barely attracted interest in QuickStart.

Provost Brown admits he's not sure why QuickStart is failing to gain traction at the satellite campuses, but he has a theory. "I think it has something to do with the physical nature of a college campus," he says. "We have that here in Zanesville, but the other sites don't. In Cambridge, we have been one building in an industrial park; in Noble County, it's one room in a library branch, so people there may have trouble seeing this as an actual 'college' course."

Still, even though Zane State's attempts at scaling have been less successful than hoped, Provost Brown is excited about another scaling effort that is now under way. In 2011, the Ohio Learning Network decided to fund another round of the project in which Zane State participated in 2007. This time though, OLN is essentially exporting QuickStart, just as Zane State designed it, to three other community colleges in Ohio: North Central (in Mansfield, Ohio), Eastern Gateway (in the Youngstown area) and Lakeland (in Kirtland, near Cleveland).

Zane State officials hope this added exposure will help QuickStart scale further, and they also see possibilities for expansion in the state's recently enacted performance-funding formula. Forty percent of Zane State's total funding comes from the state, and performance funding now accounts for half of that subsidy. Beginning in 2015, 100 percent of state funding will be tied to performance–and QuickStart is definitely seen as a performance enhancer.

"As a college, we get 'success points' when students complete courses and earn

credits," Provost Brown says. "When a student earns those three credit hours in QuickStart, that gets us a quarter of the way to the first level of 12 success points in the state's performance-funding formula. I see this as being a real motivator for us to expand QuickStart."

Another View: Community College of Baltimore County

Another developmental education program—and one that has become highly influential in higher education—is the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP), developed at the Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC). As its name indicates, ALP has acceleration as a central tenet. It employs a concept of paired courses.

In 1998, Maryland restructured Baltimore County's three community colleges as the Community College of Baltimore County, a single college, multi-campus institution. Today, CCBC educates nearly 70,000 people each year, including more than half of all Baltimore County residents attending undergraduate college. More than 80 percent of students assess below college level, most are part-time (67 percent), 41 percent receive Pell grants, and a high proportion are people of color. CCBC has long understood the need for effective strategies to boost their student's success rate. So, in 2009 the college joined the ATD network. Since then, the college's efforts have been highly successful, resulting in it being selected as a Leader College within the network in 2011, an acknowledgement of their commitment to and success in improving student success and closing achievement gaps.

ALP was piloted in 2007 by CCBC English Professor Peter Adams, during Sandra Kurtinitis' second year as president of the college. It has since grown to become one of the nation's most widespread reforms in developmental education. More than 150 institutions across the country now offer ALP, and there are large-scale ALP projects under way in Arkansas, Colorado, Connecticut, Indiana, Michigan, and Virginia.

Through ALP, CCBC sought to improve student retention by closing leaks in the college's developmental education programs. Specifically, ALP seeks to improve the rates at which students successfully complete the college's upper-level developmental education writing course (English 052) and its first college-level course (English 101).

The ALP course is structured so that developmental education students take English 052 and English 101 concurrently. They participate in the regular meetings of the gateway course (101), along with ten to twelve non-developmental students. In addition, they participate separately in the companion course (052), taught by the same instructor. There they receive developmental instruction particularly designed to help them succeed in the gateway course.

Student profile:
Community College of Baltimore County

62% female

38% male

38% black/African American

47% white

4% Hispanic/Latino

5% Asian

3% multiracial
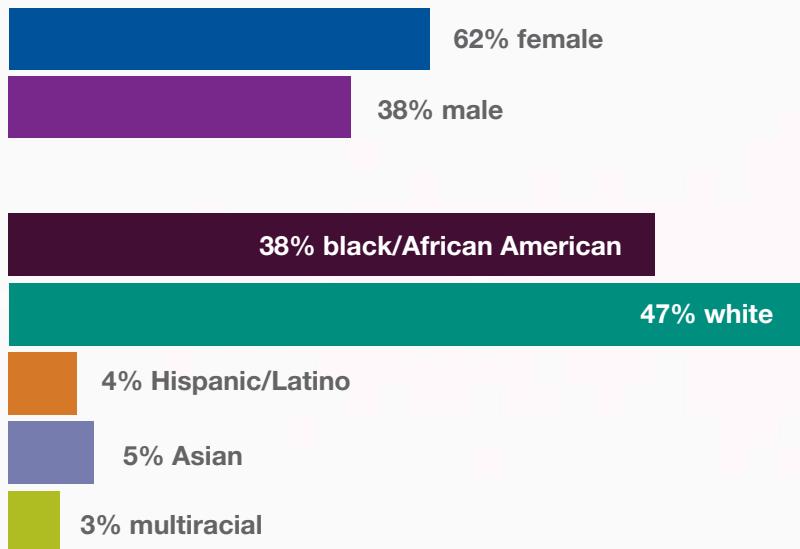
Source: Fall 2012, CCBC Website, https://www.ccbcmd.edu/media/pre/ccbc_factbook.pdf

In 2011–12, for example, this method served 1,280 of CCBC's developmental education students in approximately 160 individual sections, up from 80 students in 10 sections in 2007–08. The small size of the class—an average of eight ALP students per section—is critical because it gives instructors the time they need to address students' academic issues and help meet some of their non-cognitive needs.

Extended time with one instructor helps create a stronger bond with students, which helps ensure that the companion course supports the student's success in the gateway course. Also, the small class size and cohort structure help forge peer-to-peer connections in the ALP group, thus adding another layer of student support.

