

12-2019

## "What's Expected of Us as We Integrate the Two Disciplines?": Two-Year College Faculty Engage with Basic Writing Reform.

Erin Doran

Iowa State University, [edoran@iastate.edu](mailto:edoran@iastate.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: [https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/edu\\_pubs](https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/edu_pubs)



Part of the [Curriculum and Instruction Commons](#), [Higher Education Commons](#), and the [Language and Literacy Education Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Doran, Erin, "'What's Expected of Us as We Integrate the Two Disciplines?': Two-Year College Faculty Engage with Basic Writing Reform." (2019). *Education Publications*. 173.

[https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/edu\\_pubs/173](https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/edu_pubs/173)

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the School of Education at Iowa State University Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Education Publications by an authorized administrator of Iowa State University Digital Repository. For more information, please contact [digirep@iastate.edu](mailto:digirep@iastate.edu).

---

## "What's Expected of Us as We Integrate the Two Disciplines?": Two-Year College Faculty Engage with Basic Writing Reform.

### Abstract

Drawing on interviews from faculty at one community college in Texas, this case study focuses on one college and the change process faculty experienced in integrating its developmental reading and writing curriculum. This study centers on the faculty perspective of policy and curriculum implementation, a voice that is often lost or underrepresented in the research literature and offers insight into how colleges can support their faculty who are responding to curricular change and/or policy mandates.

### Disciplines

Curriculum and Instruction | Higher Education | Language and Literacy Education

### Comments

This article is published as Doran, Erin E. "' What's Expected of Us as We Integrate the Two Disciplines?": Two-Year College Faculty Engage with Basic Writing Reform." *Teaching English in the Two Year College* 47, no. 2 (2019): 149-167. Posted with permission.

# “What’s Expected of Us as We Integrate the Two Disciplines?”: Two-Year College Faculty Engage with Basic Writing Reform

> Erin E. Doran

---

Drawing on interviews from faculty at one community college in Texas, this case study focuses on one college and the change process faculty experienced in integrating its developmental reading and writing curriculum. This study centers on the faculty perspective of policy and curriculum implementation, a voice that is often lost or underrepresented in the research literature and offers insight into how colleges can support their faculty who are responding to curricular change and/or policy mandates.

As with many states, college readiness initiatives and developmental education dominate Texas higher education policy discussions, and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) has implemented a number of reforms including the integration of developmental reading and basic writing (“Developmental” 2). In the case of the last reform, the integration of the highest levels of developmental reading and writing courses into one integrated course accelerates student progress (2). Integrated reading and writing (INRW) is a model that is increasing in popularity across the country and is recognized as a best practice for developmental writing (Edgecombe et al. 1). Action to accelerate students’ progression in developmental activities is ideal considering that the longer students spend in such activities, the less likely they are to persist and graduate (Bettinger et al. 96). Moreover, reading and writing skills develop more effectively when taught in tandem, and the integration of the two offers the opportunity to reinforce one another (Bunn 497–98; Goen and Gillotte-Tropp 95; Perin et al. 2).

What is notable is that legislative reforms have often ignored the disciplinary breaks between reading and writing that have contributed to major differences in training, pedagogy, and theoretical perspectives (TYCA Research Committee 227–28). The result of this ignorance is that “All or any of these may seriously undermine the effectiveness of reform efforts” (228). As a result of curricular reforms like INRW, the burden of navigating disciplinary divides falls on the faculty who teach these courses on two-year and four-year campuses that offer developmental education. Therefore, practitioners and administrators in Texas and beyond presently have relatively little to go on.

The purpose of this study is to shed light on the faculty experience and perceptions of implementing INRW on one campus in Texas and to fill a gap in

---

The purpose of this study is to shed light on the faculty experience and perceptions of implementing INRW on one campus in Texas and to fill a gap in the literature with regard to basic writing reform by centering the experiences and voices of two-year faculty.

---

the literature with regard to basic writing reform by centering the experiences and voices of two-year faculty. It addresses the gap by focusing specifically on the challenges faced by faculty prior to and after INRW integration and their perceptions of the effectiveness of the program after two long semesters. The study inquiry was focused on the actions taken by faculty at one community college in Texas to develop an INRW policy and how their work (broadly defined) changed as a result of this policy. This study utilized a case study approach to introduce the

faculty voice to this discussion on developmental education policy reform. Faculty members are situated at the front line of teaching-related reforms, yet their perspectives are left out of policy debates (TYCA Research Committee 227–28) as well as the research literature (Twombly and Townsend 5).

## Literature Review

As developmental education remains a critical area of concern in higher education, scholars and practitioners have access to empirical research on a wide spectrum of topics and themes, including student attributes (Bahr 217), enrollment patterns (Bailey et al. 255), and programs and interventions (Rutschow and Schneider 13–14). However, one collective voice is all but mute in the empirical research—that of the faculty who teach these courses (Grubb and Worthen 174). This gap is notable considering the role faculty play in implementing policy enacted by states.

To date, two empirical studies best describe the faculty role in developing and implementing a new curriculum for developmental reading and writing. The first explains the role of the faculty in outlining guiding principles for the curriculum and how the faculty assessed the integrated program through students' final grades and writing portfolios that enabled faculty to evaluate students' growth in reading and writing over time (Goen and Gillotte-Tropp 101–03). The second study presents some of the anxieties faculty members at Chabot College in California felt as they integrated their developmental program and describes how faculty members pursued additional graduate-level training (Edgecombe et al. 5). One significant point in this study is how important leadership is to bridging gaps in knowledge among the faculty by facilitating discussions to include faculty from both disciplines.

