

Pronghorn Pronk Newsletter

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PRESIDENT'S MONTHLY REPORT —January 2016

PRESIDENT JOHN MARRIN

Lamar Community College Celebrates Its Employees of the Year

Brian Harris – Administrator of the Year



Brian Harris currently serves as the college's Information Technology Director. He has worked in IT for 16 years after he began his career in the Marine Corps. Brian continued with the Department of Defense as a contractor before moving into education, first at the K-12 level and then in higher education. He has served as the IT Director for LCC since 2010.

Brian is from the South and grew up in eastern Tennessee. He met his wife while he was in the Marines and she was serving in the U.S. Navy. The two returned to her hometown in La Junta when Brian took a position with La Junta Public Schools in 2005. He spends all his spare time trying to keep up with his two children.

Doug Cash – Faculty of the Year



Doug Cash is the full-time welding faculty member at Lamar Community College. He has worked at the college for five years, sharing over 30 years' worth of experience in the welding industry with his students.

Doug started his career in welding in 1983 for A-J Sales, a small trailer company in Commerce City. From there he went on to weld for Timpte trailers for a year or two, then at Merritt Equipment for 7 years. While at Merritt Equipment Doug picked up a few certifications and practiced aluminum welding. He then spent ten years working for Stanley Aviation, becoming a Class A aerospace welder. After losing his wife in 1997, he moved his daughters to Wiley started his own business. He continues to run his business alongside his duties at LCC.

Rita Horton – Classified Employee of the Year



Rita Horton is a valued member of the custodial staff at LCC. She has a long history with the college, with over ten years of full-time employment.

Rita began working at the college part-time on weekends and additional hours as necessary. She took over a classified employee position when another custodial member retired and has been working full-time ever since. She takes pride in her work and enjoys knowing that she has done the best that she can in maintaining the college grounds. She has lived in Lamar most of her life, but when she isn't working she enjoys going to Denver to see her grandkids.

Terry Martin – Adjunct Instructor of the Year



Terry Martin has worked as an adjunct faculty member in the welding department for two years. He enjoys the teaching process as well as working with the college students while trying to impart to them the knowledge to be a great welder and a valuable employee in whatever direction they choose to follow.

Terry started welding in high school in 1967. For years afterward he worked as a toolmaker for several aerospace firms and Cross Manufacturing in Lamar. Terry has acquired over 40 years of experience in the welding industry. He also served as the training officer for 2 Helicopter squadrons while serving in the US Navy.

CHAMP Grant Welding Program —Update

The Lamar Community College Welding program recently went through a facelift and redesign. The facelift involved doubling the space of the state of the art welding shop that previously housed the program. The welding shop now has 16 self-ventilated welding booths with excellent *equipment* available for students to train on.

The redesign involved the addition of intermediate and advanced certificates as well as the opportunity for students to complete an Associates of Applied Science degree in Fabrication Welding. The original program offered only one certificate which had elements of the now basic and intermediate welding certificates. The new design allows for students to complete each certificate in a single semester providing employment opportunities at each level. If students desire the AAS degree they need to pass five additional core courses. Students are able to take some of these or equivalent courses through concurrent enrollment options while still in high school.

Since improvements were implemented in spring 2015, the program has operated at near capacity with most courses filling up each semester. Although this has been very exciting the goal of any program is to have students complete successfully and ultimately, get jobs. Accordingly, the fruits of this labor are starting to be realized as the LCC welding program, after the redesign, is starting to see completers.

LCC Welding is especially proud to announce two students, Josh Forgey and Clay Davis completed the Associates of Applied Science degree in December with three more expected to complete after the spring 2016 semester. In addition to earning all three certificates, the two enrolled in and passed; Introduction to Business, Interpersonal Communication, Construction Ethics, Technical English and Technical Mathematics. These courses are in place to provide additional skills necessary for students to be successful in the workplace.

A number of other students also completed the certificates in the fall 2015 semester. 11 students completed the basic welding certificate, one student completed the intermediate certificate and two completed the advanced certificate. LCC will soon start collecting employment information on our recent graduates. There are a variety of lucrative opportunities available for students in fabrication welding and LCC hopes to guide all graduates to a great job providing a livable wage.

What Matters Most: Using High-Traction Instructional Strategies to Increase Student Success

Curtis Turner, University of Colorado at Colorado Springs

What matters most when it comes to increasing achievement and student success in the developmental classroom? Recent reform efforts in developmental education have brought sweeping changes in some states. New curricular pathways, redesigned courses and a handful of new instructional delivery methodologies have been the result. Although these are important and needed, they are only a piece of what is necessary to yield meaningful results. In the midst of intense times of change, it is vital that we not forget what matters most in any classroom----the instructor.

