Induction Symposium for New Teachers

Teachers for a New Era at Florida A&M University, in conjunction with the College of Education, sponsored the Second Annual Provost’s Induction Symposium for new teachers, held at Florida A&M University Development School (FAMU DRS) May 29-30, 2009.

The symposium covered a range of topics chosen to launch new graduates into teaching careers. Mary Diez delivered the keynote address on teacher dispositions. Two-time NEA president Reginald Weaver delivered the opening address Saturday All day Saturday, concurrent workshops covered a variety of topics useful for new teachers and teacher educators. This newsletter gives highlights of some of those workshops.

Nathaniel Johnson: Value-Added Modeling

Nathaniel Johnson

Value-Added Modeling is a concept from industrial production that uses a mathematical model to calculate the “value” a teacher adds to student learning. Value-added modeling was brought to schools as a result of No Child Left Behind’s requirement that schools report annual measures of progress.

Florida A&M University Professor of Economics Nathaniel Johnson delivered a presentation on the difficulty he has with current approaches to value-added modeling. Current approaches, he said, bring together too many variables, making it almost impossible to decipher what has influenced what.

Johnson insisted that there’s no use measuring learning until you can define it, so he defined “education” as “the production in learned persons of predefined sets of information measurable by assessment tools at the final stage of learning.”

The value-added approach hopes for a student who has accumulated “assessment value” equal to all “value added” from all “stages of production.” One goal of this approach is “to maximize the learning capacity of each student at each stage of learning production.”

Johnson said there are problems aggregating individual data to come up with meaningful results -- problems identified in “Arrow’s Impossibility Theorem.”

Johnson is working on a value-added model that focuses on fewer variables. In particular, he is addressing the problem of matching: “If student quality exceeds teacher quality,” Johnson asked, “what are we measuring?”

His objective is to come up with a theory in which “everyone knows exactly what we are measuring and how.”

Johnson is looking for measurable ways to answer the question, “What do teachers DO?”

But with the hard-edged realism that comes from quantitative research, Johnson concluded, “We may even find out that value-added modeling in education does not apply.”
Ruth Hall on Grant Writing

In "Teacher as Entrepreneur," consultant Ruth Hall coached the audience on grants and how to apply for them.

She started by emphasizing that a grant is a legal, conditional contract: If I give you my money, you must do X, Y, Z.

Grant opportunities are announced through an RFP, a Request for Proposal -- which might also be called an announcement, outline, application, bid, invitation, notice, or request.

What to Include
All proposals contain the same basic information:

Who the grant activity is for.
What are you going to do.
When you will do the grant activities.
Where you will do the grant activities.
How are you going to do this.
Why -- This is the reason for the grant.

Keep it simple. Be clear. Make sure what you have written describes what you want to do, because a successful grant becomes a contract that obligates you to perform.

Making a Good Proposal
Find something you're mad about. Then ask, If I had to fix it, here's what I would do.

Your application needs a compelling story. What will make your proposal different?
Partnerships are essential. A university that wants to work with underserved communities, for example, needs to partner with organizations that work with that clientele. You can't carry out large grants alone.

The scope of work needs to be specific. And it has to be measurable.

The Evaluation
Provide three ways of evaluating the grant. In an afterschool program, for example, you might use attendance data, a parent survey, and increases in the scores on an achievement test.

Never depend on just one method of evaluation. Finally -- and this is important -- try to bring someone from the outside to evaluate the project, so you won't be evaluating yourself.

Salaries are another area that requires careful attention. You can pay yourself on a grant, but not too much. Never let more than 20% of the money go for salaries. About another 10% can be consultants.

Because there was far too much material to cover in the time available, Hall gave attendees a CD with links to granting agencies and a handbook on applying for grants.

Kathleen Rogers: How Schools Are Judged

“Kathleen Rogers is principal of the only middle or high school in Leon County that has maintained or increased its FCAT scores in eight areas.”

Kathleen Rogers is principal of the only middle or high school in Leon County that has maintained or increased its FCAT scores in eight areas. She gave a presentation on how they went about it.

“You've got to know what you are working with,” she said. “The devil's in the details.”

At the end of each year, public schools are given two kinds of scores: the AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress toward meeting state goals) standard set by No Child Left Behind, and the school’s "grade" (from A to F).

The two scores are different, they have different criteria, and they are influenced by different factors within the school. Rogers' message was that a school has to understand what is being measured, and how, and exactly what it needs to change in order to make the necessary scores.

In order to meet the AYP, a school must meet 39 criteria (!) If any one criterion is not met, the school has not made AYP.

If the school does not meet all 39 criteria, however, but is performing at the A or B level,
Mary Moore: Professional Learning Communities

One of the most promising innovations in higher education today, according to Mary Moore, is the professional learning community. The University of Miami has faculty learning communities as part of the way it fulfills SACs requirements. Florida State University uses student learning communities to get students to collaborate.

Teachers have always collaborated, but the professional learning community is based on continuous, structured teacher collaboration. And collaboration, in Moore’s approach, is considered "a systematic process in which we work together interdependently to analyze and impact professional practice in order to improve our individual and collective results." A major objective is to overcome the widespread culture of teacher isolation.

How can we re-culture schools? Schools must overcome the culture of teacher isolation. Teachers must learn to work in effective, high performing teams.

What are professional learning communities?