Accelerating students' time in developmental education, including through the integration of reading and writing, is a fast-growing trend in developmental education currently. Along with Texas, numerous states including California,

Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, and Florida have implemented some kind of acceleration reform (Raufman and Barrow 24). The Accelerated Learning Program began in Maryland's Community College of Baltimore County, an acceleration program that integrates reading and writing, shows higher pass rates for accelerated students than for those who stayed in the traditional developmental sequence—63 percent versus 39 percent, respectively (Adams et al. 59).

While not directly focused on curricular reform, the extant research introduces a number of considerations that program planners should make concerning professional development. For example, researchers have questioned whether adjunct instructors should teach developmental courses by pointing out that adjunct faculty may not have the same level of training or professional development that full-time faculty receive (Rutschow and Schneider 64). Yet professional development poses a challenge to all faculty, not only adjuncts, and the TYCA Research Committee recommended that adjuncts be involved in design and implementation efforts (228). Professional development for community college faculty often comes in the form of one meeting

---

In an era when national and state reform efforts around developmental education are intensifying, the research to date has not addressed how community college faculty respond to state policy reforms in developmental education.

---

or workshop that has no clear purpose and does little to impact long-term change (Murray 91). More recently, research that better understands how faculty process professional development posits that participants go through stages of learning that enable them to make sense of information and how to enact it in their classrooms (Bickerstaff and Cormier 76). Considering the length and depth of personal and group reflection recounted in the aforementioned studies on INRW implementation (Edgecombe et al. 6; Goen and Gillotte-Tropp 41), this sense-making process seems critical to meaningful and long-lasting reform.

However, in an era when national and state reform efforts around developmental education are intensifying, the research to date has not addressed how community college faculty respond to state policy reforms in developmental education. Therefore, exploring state-level mandates and how they are negotiated and implemented on individual campuses in relation to broad, macro-level reforms such as INRW can provide a more complete understanding of the phenomenon of institutional change in response to curriculum reform and how this impacts the faculty who implement these changes.

### **Theoretical Framework**

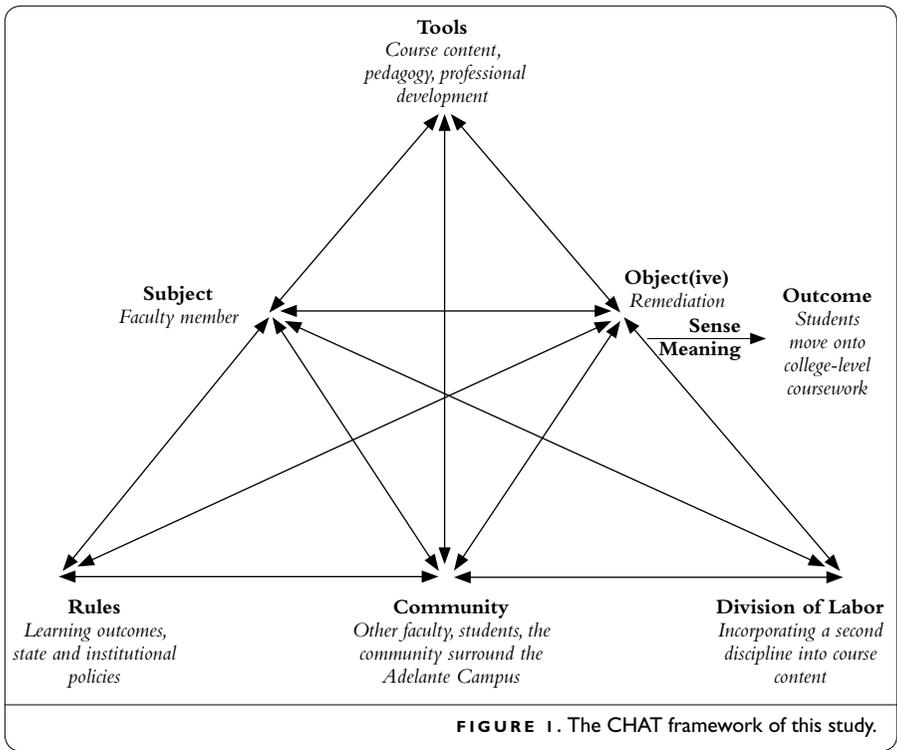
Considering that human activity can be complicated and overwhelming to observe and analyze, cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) provides a holistic framework for analysis (Yamagata-Lynch 451). CHAT derives largely from the work of

Soviet psychologist Lev Vygotsky, and this theory is known by its pictorial depictions of activity in which triangles are normally used (Engeström, “Expansive” 134; Yamagata-Lynch 454). The basic Vygotskian triangle shows at the corners the subject, object, and mediating tool or artifact. This simplistic relationship shows how one subject (a teacher, for instance) uses mediating tools or artifacts to achieve a certain outcome for the object (Engeström 134). However, if the object is not producing the desired results, the subject might rethink the tools they use.

Activity systems are social creations situated within a specific history and context and provide a lens for analyzing human interactions in a naturalistic setting (Engeström, “Expansive” 134). Engeström (“Activity” 962) introduced a more complex figure for organizing and understanding human activity by expanding the triangle to include the division of labor (who does what), rules (what formal or informal rules help or hinder the activity), and community (those who are directly or indirectly influencing the activity).