Most instructors are looking for suggestions and ways to increase instructional effectiveness. We all want students to succeed. I propose "high traction", easy to implement instructional practices will have significant impact on student success. I would encourage all who read this article to look more closely at the proposed strategies they already use and consider all others.

In this article I will briefly explain five strategies that I've used for years. I will then show the result of implementing these practices in College Algebra classrooms over a course of five years. I think you will find the report to be impressive.

The proposed "High Traction Practices";

Make a personal connection

Continually Assess and provide timely feedback

Provide a safe place to fail

Have a plan

Prioritize content, focus on concepts necessary for success at the next level

These are similar to some of the high leverage practices on the Teaching Works website of the University of Michigan. This work is directed at K-12 educators.

The content can be attributed to Deborah Loewenberg Ball and her team. The list above was not generated from the Teaching work's list but the content of that list was reviewed while preparing this paper. It is recommended that you visit the Teaching Works website, where you will find a lot of beneficial information for teachers who want to improve student performance (<http://teachingworks.org/>).

Make a personal connection:

Making a personal connection with students is something that seems difficult in college classrooms but for instructional effectiveness it provides a significant amount traction. Students need to feel connected in some way. Friendly relationships with fellow students are of value but the most important connection to be made is one with the instructor. There are some simple ways to start building great relationships with your students.

First, learn their names. This is a simple gesture that will send a strong message that you value students. Another strategy is to arrive at class early each day and speak to students as they come into the room. Try to have a conversation with each student in your class at some point early in the semester. It doesn't have to be a long conversation, just enough to show them you are interested in knowing more about them. These brief encounters will quickly grow into significant engagements in the classroom. For more suggestion on this topic see Teaching Works; Engaging in strategic relationship-building conversations with students (<http://teachingworks.org/>).

Continually assess, and provide timely feedback:

When we think of assessment; tests, quizzes and final exams come to mind. Effective assessment is much more than this. You can increase the effectiveness of your instruction by adopting an assessment mind-set, where assessment is ongoing throughout the instructional process.

You can begin working on effective assessment immediately by asking a few questions during class. Answers will provide valuable and useful feedback. Even better, ask some questions and allow student to student discussion. You will be amazed at what you'll learn as you walk around the room and listen to the conversations. If students aren't understanding then get their attention and re-direct. If they are understanding you can move forward with confidence. This type of environment allows all students to actively engage with content, increasing motivation and retention.

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Read some documents on the Socratic Method for ideas on developing a dynamic environment with substantial levels of student engagement.

The above describes assessment that is informal. When you assess this way you usually have no intention of assigning a grade. You are simply noting what's going on. When you assess formally however, with tests, quizzes or homework, it's important that you give students timely feedback. The best feedback is not just a grade but narrative comments on student work. English instructors are great at this. You may also consider giving students the opportunity to revise their work when they get the wrong answers. It's hard to argue the value of a second chance when it comes to learning. Professional exams including, NCAT, drivers license exams and Praxis to name a few, allow for repeated attempts. Why then in education do we employ the one and done philosophy with all testing? For more suggestions on this topic see Teaching Works; Selecting and using particular methods to check understanding and monitor student learning. Providing oral and written feedback to students on their work (<http://teachingworks.org/>).

Provide a safe place to fail:

In Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, at the base just above the need for basic necessities such as food and water is the need for safety. Not to be mistaken for physical safety which is equally important, this high traction practice refers to a student's need to feel safe academically. They need to know they aren't going to die a "math death" when they walk into your classroom.

Failure is a great teacher. I'm not familiar with the research on this topic but most teachers will agree with the statement. In my classroom experience I've found if students aren't willing to stretch enough to risk failure then learning is severely hampered. As a teacher you have to create an environment where this can happen.

The two elements already mentioned are basic to providing a safe place to fail. Students need to have a connection with his/her instructor. They also need feedback letting them know whether they are right or wrong. In your days as a student you can recall how uncomfortable it was to turn in an assignment not knowing if you got anything right, then waiting forever to receive any feedback. This doesn't create a sense of safety.

A third element and perhaps the most important is; students need an opportunity to edit and revise their work. If they turn in a homework assignment they need the opportunity to revise and correct the questions they missed. If students write a paper, allow them the opportunity to edit and revise until they have prepared a nearly perfect product. You might even consider allowing them to do things like make corrections on tests. The thought of this stretches most of us but you have to ask what is more important, the score or the learning that could take place.