- Team members who regularly collaborate
- Members are guided by a clear and compelling vision
- A shift from focus on teaching to focus on learning
- Committed to continuous improvement
- Shared mission, vision, and values
- Collective inquiry into best practice and current reality
- Action oriented: move quickly to turn aspirations into action and visions into reality.

Advantages of professional learning communities:

- Gains in student achievement
- Higher quality solutions to problems
- Increased confidence among staff
- Mutual support for teachers’ strengths and help for weaknesses
- Ability to test new ideas
- More support for new teachers
- Expanded pool of ideas, materials, methods
- Focus on the student.
- Being open with methods and materials.

- Ability to address cultural issues.
- Not all students learn at the same rate. Not all students understand the same things from a lesson. There are many ways to teach a lesson.
- DRIP syndrome: We are data rich and information poor.
- We need to do comparative analyses of student performance.


Kathleen Rogers, Cont’d

then the school will be awarded a "provisional" AYP status.

"It is very difficult to make AYP," Rogers said. Many schools that achieve an A grade still fail to meet the criteria for AYP. Instead of studying A schools, she said, "maybe we should be studying B and C schools that have made AYP."

Rogers found that "writing is the gate-keeper" to making AYP. Rogers had the school tracking every student’s value in the AYP computations. In some cases, one student may affect the school’s AYP computations by being in several different subgroups – e.g., black male AND economically disadvantaged AND learning disability. Identifying these students was important to understanding what influenced the school’s scores.

Schools tend to say after completing the FCAT, so Rogers had teachers all make a 45-day plan to cover the remaining school year.

At the time of the symposium, Rogers had been principal of Belleview for 19 months. Belleview is slated to close in February, 2010. It usually takes three years, Rogers said, to turn a school around.

PAGE 3
Edward Tolliver on Young Black Males

Tolliver is director of the Black Male College Explorers Program at FAMU. This is an at-risk prevention/intervention program designed to prevent black males from dropping out of high school, help them get into college, and increase their chances of earning a college degree.

It draws students from middle and high schools in Tallahassee and surrounding areas.

This program takes black males in grades 7 through 11 through six weeks of highly concentrated developmental experiences, which includes weekly seminars, workshops and motivational trips, during the summer.

The program significantly increases their chances of earning a degree: 85% of the young men who have gone through this program have graduated from high school. "We are not running a summer camp. We are running an academic program." They are in class from 8 to 4, Monday through Thursday, then they spend evenings in the library in study sessions. Friday serves as a personal development day.

The program has an emphasis on science, math, arts (including culinary and performing), reading, and technology.

During the rest of the school year, a team of school and community leaders provide support services to these students. Tolliver recruits volunteers from many sources.

Faces of some of the engaged participants in the Induction Symposium.
Induction Symposium — List of Presentations

**Friday, May 29th**
Opening Session: Dispositions.
Dr. Mary Diez, Alverno College.
"Buzz," Theatrical Presentation.
Brooke Haycock, Education Trust.

**Saturday, May 30th**
Opening Session: Reginald Weaver.
Maximizing the Potential of African American Males...It’s Possible. Dr. Brenda Jarmon, FAMU. Facilitator: Dr. Tony Manson.
The Teacher as An Entrepreneur. Dr. Ruth Hall, Educational Consultant, Tampa. Facilitator: Isiah Brown, FAMU.
Engaging in an Action Research Learning Community. Dr. Henry Thomas, University of North Florida. Facilitator: Dr. Mark Howse, Bethune Cookman University.
Value Added/Learning Growth. Dr. Nathaniel Johnson, FAMU.

**What Difference Does it Make?**
Kathleen Rodgers, Principal, Leon County Schools. Facilitator: Dr. Janet Hurlock-Dick, University of North Florida.
Data Mining for Classroom Teachers. Michelle Hughes, Program Specialist, Florida Department of Education. Facilitator: Dr. Eugenia Russell Florida Memorial University.
Making a Difference in Quality Teaching and Student Achievement. Shirley Proctor Paul, NBCT, Leon County Schools. Developing a Take One! Learning Community. Tracey Hall, Marilyn Carter, Cheryl Hall Lewis, Florida A&M University, TNE Master Practitioners. Facilitator: Dr. Idriss Abdoulaye, Florida Memorial University.
Teacher Panel Discussion. Facilitated by Reginald Weaver. Enhancing Learning...An Efficacy Model. Dr. Gerald Grow, FAMU. What is a Professional Learning Community? Dr. Mary Moore, FAMU. Facilitator: Dr. Helena Waldron, Bethune Cookman University.
Parental Involvement — It’s Essential. Dr. Mildred Berry, Florida Memorial University. Facilitator: Almeta Washington, FAMU.

Grant Writing 101. Dr. Nancy Fontaine, FAMU, TNE. Facilitator: Dr. Serena Roberts, FAMU, TNE.
An Educational Exploration of the Critical Issues Affecting African American Males in Florida. Dr. Edward Tolliver, FAMU. Facilitator: Dr. Charles Ervin, FAMU.

Quality Teaching Policy Development. Dr. Henry Thomas, University of North Florida. Deloris Harpool, FAMU, TNE. Facilitator: Dr. Henry William, FAMU.

---

The Induction Symposium ran on Friday from 4 to 8 and Saturday from 7:30 to 5.