Engeström (“Expansive” 136–37) introduces five principles for summarizing activity. The first explains that the activity system, viewed in its relation to other systems operating at the same time, is the primary unit of analysis. The second principle is the acknowledgment of the multivoicedness of activity systems. Activity systems are social creations, which is perhaps why Engeström added community and the division of labor in his activity system model. These two concepts show that multiple people may take actions that have effects on a system. Following the same sort of contextual principles, Engeström’s third principle is historicity, meaning that each activity system has a local history and context that operates along with more global histories. These historic dimensions of an activity system must be analyzed, along with the immediate operations of the system. Fourth, activity systems have inner contradictions that are not to be conflated with problems or struggles. Contradictions may be the result of a change in the activity system that causes tension between multiple activity systems or within one part of one system such as the division of labor. Consequently, Engeström’s fifth principle states that such contradictions can bring about expansive transformations. In higher education research, for example, Deryl K. Hatch (25–26) notes these tensions or contradictions can bring about new ways of conceiving how to improve practice. Figure 1 presents the theoretical framework for this study.

This model represents the developmental classroom from the faculty member’s perspective. The *subject* is the individual faculty member. The *rules* are the policies prescribed by the state and the college, including department rules and standard learning outcomes. The *division of labor* is how central activities (e.g., the delivery of course content) are assigned to specific actors and how they are carried out. The *tools* are the various means the subject uses to bring about a certain outcome or effect. These may include teaching tools such as instructor-created lessons, professional development, or the knowledge the instructor draws on to teach their course.



## Method

This study utilized case study methodology in order to identify a “case,” or an individual, context, phenomenon, or problem in a real-life context that forms a bounded system for analysis (Yin 16). As described by John Gerring, a case study is “an intensive study of a single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of (similar) units” (342). This study was bounded to the experience of faculty who teach INRW classes at a single community college. The community college where data was collected was Adelante College (a pseudonym), a campus of the River City Colleges system. Adelante College is located in an urban region in South Texas, and its student body is approximately 70 percent Latinx. The THECB handed down the announcement of the INRW changes in the 2012–2013 academic year. During the 2013–2014 year

---

This study utilized case study methodology in order to identify a “case,” or an individual, context, phenomenon, or problem in a real-life context that forms a bounded system for analysis.

---

and the fall 2013 semester, Adelante College faculty participated in professional development, and certain faculty developed the INRW curriculum. The spring

---

In the final stages of the rollout (where data collection took place), the faculty in this study were left to make meaning of how policy mandates were translated into classroom practice, and faculty were left to respond to these mandates that they had no hand in crafting.

---

2014 semester was the first semester the integrated course was taught. Data collection for this project took place in fall 2014 and throughout spring 2015.

While this study focuses on the rollout of INRW at one college, Adelante, which has its own geographical and historical intricacies, the implementation of INRW is arguably typical of curricular programs across institutions, particularly those in undergraduate education that are subject to specific reforms such as developmental education policy. Put another way, the rollout of INRW experienced at Adelante was top-down in nature: the THECB provided the mandate, and the River City Colleges system offered its own response to the mandate with professional development opportunities. In the final stages of the rollout (where data collection took place), the faculty in this study were left to make meaning of how policy mandates were translated into classroom practice, and faculty were left to respond to these mandates that they had no hand in crafting.

experienced at Adelante was top-down in nature: the THECB provided the mandate, and the River City Colleges system offered its own response to the mandate with professional development opportunities. In the final stages of the rollout (where data collection took place), the faculty in this study were left to make meaning of how policy mandates were translated into classroom practice, and faculty were left to respond to these mandates that they had no hand in crafting.

## Interviews

In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with seven INRW faculty members and the department chair at Adelante College as well as the vice president of academic success for River City Colleges. Using Adelante's publicly available class schedule, faculty members were identified according to their assignment to teach INRW courses. Using an IRB-approved recruitment email, requests for participation were sent to fourteen individuals teaching INRW courses in the fall 2014 and spring 2015 semesters. Seven faculty members responded to the request and agreed to participate in my study; all have been included in the analysis and conclusions. Table 1 provides detailed information on the faculty participants.

In order to include a variety of experiences and perceptions, this study included full-time, tenured/tenure-track faculty members and adjuncts. The purpose was not to address similarities and differences between full-timers and part-timers so much as to include as many viewpoints as possible. Faculty with reading/education backgrounds and from English/writing backgrounds were also included.

Once informed consent was obtained, a semi-structured interview protocol was used to prompt faculty to discuss their perceptions of issues that have been most positive, negative, or important since integration began. The interviews with the department chair and the vice chancellor were semi-structured and focused on policies and procedures that came about as a result of INRW. For example, the department highlighted how hiring practices might change due to the changing

**TABLE 1.** Information on faculty participants

First name	Highest degree attained	Educational background	Years teaching at Adelante	Gender	Employment status	Additional relevant information
Cecilia	M.A.	English	10	Female	Tenure-track	INRW lead
Tomás	Ph.D.	Spanish	>1	Male	Tenure-track	Department Chair
Linda	M.A.	Reading	16	Female	Tenured	
Jeanette	M.A.	Reading, Elementary Education	>5	Female	Adjunct	Previous K–12 teacher
Samuel	M.A.	English	>5	Male	Adjunct	Involved with problem-based learning program
Suzanne	M.A.	English and Education	>5	Female	Adjunct	Previous K–12 teacher
Jorge	Ph.D.	English	<30	Male	Tenured	
Renee	M.A.	Curriculum and Instruction, Reading	>5	Female	Adjunct	Previous K–12 teacher

expectation that instructors would need to teach reading *and* writing; the vice chancellor described the process for developing district-wide professional development sessions to prepare faculty for implementation.