Have a plan:

By plan I'm referring to a lesson plan. There are a variety of lesson plan models or templates available and any of them would be better than nothing. One issue with these is they are mostly developed for K-12 education and a college classroom is distinctly different. The main difference being, a college instructor has to cover a lot more material or content in a lesson than a high school teacher. To see a copy of an effective lesson planning template for higher education you can send an email to me at the contact listed in this article.

A simple planning strategy that would increase instructional effectiveness quickly would be to think of the lesson as being similar to a good essay. In a good essay you tell the audience what you are going to say, say it with supporting detail and then tell them what you said.

In a good lesson you should always start with objectives. The lesson objectives are statements determining what you want the students to know when they leave your class on the given day. Give students the objectives at the start of your lesson. It is good practice to have them posted somewhere in the room for you and students to refer back to. The objectives communicate what you are going to say. This is a brief interaction followed by the meat of the lecture or presentation wherein you will provide the supporting details. When you have accomplished this you bring closure to the lesson. For closure you can do a variety of things but in some way you should restate the objectives or assess to determine if the students learned what you wanted them to.

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The supporting details can be taken care of in a variety of ways. A majority of instructors try to accomplish this through lecture. Other potentially more effective options are; discussion, particularly Socratic or small group, modeling, demonstration or lab. The key is to find an effective strategy that fits your style and the needs of your students to provide instructional input. For more suggestions on this topic see Teaching Works; Teaching a lesson or segment of instruction (<http://teachingworks.org/>).

Prioritize content, focus on concepts necessary for success at the next level:

The enemy of quality instruction is always time. There is never enough time to cover all of the content in a course to an acceptable level of mastery for all students. The result is one of two things. Either the instructor doesn't get all way through the content missing important topics, or the instructor methodically marches through the content but students master very little of it.

The fix is thoughtful prioritization of content.

Before the semester begins go through the content you are required to teach item by item. Identify those topics crucial to success at the next level. They get the highest priority. Then identify the levels of priority for the remaining items. I recommend three levels. Those that absolutely cannot be skipped, those that could be skipped without great consequence at the next level, and those that aren't very important.

Once content is prioritized develop a pacing schedule. The pacing schedule will identify bench marks to help you keep pace during the semester. Then as you progress if you are running low on time you will have already made the decision regarding what you can skip. This will allow adequate time to cover all concepts of highest priority. Syllabi usually have something like this but most of the time it is an inflexible document. A pacing schedule needs to be flexible to allow for strategic decision making. (For additional information on this topic see Teaching Works; designing a sequence of lessons toward a specific learning goal (<http://teachingworks.org/>)).

Effect on College Algebra Classroom:

We'll now look at a case study where the high traction practices mentioned above were implemented by an instructor at Lamar Community College. He taught several sections of College Algebra over the course of five years. The implementation affected 225 students who enrolled in the sections. In each, the high traction strategies were applied consistently.

College Algebra is a course with high failure rates. Accurate information is difficult to find but a search of the topic will reveal reports of failure rates from 40% to 60%. You will also find numerous reports of redesign efforts, most with minimal success. The focus of change is almost exclusively on student support and early intervention processes. Although these are good efforts, implementation of the high traction strategies will yield more significant results as the following narrative will demonstrate.

Study Results:

The study at Lamar Community College focused on students who enrolled in College Algebra courses offered by one instructor from the fall of 2008 through the spring of 2013. Throughout the five years of the study 225 students completed the course. Of those 88% received a grade of A, B or C. This is significantly higher than most reported results from College Algebra courses.

Due to the unusually high success rate, the rigor of the course may be challenged. Syllabi for each course offered would verify appropriate coverage of Colorado Community College commonly described course competencies. For most in the Colorado Community College System, College Algebra is a capstone in mathematics and they don't choose to take any further math courses. Only 23 of the 225 students involved took additional math courses while enrolled at LCC. 20 or 86% of those students passed the additional mathematics course with a C or better. This provides at least some evidence of rigor.

The ultimate success indicator for college students is degree completion. A January 2014 report written by the American Association of Community Colleges (Juszkiewicz, 2013) revealed, 26.5% of students complete a degree at their first institution of attendance. Of the 225 students who took the college algebra courses studied, 48% of them completed a degree at LCC. If nothing else this shows the significance of completing the gatekeeper math course. 73% of the students who took the course either completed a degree at LCC or transferred to another two or four year institution.

