

Los Medanos College
Developmental Education Program
Guide to Facilitating a Teaching Community

Congratulations! You have been selected to facilitate a teaching community in our developmental education program. Now what? You probably have questions. Here are our answers to those we have anticipated, but be sure to work with the DE Program Coordinators to answer anything not covered below.

What is a teaching community?

A teaching community is a group of faculty who meet on a regular basis to investigate questions of how and how well students are achieving our stated learning outcomes in a particular course. Each semester, faculty agree on a question or questions to be investigated relevant to these learning outcomes. Attempting to answer these questions is the focus of the teaching community. Our teaching communities are based on:

- Collaborative investigations into student learning
- An assessment cycle based on student learning outcomes
- Content-based staff development
- Integration of research and best practice into curriculum and pedagogy

The nature of the question being investigated determines the study design of the assessment component of the teaching community. The study design includes the assessment method, sample and scoring technique, including any rubrics that may need to be developed or adapted. We also decide what kind of student work we want to collect and review.

The content-based staff development component of the teaching community gives us an opportunity to expand our understanding of teaching and learning in developmental courses by studying our students' work together. At each meeting of the teaching community, we share instructional activities and sample student work in order to examine what is helping students' learn, what they are still struggling with and why, and strategies to increase the possibility of student success. We will also discuss literature relevant to our question, and perhaps invite consultants to make brief presentations pertinent to our discussions. There are a number of ways that faculty can participate in the work of teaching communities. As the facilitator, you may choose to offer some of the following options—or something we haven't thought of yet—in addition to, or instead of, face to face meetings. In order to provide cohesiveness, however, all options should focus on the question the teaching community is investigating:

1. Review of the Literature

Faculty may choose to do research on the question being investigated; for example, what does research tell us about how students best learn to correct usage

errors in their papers? Do different methods work better for native vs. non-native speakers?

Deliverable: Annotated bibliography of articles read.

2. Classroom Observations

Faculty may choose to visit each other's classrooms in order to observe instruction directly related to the question being investigated by the teaching community. Both a pre and a post observation meeting are encouraged to focus the purpose and intended outcomes of the observation.

Faculty may also choose to have their students interviewed by another faculty member in order to solicit feedback about their learning experiences in the course.

Deliverable: Completed observation sheet.

3. Classroom Research

Faculty may choose to do a classroom research project on the focused area of inquiry. The proposal for this project should be written up and approved by you before it is implemented. An excellent resource for this work is the handbook on Classroom Assessment by Pat Cross and Tom Angelo.

Deliverable: Typed report on classroom research project including:

- Question addressed (Must be related to the teaching community's focus)
- Study Design
- Student Work Samples
- Outcomes of Research Project
- Plan for addressing findings of the Research Project

4. Course Portfolio

A course portfolio would include the following:

- An introductory statement that addresses:
 - The purpose and focus of the portfolio (must be aligned with teaching community's area of inquiry)
 - An overall guide to what is included in the portfolio and why it was included
 - General reflection on what was learned in the process of documenting the work included in the portfolio
 - A statement of how the author plans to make changes in the course based on what was learned.
- Table of Contents
- Assignments and/or Lesson Plans with attached reflection on why they were written as they appear, and how they worked out, if revisions are needed for the future and why, etc.

- Samples of Student Work with attached reflection on what each sample demonstrates with regard to the focus of inquiry.

Deliverable: The Course Portfolio, submitted electronically. Student work samples should be submitted either for typing, or for scanning.

Note: The Course Portfolio is intended to be a tool for inquiry, and does not have to showcase exemplary work. An honest examination of what is, and is not working may yield more valuable information than a “best of” presentation.

5. Case Studies

Faculty may choose to focus on a few students in their class that they believe offer insights into the question being studied by the teaching community. For example, in investigating how ESL students respond to different instructional strategies intended to help them proofread and edit their papers, it might be interesting to follow the work of three students with different native languages, or of different generations. A case study should include:

- The question being investigated
- A profile of the student(s)
- Samples of student work with attached reflection on what it demonstrates about the student’s learning. Samples should reflect student work at the beginning, middle and end of the semester.
- Summaries of meetings with the student or classroom interactions
- Reflections on the instructor’s interactions with the student
- Summary statement on what was learned about the question being investigated as a result of conducting this case study.

6. Instructional Design/ Curriculum Development

Faculty may choose to develop lesson plans or other instructional activities that address the focus of inquiry. These must be accompanied by rubrics or scoring guides, and if possible, actual student work produced as a result of using these plans in the classroom.

Deliverable: Typed lesson plans, instructional activities, rubrics, student work samples – typed or scanned; to be submitted electronically.