### Document Analysis

A number of artifacts were also included in the data collection and analysis processes. The standardized syllabus of INRW 0420, the course that ended up being a focal point of this study, was collected as well as examples of the syllabi from developmental reading and writing courses before they were integrated. Four instructors also provided copies of course assignments or materials that they use in INRW 0420. Documents from the THECB about the INRW policy and college readiness initiatives provided an opportunity to better understand how college readiness has been framed in Texas and what implications these changes have had for practice and institutional-level action in order to better understand the policies to which Adelante College responded.

### Data Analysis

Once informed consent was obtained, each interview was recorded and transcribed. Transcripts were emailed to the participants in order to give them the opportu-

nity to make comments on any additions or deletions they desired. All but two participants responded to the request to review the transcripts, and several asked for edits or asked for the redaction of certain comments in the interviews. These requests were honored.

The CHAT theoretical framework was developed before data collection and served in many ways as a visual guide for coding. The multidirectional arrows presented in the theoretical framework show that movement in one part of the activity system (e.g., the rules or division of labor) impacted the rest of the system, similar to a domino effect. The first movement in the activity system was conceptualized as a change to the rules—that is, the changes to the state policy that called for the integration of reading and writing.

---

This study found INRW required changes in the department's assessment and course content policies that were not universally agreed upon or followed in individual classrooms.

---

Emotion coding (Saldaña 125) was used in the first round of coding in order to explore interpersonal and intrapersonal experiences and perceptions among the participants. After the first round of coding, emergent patterns by organizing codes within the theoretical model were analyzed. With the use of axial coding in the second round (Saldaña 244), the movement of the activity system allowed

analysis of patterns by focusing on relationships among individuals and disciplines, processes for implementation, and emergent tensions that occurred through the INRW implementation process.

## Limitations

What was captured largely through interviews and documents is in essence a snapshot of how one college responded to a policy affecting public two-year institutions throughout Texas and, to varying degrees, around the United States. This snapshot is not so much a limitation as it is a reality of conducting research out in the world and in real time. Further, interviews are highly subjective, and some of the information divulged by some faculty members could be considered hearsay. Ideally, the entire INRW faculty would have participated in this study, including those who ultimately opted out of teaching INRW completely or the one who has chosen to retire because of the curriculum change.

## Findings

This study found INRW required changes in the department's assessment and course content policies that were not universally agreed upon or followed in individual classrooms. Further, River City College's district-wide professional development failed to provide faculty with concrete pedagogical skills or lessons that they took directly into the classroom. The Adelante program also struggled to find a textbook

that met the needs for teaching both reading and writing. Finally, the integration changes prompted questions about the role of adjunct faculty and how future faculty credentialing policies might change in light of major curriculum changes.

### Disproportionate Changes for Reading Faculty

The rules section of the CHAT model referred to the specific policies and procedures that govern or dictate what learning outcomes are addressed, how programs evaluate students, how faculty members conduct their classes, and so forth. The starting point of this study was the initial movement in the activity system that was conceptualized as the change in state rules, specifically the 2012 mandate that called for the integration of developmental reading and writing.

**Competing assessment approaches.** Many students at Adelante College face two major assessments: a placement exam to determine if they are college ready and an exit exam. Perhaps the biggest change, for reading faculty especially, was the introduction of the INRW exit exam that was not required in stand-alone reading courses. As is common, the exit exams are graded on a variety of points, including if they have a unified and developed topic, have a clear thesis statement, are free of errors, and utilize exceptional examples and details. Students who do not pass the exam must remain in INRW 0420 the next semester, regardless of their final grade. Two reading instructors and one writing instructor voiced their reservations about the exit exam. Linda simply stated, “If they don’t pass, I feel responsible.” Another faculty member, Suzanne, likened the exit exam to teaching to the test, a point that is usually used to criticize the teaching focus of K–12 teachers since the rise and increase in standardized testing. Suzanne described the exit exam as causing a dramatic change of pace and approach for INRW faculty members and how, in essence, the exam became the sole focus on INRW 0420:

Because there’s an exit exam, and this is the biggie . . . are my students going to be . . . prepared to take that exam . . . I can’t really deviate, I’ve got to do this, we have to do this, and I have to do this in this amount of time. So it’s just fitting it all into that amount of time with the end result being that they have to take this test.

With the looming exit exam and the pressure to prepare students for it, Suzanne stated that there was no time for getting to know the students, orienting them with resources such as the library and writing center, and figuring out where the class as a whole was and what she needed to address first. INRW 0420 became an outcomes-driven course that differed greatly from developmental reading.

**Standardization of course content.** The INRW lead, Cecilia, described the rollout of INRW in the spring 2014 semester as “rushed.” She called the first semester a “terrible experience,” while sharing, “I taught the class with the reading textbook with this curriculum that was really rushed because we only had one semester to get it done, and none of it was working.” Multiple faculty members from both reading and writing co-developed the original INRW curriculum and, among other things, chose the common textbook. Yet Cecilia overhauled the cur-

riculum in the summer of 2014, and by that fall semester, the syllabus was completely redesigned, a new textbook was chosen, and this time curriculum decisions were made by one person with an English background.

