

BRIEF descriptions of DE courses

RD 80. Students are not print-oriented. Though they can read at a very low high school level, many have never read a book. They have limited ability to persist with a text and their comprehension skills are limited, but they often don't realize it.

RD 90. Though students grow more confident with print material, they possess limited general knowledge. Comprehension, analysis, and retention of college-level material are poor. There is some improvement in reading frequency and persistence.

RD 115. Students develop critical reading skills and apply them to excerpts from college-level texts. They need to continue building vocabulary, speed, and comprehension. They have become fairly good at monitoring their own skills.

WR 80. Students practice writing well-developed paragraphs and sometimes short essays. They are introduced to campus computer resources and encouraged to word-process. Errors are pervasive and sentence structure is limited.

WR 90. Students practice multi-paragraph essays with main idea and support and variety in sentence structure. Word processing is required. Though grammar is a big focus, errors persist at the end of the term.

WR 115. By the end of WR 115, students should be able to write essays 2-3 pages in length with confidence. Students work further on writing skills by reading critically, responding to texts, and writing for different audiences. They may practice paraphrasing, quotation, and documentation.

Characteristics of Developmental Students and Instructional Accommodations

by Kathleen T. McWhorter

(from her *Guide to College Reading*, instructor's edition, 3rd ed. (New York: HarperCollins, 1993))

Developmental Education [DE] students exhibit unique learning characteristics, behaviors, and attitudes that must be recognized in order for the instructor to provide effective reading and writing skill instruction. The most prevalent characteristics are described here, along with practical suggestions for adapting instruction to respond to these characteristics.

Negative Self-Image

Many DE students hold a negative academic self-image and regard themselves as failures. This may be largely a result of numerous failures they have experienced in previous educational settings. Many students think of themselves as unable to learn or to compete in academic situations. Consistent, then, with their past history, they expect little of themselves and demand little of those around them.

Instructional Accommodation Assignments, especially initial ones in the course, should be designed so that the student experiences success. The first opportunity to practice a newly learned skill should also demonstrate success.

Passive Approach to Learning

Partly because of their lack of experience in and success with academic environments, DE students often exhibit a passive approach to learning. They seldom ask questions or initiate action to solve problems. Instead, they follow procedures as well as they are able to understand them, wait to be told what to do, and take little action without specific direction.

Instructional Accommodation Class discussions that require involvement and problem solving are useful in encouraging or shaping more active learning. Often a forthright discussion of active vs. passive learning characteristics is effective.

Short Attention Span

Many DE students exhibit a very short attention span: they are unable or unaccustomed to focusing their attention at length on a particular task or assignment.

Instructional Accommodation Lengthy lectures and extended discussions are ineffective. Rather, try to incorporate several activities into each class session. For example, a class session might be structured as follows: review and discuss answers to an assigned reading selection (twenty minutes), finish exercises within a previously assigned chapter (fifteen minutes), and introduce a new chapter and outline its content (ten minutes).