7. Videotaped Class Session with Written Critique

Faculty may choose to have a class session that relates to the area of inquiry videotaped. Then, they can watch the videotape with the DE facilitator or another faculty member and write a critique of the teaching and learning they see happening in their own classroom.

Deliverable: Videotape and written critique, submitted electronically. If the faculty member is willing to give permission for the videotape to appear on our website, be sure it is filmed with equipment that facilitates that medium. (See permission form for website use.)

NOTE: All deliverables must be accompanied by a completed time log and timecard. (See Time Log form.)

What are my responsibilities as the facilitator?

- Advertise and promote participation in the teaching community (Let participants know what their time commitment and responsibilities will be.)
- Schedule meeting times for the teaching community
- Plan for and facilitate each teaching community meeting
- Decide on focus for the teaching community (consider results of previous assessments and input of department)
- Select readings and invite presentations by consultants, if appropriate
- Keep electronic records of all documents that will be included in the electronic “notebook” for this teaching community.
- Conduct assessment of student learning outcomes as outlined in your study design and complete the TLP Assessment Report.
- Submit timecards for all faculty participants at the end of the semester. (See the DE Coordinator for deadlines and procedures.)
- Share both the Teaching Community Report and the TLP Assessment Report with the department and facilitate discussion on “next steps”.

How do I schedule meeting times for the teaching community?

This is a bit of a chicken/egg dilemma. You want to know what time most faculty, especially adjunct, can attend. Faculty want to know what time it will be offered before they commit. (*Remember, you will want to meet at least every other week during the semester for 1 ½ hours- this will give you 8 meetings during the semester for a total of 12 hours.*) Try this approach:

1. Around the same time that the schedule is developed for the following semester, send out an announcement (email and paper) of the opportunity for faculty to participate (compensated, of course) in a teaching community for the upcoming semester in course X. Ask for those who are interested to respond, and with your department’s support, emphasize that the department will attempt to

accommodate their request for a section of a teaching community course. Include the focus of the teaching community if you know what it will be. If not, you may want to solicit suggestions.

2. Encourage full time faculty to participate in the teaching community as well during scheduling discussions.
3. Once you have an idea of who is interested, work with the department chair to schedule the teaching community meetings at a time when the maximum number of interested faculty can participate.
4. Send out an announcement of the selected time. Reserve a room for your meetings.
5. Send out reminders of meetings a week in advance, with agendas and reminders of any preparations faculty need to make for the meeting, e.g. readings to be done, student work to be collected and copied, journal entries to be made, etc.

What are the expected outcomes of a teaching community?

A teaching community has three primary goals:

Goal #1 Design instruction and assessment aligned with student learning outcomes.

*Outcome: Faculty participating in the Teaching Community will produce an electronic ‘notebook’ * that includes the following:*

1. Updated and revised curricular unit plans that confirm to course outlines
2. Updated and revised assessment tools related to curricular unit plans and course outlines
3. Samples of student work, high, medium, and low, related to course outcomes

*Please note that all components of the “electronic notebook” described below are included in the Teaching Community Report format. In other words, completing the Teaching Community Report automatically produces the “electronic notebook”.

Goal #2 Support faculty development in improving student learning

Outcome: The facilitator of the teaching community will include in the electronic notebook:

1. Meeting agendas and minutes that document
 - The process used to develop the outcomes-based instructional materials related to course learning outcomes

- The analysis of student work to inform curricular revision and pedagogical decisions
2. Results of a faculty survey measuring instructor perception of the impact of the Teaching Community on teaching effectiveness and student learning
 3. Results of a student survey measuring student perception of the impact on their learning of curriculum and pedagogy used by the Teaching Community

Goal #3 Conduct course-level assessment with holistic evaluation

Outcome: As a result of the assessment component of the teaching community, the facilitator will also document the following in the electronic notebook:

1. Summary of student achievement relative to course learning outcomes
2. Action plans for improving teaching and learning based on assessment results
3. Description and implementation of action plans

How do I plan what we'll actually do during teaching community meetings?

Think of meetings of the teaching community as a “class” you are teaching and plan accordingly. At the first meeting, be clear about the purpose, focus and expected outcomes of the teaching community. Present the three primary goals of developmental education teaching communities outlined above, and how they apply to this particular teaching community. With the input of the participating faculty, clarify the question or questions the teaching community plans to investigate. This will determine both the focus for staff development and the focus of the assessment. Review meeting dates and times, and explain how faculty will be paid for their work, and what their responsibilities are as participants in the teaching community. (See next question.)