The result of the overhaul was a standardized syllabus that followed a tightly managed curriculum focused on student writing. Cecilia expressed concerns about the reading faculty members' ability to teach writing effectively, and it was evident that by mostly single-handedly redoing the department syllabus, Cecilia was ensuring that all faculty were on the same page in their classes. This was clear when Cecilia described her observations of one particular INRW faculty member who previously taught reading:

One of my responsibilities is to oversee the faculty. Again, all she's [a reading faculty member] ever done is teach reading. This, she's been assigning . . . narrative after narrative after narrative. Although it's fun, reading [as a] discipline is very fun. You get to read different books, and you get to talk, and you get to talk about your interpretations, your experiences with the text. Very fun stuff. However, just focusing on how you respond to text won't prepare students for Comp I when they're asked to write argumentative essays or Comp II when they're asked to analyze literature in third person point of view. So she's not preparing these kids.

As a result, the information on the syllabus presented a course that focused heavily on writing development despite its description's claim that "Strong emphasis

---

This standardized syllabus significantly limited faculty members' academic freedom in the courses as it only left approximately 10 percent of students' final grade to be determined by individual faculty members who wanted to personalize their class.

---

is placed on critical reading and writing skills" (INRW 0420 Syllabus). Although students were responsible for completing reading assignments for the course, the content of each class meeting focused much more heavily on writing-related skills such as developing a thesis statement, writing body paragraphs, and revision strategies (INRW 0420 Syllabus). This differed from the stand-alone reading courses that offered specific weeks on reading comprehension strategies such as making inferences and locating a main idea (Reading 0302 Syllabus). This

standardized syllabus significantly limited faculty members' academic freedom in the courses as it only left approximately 10 percent of students' final grade to be determined by individual faculty members who wanted to personalize their class. The content of the syllabus also strongly favored writing content over any focus on reading strategies.

### Locating New Tools for the New Course

The tools were conceptualized as disciplinary and pedagogical knowledge, course materials such as the textbook, and professional development sessions that prepared

faculty members to teach INRW. Some tools were tangible, such as the textbook, which has changed several times, and the technology faculty use to teach, which has remained the same. Other tools were more abstract, such as the disciplinary knowledge faculty already had, the new knowledge they acquired, and the skills they needed to focus on in their classes to facilitate the ultimate objective—enabling students to progress into Composition I.

#### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The THECB offered a number of professional development sessions throughout the state in the spring and fall of 2013. While several sessions were offered within a three-hour drive of the Adelante College campus, none of the participants in this study disclosed whether they participated in these sessions. Instead, most faculty partook in local workshops. River City Colleges mandated that current faculty members in reading and English undergo at least nine hours of INRW training. The district also brought in a faculty member from an area university to deliver three sessions in three-hour increments on INRW. Across the board, faculty participants agreed that the major message of these sessions was to reassure faculty about their abilities to teach the second subject with which they were not familiar and that this was an approach taken elsewhere. One participant commented:

The topic of the first few classes that we had was kinda reassuring to those who taught English going, “I don’t know if I can teach reading,” and the reading to the English. . . . He [the facilitator] finally said, “Look, what I’m teaching you is not new, this is something that I taught in another state two years ago, you know other community colleges and universities—they teach it this way and have for years.”

Based on the accounts of the faculty who went through these workshops, a major purpose was to increase their buy-in to the idea of INRW. On the trainings, Samuel said, “They offered training on how integration was going to take place, why it should take place, [and] it became apparent that it was something we needed to do.”

When asked about the details of the professional development such as specific strategies that were used, what was most notable was what was not said and the vagueness with which the participants spoke. For example, when asked on her overall impression of the professional development, Linda recalled lukewarmly, “It was okay.” Linda’s details about the workshop focused more on what she wished she had learned (e.g., how to mark up student essays) rather than what she did. Jeanette responded tepidly when asked about the content of the workshops: “They were really all the same.” She summarized the three-hour sessions by explaining that “They were just ways to encourage developmental students, motivate them, then we had a section on reading development, then a section on writing development.” Based on Jeanette’s description, it is unknown how much time was devoted to actually integrating the reading and writing and teaching them together.

Tensions over the textbook and in the overall balance between reading and writing in INRW were present as well. Cecilia felt that INRW was being implemented so quickly that the textbook publishers did not have time to produce a quality textbook. Instead, they were in a rush to get an INRW textbook out so colleges could adopt them.

Full-time faculty received financial support for travel to state (e.g., the Texas Community College Teachers' Association) and national (including CCCC) conferences, and the faculty were encouraged to meet with publishers to find out more about the available textbook options that could be used in the new INRW course. Cecilia described being overwhelmed with products and the pressure by publishers to adopt their textbooks during various conferences she attended:

So we were frequently sent to different conferences, sometimes in different states, sometimes like in Tarrant County or Austin. And the purpose was to educate the leads, the faculty on how to teach INRW. But looking back on it, hindsight's 20/20, I feel like it was a money-driven initiative, and I say that because at conferences, there's so many publishers—Cengage, Bedford, Pearson—hawking their products, you know? And I thought, "Wait a minute, are we trying to get better at teaching INRW or are we just taking part in a sales pitch?"

Although neither Linda nor Cecilia gave specific information about the content of conference sessions they attended, they described the conferences as a chance to get the lay of the land in INRW and to see what products were available.

The end result of one book was what Cecilia called "a dumping site," as if the author wrote everything they knew about reading and everything they knew about writing into one book without thoughtfulness on putting them together.

Both Jeanette and Linda expressed concerns that the reading needs of the students were not adequately addressed. Jeanette pointed out that trying to use the same book for both INRW levels was not working. The readings in the textbook were above what was appropriate for the lowest development reading course. As she put it, "In my reading opinion, all the stories were way above their [students'] reading comprehension." In INRW 0420, Linda argued that students needed exposure to other types of reading than what the textbook provided; for example, she suggested that all INRW students should read at least one short novel. However, the tightly managed syllabus did not leave enough latitude for this to be added.