(Conclusion on page 5)

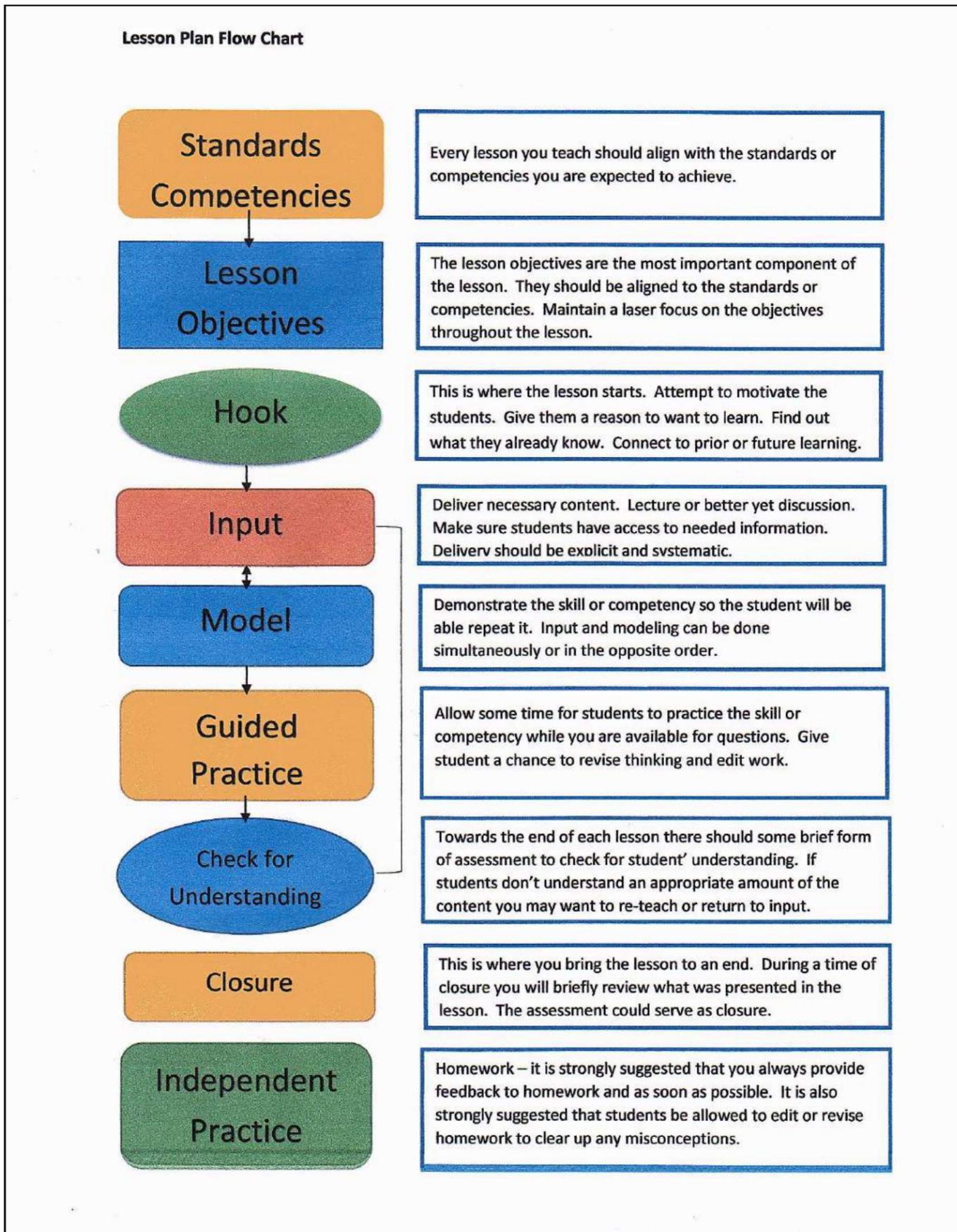
Conclusion:

In conclusion; if community college instructors, especially those teaching developmental courses would implement high traction strategies they would see similar results to those reported at Lamar Community College. Even the implementation of a single strategy suggested will have significant impact.

(see accompanying lesson plan flow chart below)

Bibliography:

Juszkiewicz, J. (2013). Recent National Community College Enrollment and Award Completion Data. ▪



LCC Events Calendar —February 2016

Please view our full calendar of events at <http://www.lamarcc.edu/calendar/>

LCC Sports:

Lady Lopes Women's Basketball—Runnin' Lopes Men's Basketball

Runnin' Lopes Rodeo—Lady Lopes Women's Softball

17th—8:00A—4:00P Wellness Ctr.—Southeast Regional Science Fair

March 2016 Preview

5th— 9:00A—2:00P Bowman 139—Girls in the Middle Conference

14th—20th SPRING BREAK!

21st—Classes resume