For subsequent meetings, be sure to let faculty know what they need to do to prepare for each meeting, e.g. reading assignments, development of lesson plans/activities, collecting and making copies of student work samples, etc. Staying focused on the question the teaching community is investigating, try to incorporate review and discussion of actual student work into as many meetings as possible. If readings are assigned, structure discussion questions as you would for a class you are teaching. Encourage instructors to keep up with journals (now called Teacher Practice Rubrics) , recording how they are attempting to incorporate work of the teaching community into their courses.

At the final meeting, ask faculty to write a reflection on their experience in the teaching community and to submit it to you electronically. Provide a format for this reflection and include a check off where faculty can indicate if it is permissible to post their reflection on the website (currently Blackboard) for others to see. Also, at the final meeting, fill out

timecards, and give a deadline for all faculty work to be submitted, so you can complete the electronic notebook.

Keep the assessment component of the teaching community in mind in terms of a timeline for activities. For example, if you are going to do a pre/post study design, you will need to be sure faculty know when they will give the assessments in their classes, and when they will score them in the teaching community.

Keep up with your “electronic notebook” throughout the semester. Post minutes and agendas for all meetings. Ask faculty to submit as much work as possible electronically to minimize the volume of material that will need to be scanned into the final reports. When the teaching community is over, you will need to submit two reports: the Teaching Community Report (essentially, this is the electronic notebook) and the TLP Assessment Report. Familiarize yourself with the content of these reports at the beginning of the semester, so you will systematically collect the necessary information as you go.

What are the responsibilities of instructors who participate in the teaching community?

Faculty are expected to:

1. Attend all (or most) meetings of the teaching community.
2. Come to meetings prepared to do the work agreed upon, e.g. discuss readings, distribute copies of their students’ work for review and discussion, create lesson plans/activities/rubrics, etc.
3. Submit work for inclusion in the “electronic notebook”:
 - Updated and revised curricular unit plans that confirm to course outlines
 - Updated and revised assessment tools related to curricular unit plans and course outlines
 - Samples of student work, high, medium, and low, related to course outcomes
4. Participate in assessment activities designed by the teaching communities
5. Submit a final reflection or evaluation of the teaching community experience

How do I handle problems that might come up during meetings?

Be clear at the very first meeting that the purpose of the teaching community is to investigate questions about student learning, not to praise or condemn particular teaching

practices. Since our goal is critical inquiry, raising questions is central to our work. As long as it is done respectfully, faculty should not consider such questions an affront to their professional judgment. Try to set a tone of collaborative investigation and keep the focus on student learning as much as possible – that is why it is important to include the examination of student work in most sessions. To the extent possible, try to avoid “this is what I do/say/believe in my classroom” presentations. Instead, focus on what students are accomplishing or lacking in their work, and discuss ways to help students learn more effectively.

How do I conduct the assessment of student learning outcomes in the teaching community?

Begin by reviewing the TLP Assessment Report ([LINK](#)). This will help you think about the components of the assessment process, the information you will be gathering, and how you will report it. You will need to decide early on what your research question is, what your study design will be, and how you will agree on the criteria (rubrics) to be used in assessing student achievement of learning outcomes. For more specific “how to” information, see the Course Level Assessment Guide. ([LINK](#))

How do I assess the effectiveness of the teaching community itself?

The effectiveness of the teaching community is assessed relative to the following **goals**:

Goal #1 Design instruction and assessment aligned with student learning outcomes.

Effectiveness measure:

- Students will be assessed by assignment rubrics
- Teaching Community will produce the electronic “notebook” as a smooth method to disseminate learning outcomes, assessment criteria as described in Activity #1

Goal #2 Support faculty development in improving student learning

Effectiveness measure:

- Meetings are documented with agendas, attendance, and minutes
- All members of the Teaching Community attend at least 80% of the meetings
- At least two-thirds of the faculty participants give positive ratings on the survey for the majority of questions.
- Faculty will use results from student surveys to design action plans for future curricular and pedagogical improvement.

Goal #3 Conduct course-level assessment with holistic evaluation

Effectiveness measure:

- Faculty will craft an assignment that elicits students' demonstration of course learning outcomes
- Faculty will design a rubric to holistically assess the assignment.
- Faculty will holistically assess student work from at least 60% of the sections
- A mean of least a 60% of students will demonstrate proficient performance in the stated course outcomes.
- Faculty will use the results from the assessment of learning outcomes in action plans for future curricular and pedagogical improvement

How do I document the work of the teaching community?

At the end of the semester, when the work of the teaching community is completed, submit the Teaching Community Report electronically to the DE Coordinator. Student work samples should be scanned and linked to your report.