### **Division of Labor: How Does Curricular Reform Impact Faculty Credentials?**

The professional development provided to faculty by Adelante College signaled that the college avoided major changes in credentialing for the short term. However, several participants brought up issues with potential implications for the future.

#### **THE PLACE OF ADJUNCTS**

Considering the separation of reading and writing as separate master's disciplines and credentialing guidelines that require faculty to have eighteen hours of credit in

their teaching field, there was anxiety that INRW might displace faculty members. For example, Linda mentioned that when INRW came out, she openly supported it, and other colleagues within River City College District commented that she should stop because it was a threat to reading faculty and their jobs. However, almost no one who participated in this study spoke about fears of losing their job or being displaced because the credential process would change. Instead, Renee wondered if the INRW revamp with the refreshers was doing such a good job that colleges did not need to offer as many sections of developmental courses. She figured that if the need for INRW was declining, that was overall a positive thing. As a full-time faculty member with tenure, Linda noted that even if the credentialing process changed, “I have options.” As most of her reading courses were listed under education, Linda moved from INRW to the Department of Student Development after the end of data collection and now teaches student success courses. As of the spring 2018 semester, only Cecilia and Samuel remain as INRW faculty at Adelante College. Samuel was an adjunct when data was collected, and his master’s degree was in English, not reading. None of the other adjuncts, whose backgrounds were in reading, appear on the schedule as INRW instructors at Adelante College.

#### THE CREDENTIALING OF FUTURE FACULTY

Tomás offered an interesting perspective on the credentialing process of prospective new hires at Adelante in his department. For the immediate future, all reading instructors who underwent the nine hours of INRW training were considered qualified to teach these classes. It is unknown whether prospective applicants with master’s degrees in reading would be considered competitive or marketable candidates to the department. While the credentialing requirements have not necessarily changed under the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), the regional accrediting body of Texas, applicants are qualified to teach developmental courses provided they hold a bachelor’s degree with eighteen hours of coursework in a relevant field. It remains to be seen whether new applicants will have the option to pursue the additional training. More to the point, however, Tomás suggested that applicants will need more than a master’s degree in reading to be hired at Adelante:

[A change will] happen 2 [or] 3 years down the road. We’ll have master’s degrees that specialize in this [developmental] curriculum, these courses, so what we do now and this is kind of like Texas mandate. I mean, we have to look at the credentials to see what people can teach or cannot teach. And then from there, we also go to the experience—what kind of experience do they have in developmental English?

The rush to implement INRW revealed three interesting points: First, the professional development did not adequately address the needs of the faculty, especially given that they could not name any specific skill or new piece of knowledge they took away from nine hours of workshops. Second, the struggle to agree on an adequate textbook showed that even textbook companies were not given sufficient time to develop materials. Third, the nine hours of professional development addressed

Taken together, these points of tension illustrate a struggle to bring together the two disciplines in a way that collaboratively incorporated the expectations and needs of both sides.

credentialing issues related to integration for the short term, but the department chair’s comments about master’s degrees signals the possibility that colleges may change the credentials they require job applicants to have to accommodate the change to INRW. Samuel summarized the process and challenges of implementation with his questions, “What’s expected of us as we integrate the two

disciplines, and how can we reach a consensus?” Taken together, these points of tension illustrate a struggle to bring together the two disciplines in a way that collaboratively incorporated the expectations and needs of both sides. Consensus was not yet reached when data collection ended for this project.

### INRW by the Numbers

The qualitative data illustrates the difficulty for faculty to adjust to the rollout of INRW. This data provides a snapshot of the early days of the rollout at Adelante, a lack of consensus of the best way to go, and an overall ambivalence about whether this policy would benefit students. In looking at the accountability measures reported to the Texas Higher Education Board from 2012 to 2017 (see Table 2), it is clear that more students are meeting Texas state standards for college readiness than before INRW was implemented. These numbers may suggest that INRW has had a positive impact on students’ progression through developmental education though further research should delve into these numbers to see *if* INRW is directly responsible for this upward trend and, if so, *how*.

Year	Reading	Writing
2012	54.5%	48.6%
2013	40.8%	30.5%
2014	57.7%	48.1%
2015	63.2%	54.4%
2016	67%	62.7%
2017	69.7%	62.9%

Source: Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, *Developmental Education Accountability Measures Data*.

## Discussion

Integrated reading and writing (INRW) was very much a product of the current climate of developmental education that focuses on policy and curricular reforms, especially those that accelerate students' time in developmental courses. Given the dearth of empirical research on this model, an analysis of one campus through the lens of cultural-historical activity theory enabled the examination of the processes that went into the implementation of this model. Rather than conceptualizing a new policy as a purely top-down directive, this lens accounted for the process of negotiation and trial and error that campuses undergo in adapting a new curriculum. CHAT made visible the policy changes and their impact on the expectations of what INRW faculty were expected to teach (division of labor), the state and institutional policies that supported or constrained them (rules), and the supporting knowledge they found to help them work (tools). As Hatch noted, the use of CHAT to understand the contradictions or conflicts that happen during human activity (e.g., developing new programs, working to improve practice) is useful for researchers and practitioners because it ultimately treats practice and reform efforts as ongoing learning processes that can continually be improved. In this case, understanding the faculty perspective of INRW can inform how new reforms are introduced, negotiated, and implemented in a wide array of contexts within a community college.