"One feature that contributes to ALP's success is the fact that developmental students are not separated off in classes where all the students are fairly weak writers," Adams says. "Instead, they're in a class where at least half of the students were placed in the credit writing class."

Adams says this mixed grouping has two important benefits. First, it pairs developmental

students with role models who are stronger writers and more familiar with college-going routines. Second, it reduces the stigma—what Adams calls "the sense of being held out of college"—that often discourages developmental students.

This approach has proved to be highly effective. According to a 2012 study by the Community College Research Center (CCRC), of the 592 students who took ALP between fall 2007 and fall 2010, 82 percent passed English 052 and 74 percent passed English 101. Before ALP, only about 30 percent of students who tested into English 052 went on to pass the English 101 gateway course. Since 2007, those who have participated in ALP have consistently passed English 101 at rates averaging higher than 70 percent. Of the cohort enrolling in fall 2010, 42 percent tested one level below college English, with an additional 23 percent testing two levels below (the college has no lower levels). Some 288 students who enrolled in fall 2010 were served by ALP.

Occasionally it has been argued that ALP works well only for students "close to the cut-off" for English 101. However, all students placed in English 052 are eligible for ALP, so it shows promise for a wide range of developmental students, not just those close to the cut-off. In fact, CCBC has recently discovered that the success rates of students whose placement scores are the lowest appear to make as much progress, even more perhaps than those with higher scores. For example, in 2010, 75 percent students who scored between 58 and 69 on the ACCUPLACER Sentence Skills test passed the ENGL 052 portion of ALP; 73 percent those who scored 70 to 79 passed; and 79 percent of those who scores between 80 and 89 passed.

Following ALP's notable early success, organizers developed ambitious plans for expansion and sought to double the number of ALP sections each semester. Organizers now realize their plans were too ambitious, largely because they underestimated the depth of faculty training that would be needed.

"We were naïve when we started," admits Donna McKusick, dean of developmental education and special academic programs. "We didn't understand how an initiative like this had to grow roots. The importance of faculty training was the big thing we didn't understand … how important it is to educate faculty on how to teach developmental students within the accelerated framework."

Since those early years, CCBC has worked to emphasize faculty development. The number of faculty teaching ALP sections has risen from 43 percent in 2010–11 to 73 percent in 2012–13. The college has also used its student outcomes data to engage faculty and build awareness about ALP. Those outcomes data figure prominently in a 25-hour professional development program implemented in 2011–12 that engaged 54 full-time and part-time faculty members in 2012–13 to help improve ALP, up from 19 in its launch year. The professional development aspects of ALP have also expanded well beyond CCBC and Adams is now a recognized national expert who provides ALP training sessions on campuses all over the country.

What Zane State and CCBC Learned

The programs featured in this brief—Zane State's QuickStart to College and the ALP program at CCBC—are structured to meet the unique needs and environments of their specific colleges. Still, the programs have much in common beyond their basic, shared stratagem of acceleration. Several important lessons that Zane State and CCBC learned during program implementation and throughout the ongoing process of adaptation can help guide and instruct other institutions seeking to improve developmental education programs and practices:

🔧 ***It's not all about academics.*** An intervention can feature exemplary curriculum and inspired pedagogy and still be ineffective if it does not address students' non-academic needs. The best programs work to build students' self-confidence and sense of belonging by offering two basic types of support:

> 1. Tactical training. Students unfamiliar with the college environment need to be given the tactical skills to negotiate processes such as financial aid, enrollment, book purchases, e-mail and Blackboard use, course scheduling, and development of an academic plan.
>
> 2. Affective support. Students need to feel comfortable seeking help from faculty, advisors, and their peers. That means they need to establish personal connections built on trust.

🔧 ***The personal touch is paramount.*** Although technology can produce many vital efficiencies in both pedagogy and student support, it cannot fully supplant personal interaction in either area. This is particularly true among the high-risk populations who so often require developmental education. The best programs are structured intentionally to foster and leverage a genuine bond between instructor and student.

🔧 ***Quantify and leverage results.*** All of the featured programs were able to expand because organizers made a commitment to objectively demonstrate success. A data-driven process of continuous improvement is vital. While it is important to track student participation and performance, record the generation of tuition revenue, and collect other such data, it is not enough to just collect the data; rather, data must be used intentionally to help inform the initial adoption of the intervention, to improve it, and to help institutionalize and scale it. Cost-benefit analyses are particularly persuasive.

🔧 ***Students aren't the only ones who need support.*** Developmental education instructors—whether adjuncts or full-time faculty—must be valued, respected, supported, and rewarded. Whatever steps can be taken to accomplish this—release time, financial incentives, possibilities for promotion—can pay off where it fundamentally counts, in improved student outcomes. Faculty development should not be viewed as an add-on or afterthought. It needs to be built in from the outset.

🔧 ***Follow the leaders … even if they're not in charge.*** Neither of these successful programs could have achieved their impressive results without a group–often a small group–of dedicated champions. Sometimes those champions are found in the college's administrative ranks. Perhaps more often, though, they can be found working in the trenches, so to speak, just waiting for permission or encouragement. Often, a core group of creative faculty members sparks innovation, but too often there are few channels within systems to express that creativity. The most effective institutional leaders are those who seek out, encourage, and enable those faculty members.

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