The Basic Skills Initiative & Foothill College Self-Assessment
Section D: Instructional Practices Findings & Recommendations

Data Collection:
- Data was collected predominantly from the Math and English departments, and from the Business and Social Sciences Division.
  - Math data was collected through a group discussion held during an on-campus, faculty pedagogy course.
  - English data was collected through a discussion held during a scheduled department meeting.
  - Business and Social Science Division data was collected through research surveys that went out to all divisions.
- Research surveys went out to all divisions on campus. This survey consisted of nine, open-ended questions about whether or not instructors apply particular practices in their courses and how they apply these practices. The survey focused on effective practices D.1.1, D.1.2, D.4.1, D.5.3, D.6.1, D.6.2, D.8.1, D.9.1 and D.9.2.
- A total of 7 surveys were returned; no electronic copies were returned.

Findings:
- The limited amount of surveys returned demonstrate the need to gather future data through a more strategic effort where faculty and staff meet face to face to discuss basic skills in a department or division meeting.
- Surveys returned were self-selected; those instructors who responded to the survey are the same instructors who are familiar with basic skills needs and more likely to use these effective practices in the classroom.
- Definitions of terms difficult and/or varied:
  - Instructors, in general, don’t appear to have a clear sense of what Culturally Responsive teaching theory and practices are or how to incorporate them into their instructional methods.
  - Faculty articulate strategies that work from a practitioner’s point of view, but had difficulty connecting/articulating how these strategies reflect specific theory. Generally reflects an unfamiliarity with the language of learning theory.
    - E.g., math had questions relating to the definition of learning theory, or what constitutes learning theory.
  - Understanding of how effective instructional practices work together was difficult for some faculty.
    - E.g., Faculty (Math) asserted that there is a direct conflict between “highly structured” learning and “self-directed” learning. Faculty also suggested that basic skills students were in need of structure, not self-direction. “Self-directed” was an unfamiliar term.
What is working?

- As demonstrated by the existence of pedagogy courses offered in both math and English departments, it is clear that faculty are interested and actively participating in professional growth opportunities to improve teaching methodologies and strategies that benefit basic skills students. Those who have not had these opportunities have expressed a strong interest in doing so.
- Many instructors who do work with basic skills students are attempting to collaborate with other on-campus resources to support students academically.

Recommendations:

- Institutionally supported and on-going opportunities for faculty collaboration
  - External and internal incentives for participation
  - Opening Day session on Basic Skills – define basic skills, etc.
- Institutionally supported training in the effective practices learning theories and strategies
  - Professional development and flex days
  - Workshops on current learning theories and pedagogy
  - Increased opportunities to share pedagogical and instructional practice and expectations between basic skills courses and courses not traditionally associated with basic skills
- Campus-wide pedagogy committee or taskforce made up of faculty who are interested in learning communities and cross disciplinary collaborations to organize/facilitate collaboration:
  - Committee can be made up of faculty and administration to coordinate and schedule collaborations
  - Reassigned time to organize/co-develop cross-disciplinary collaboration
- Develop central faculty meeting place for informal collaborations
  - Faculty library of materials/methodologies/theories