Although Adelante College's student population is approximately 70 percent Latinx and therefore different from many colleges outside of the South Texas region and California, the rollout of INRW at Adelante was arguably typical for community colleges in its top-down nature. This type of directive was criticized by TYCA in 2015, which pointed out that most developmental education reforms neglected to include faculty expertise while failing to provide faculty with adequate training ahead of a respective reform's implementation (TYCA Research Committee 227). Further, this study confirmed findings by Susan Bickerstaff and Julia Raufman (10) from Virginia and North Carolina that the integration, especially the professional development for it, lacked guiding principles or a framework for faculty to better understand the change. Instead, the district provided an underwhelming series of workshops aimed at convincing faculty that integration would be positive rather than providing them with specific classroom strategies.

Adelante College reading and writing faculty perceived the new policy as changing their work significantly, as they underwent a process of accommodating a second subject in their developmental courses. In effect, the rules changed, which in turn impacted the tools and division of labor for those teaching INRW courses. As a result, condensing the content of two classes into one meant that faculty

---

In effect, the rules changed, which in turn impacted the tools and division of labor for those teaching INRW courses.

---

had less flexibility in designing their courses, as a new standardized syllabus was developed and a new textbook was adopted to ensure that all sections of courses were preparing students for the exit exam. Along disciplinary lines, reading faculty encountered more difficulty in integrating reading and writing than their writing counterparts. The new integrated course required an exit exam, an assessment format that reading faculty did not previously use, and the new course clearly focused on preparing students for college-level composition. The developmental-level integrated course, as a result, more closely resembled the old developmental writing course much more than the developmental reading course. Reading faculty dealt with a steeper learning curve than their writing counterparts. This difference highlighted what legislative reforms that combine disciplines often ignore: long-established disciplinary divides contributed to different pedagogical practices that complicate integration (TYCA Research Committee 228). In short, creating an integrated course that favored developmental writing disproportionately affected reading faculty members' responses to the new course.

### **Recommendations for Supporting Faculty during Curricular Reforms**

Engaging faculty in professional development ahead of reform implementation can help calm apprehensions and concerns about these efforts, but faculty undergo their own process of learning and adapting to reform (Bickerstaff and Cormier 77–78). Thus, providing continuing efforts for development that address faculty questions as they gain more experience and learn their own strengths and weaknesses vis-à-vis these reforms is equally important (77). In combining disciplines into one field, failing to take into account the disciplinary expertise that informs pedagogy undermines reform efforts (TYCA Research Committee 227–28). In this case, the faculty felt that they had suggestions for the course content and textbook that would better prepare students for college-level work, but the tightly managed syllabus left little to no room to incorporate what they felt the new textbook lacked. The textbook became a source of tension between how to balance reading and writing, and similar to the findings of Bickerstaff and Julia Raufman (11), the Adelante faculty had not found a common text providing integrated content that balanced out reading- and writing-focused content. This was not necessarily a local problem; the faculty in this study recalled looking for textbooks at state and national conferences and looked to major educational presses for materials that had not yet been written or published.

Given the lack of adequate pedagogical tools from professional development sessions and textbooks, there emerges another source of potential faculty preparation: graduate programs. Now that INRW has been implemented in Texas and other states, graduate programs in reading and English may consider preparing graduate students by incorporating electives or training in the corresponding subject. This will enable graduate programs to be more responsive to the policies that dictate where their future graduates may end up teaching.

At both the state policymaking level and the campus-level implementation stages, this study illuminates places where faculty input could have mitigated some of the confusion and growing pains of INRW. In order to assure alignment of goals for developmental and college-level courses, faculty reflection and input is necessary. This type of input was included in the development of the San Francisco State University INRW program (Goen & Gillotte-Tropp 94) and is upheld by the TYCA Research Committee (227–28). This study adds to the literature that argues for more attention to be paid to the preparation of faculty members, both before and after program implementation, and to how policy changes support or challenge instructors' abilities to effectively teach their students. Faculty are undeniably crucial to the implementation of developmental curriculum changes, yet the research on how to aid them in such implementation efforts is thin.

## Conclusion

This study aimed to understand the experience of faculty members during the implementation of integrated reading and writing, an emerging developmental education model combining two fields related yet long separated by disciplinary divides. The faculty participants described a rollout that was filled with uncertainty, including professional development that was mainly considered useless and a tightly managed curriculum. While faculty did agree that the move toward integrated reading and writing would eventually have a positive effect on students, they still required time to adjust to the demands of the new curriculum while finding adequate materials. As this form of accelerated developmental education reform gains popularity, this study provides insight into some of the challenges faced at Adelante College and offers recommendations for how other colleges can reform their developmental education programs with greater collaboration and effectiveness.

---

While faculty did agree that the move toward integrated reading and writing would eventually have a positive effect on students, they still required time to adjust to the demands of the new curriculum while finding adequate materials.

---

## Works Cited

- Adams, Peter, et al. "The Accelerated Learning Program: Throwing Open the Gates." *Journal of Basic Writing*, vol. 28, no. 2, 2009, pp. 50–69. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/43443881.
- Bahr, Peter Riley. "Preparing the Underprepared: An Analysis of Racial Disparities in Postsecondary Mathematics Remediation." *The Journal of Higher Education*, vol. 81, no. 2, 2010, pp. 209–37. doi: 10.1080/00221546.2010.11779049.

- Bailey, Thomas, et al. "Referral, Enrollment, and Completion in Developmental Education Sequences in Community Colleges." *Economics of Education Review*, vol. 29, no. 2, 2010, pp. 255–70. doi: 10.1016/j.econedurev.2009.09.002.
- Bettinger, Eric P., et al. "Student Supports: Developmental Education and Other Academic Programs." *The Future of Children*, vol. 23, no. 2, 2013, pp. 93–115. *Jstor*, [www.jstor.org/stable/23409490](http://www.jstor.org/stable/23409490).
- Bickerstaff, Susan, and Maria S. Cormier. "Examining Faculty Questions to Facilitate Instructional Improvement in Higher Education." *Studies in Educational Evaluation*, vol. 6, 2015, pp. 74–80. doi: 10.1016/j.stueduc.2014.11.004.
- Bickerstaff, Susan, and Julia Raufman. "From 'Additive' to 'Integrative': Experiences of Faculty Teaching Developmental Integrated Reading and Writing Courses." CCRC Working Paper no. 96. Community College Research Center, Teachers College, Columbia University, 2017. [files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED577008.pdf](http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED577008.pdf).
- Bunn, Michael. "Motivation and Connection: Teaching Reading (and Writing) in the Composition Classroom." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 64, no. 3, 2013, pp. 496–516. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/43490768](http://www.jstor.org/stable/43490768).
- Edgecombe, Nikki, et al. "Accelerating the Integrated Instruction of Developmental Reading and Writing at Chabot College." CCRC Working Paper no. 71. Community College Research Center, Teachers College, Columbia University, 2014. [csrc.tc.columbia.edu/publications/accelerating-integrated-instruction-at-chabot.html](http://csrc.tc.columbia.edu/publications/accelerating-integrated-instruction-at-chabot.html).
- Engeström, Yrjö. "Activity Theory as a Framework for Analyzing and Re-designing Work." *Ergonomics*, vol. 43, no. 7, 2000, pp. 960–74. doi: 10.1080/001401300409143.
- . "Expansive Learning at Work: Toward an Activity Theoretical Reconceptualization." *Journal of Education and Work*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2001, pp. 133–56. doi: 10.1080/13639080020028747.
- Gerring, John. "What Is a Case Study and What Is It Good For?" *The American Political Science Review*, vol. 98, no. 2, 2004, pp. 341–54. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/4145316](http://www.jstor.org/stable/4145316).
- Goen, Sugie, and Helen Gillotte-Tropp. "Integrating Reading and Writing: A Response to the Basic Writing 'Crisis.'" *Journal of Basic Writing*, vol. 22, no. 2, 2003, pp. 90–113. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/43443776](http://www.jstor.org/stable/43443776).
- Grubb, W. Norton, and Helena Worthen. *Honored but Invisible: An Inside Look at Teaching in Community Colleges*. Psychology P, 1999.
- Hatch, Deryl K. "A Brief History and a Framework for Understanding Commonalities and Differences of Community College Student Success Programs." *New Directions for Community Colleges*, vol. 175, 2016, pp. 19–31. doi: 10.1002/cc.20209.

- Murray, John P. "The Current State of Faculty Development in Two-Year Colleges." *New Directions for Community Colleges*, vol. 118, 2002, pp. 89–98, doi: 10.1002/cc.67.
- Perin, Dolores, et al. "A Contextualized Intervention for Community College Developmental Reading and Writing Students. CCRC Working Paper no. 38." *Community College Research Center, Columbia University*, 2011. doi: 10.7916/D82N59D6.
- Raufman, Julia, and Hilda Barrow. "Learning to Teach Integrated Reading and Writing: Evidence from Research and Practice." *National Association of Developmental Education*, 2015. [ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/nade-2015-integrated-reading-writing.pdf](http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/nade-2015-integrated-reading-writing.pdf).
- Rutschow, Elizabeth Zachry, and Emily Schneider. *Unlocking the Gate: What We Know about Improving Developmental Education*. MDRC, 2011. [files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED521471.pdf](http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED521471.pdf).
- Saldaña, Johnny. *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*. 3rd ed., Sage, 2015.
- Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. *Developmental Education: Updates and Progress for Underprepared Students: A Report to the Texas Legislature, per Rider 42 and SB 1776, 84th Texas Legislature*. Nov. 2016.
- . *Developmental Education Accountability Measures Data*. <http://www.txhighereddata.org/index.cfm?objectId=200A40A0-E156-11E8-BB650050560100A9>.
- Twombly, Susan, and Barbara K. Townsend. "Community College Faculty: What We Know and Need to Know." *Community College Review*, vol. 36, no. 1, 2008, pp. 5–24. doi: 10.1177/0091552108319538.
- TYCA Research Committee. "TYCA White Paper on Developmental Education Reforms." *Teaching English in the Two Year College*, vol. 42, no. 3, 2015, pp. 227–43. [www.ncte.org/library/NCTEFiles/Groups/TYCA/Develop\\_Educ\\_Reforms.pdf](http://www.ncte.org/library/NCTEFiles/Groups/TYCA/Develop_Educ_Reforms.pdf).
- Yamagata-Lynch, Lisa C. "Confronting Analytical Dilemmas for Understanding Complex Human Interactions in Design-Based Research from a Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) Framework." *The Journal of the Learning Sciences*, vol. 16, no. 4, 2007, pp. 451–84. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/27736712](http://www.jstor.org/stable/27736712).
- Yin, Robert K. *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods*. Sage, 2017.

---

Erin E. Doran is an assistant professor in the Division of Higher Education at Iowa State University.

Copyright of Teaching English in the Two Year College is the property of National Council of Teachers of English and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.