

Record keeping was also problematic, because grades were based only on mastery of outcomes as reflected in compositions, oral presentations, and tests. To provide more feedback, we designed a "unit reporting form" for parents that allowed us to comment on attendance, work habits, behavior, and homework. This form also served as a management tool; it was distributed to students at the beginning of every unit so they could chart their own progress and take responsibility for their own success. Although cumbersome to fill out, this report became a more precise indicator of student performance than conventional report cards.

Other efforts to expand opportunities for success included urging students to complete work and to come for extra help, phoning parents, and occasionally making ourselves available on non-teaching days.

Frustrations and Rewards

In spite of the frustrations of time pressures, greater planning work, and adapting outcome-based principles to an existing curriculum and timetable, our reorganization has resulted in better teaching and better learning. For us, student appreciation of our extra efforts has been a major reward. One student, who had spent one and a half hours after school remediating a lesson on sentence structure, walked out the door saying, "Thank you. I never understood it before."

And we all have stories of students for whom OBE English has made a major difference: Miguel, a bright student newly arrived in this country who needed extra time to learn his second language; Jerome, who needed extra support to deal with a minor learning disability; Jessica, who was elated to discover that she could earn B's when given a chance to re-test.

On the other hand, we had to face the reality that some students refuse to learn. For students with ingrained self-defeating belief systems or behavior patterns, expanded opportunity does not mean infinite opportunity; they may not succeed no matter how much time and help we offer.

On that semester's final exam, the average score of students in the OBE sections was several percentage points higher than the average of those in non-OBE sections. At semester's end, not only was the unsatisfactory grade of D missing in our final reports, the number of failures was fewer than in previous years. Given our own satisfaction and the success of our students, none of us will go back to our old way of doing things. □

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— A. DAVID BRIGGS —

Alhambra High: A "High Success" School

A small-scale OBE program at Alhambra High School in Phoenix, Arizona, has improved students' attendance and motivation and has sparked schoolwide interest in the program.

Alhambra High School, where I am principal, is an active participant in William Spady's High Success Program. Our school, located in Phoenix, Arizona, has a student population of 2,400 and a certificated staff of 135 (average age: 51). In 1987, 18 teachers, representing various subject areas, volunteered to apply the philosophy and operational principles of Outcome-Based Education as described by Spady.

Early Results

These teachers defined the intended

outcomes for their courses and units, carefully aligned their tests and performance criteria with those outcomes, provided students with second chances and extra time to demonstrate the outcomes successfully, and raised their expectations for the minimum acceptable performance. The district allowed these teachers released time to prepare their units and lessons.

During the first year of implementation, success stories spread through the faculty. The participating teachers reported increases in their students' attendance, motivation, attention to

course work, self-esteem, and confidence. A much higher proportion of students than usual earned A's and B's in their classes. Organizing for results has really paid off for these 18 teachers—and for students, who have made comments like the following:

- "Teachers definitely work harder at helping you learn."
- "I now know that I am capable of doing better than I have done in the past."
- "Having more than one chance to learn and do well has made a big difference in my work."

Photograph Courtesy A. David Briggs



At Alhambra High School, Phoenix, Arizona, teachers have seen the rewards of focusing on outcomes despite the stranglehold of clock and calendar

From my perspective, the improvement lies in the renewed commitment and enthusiasm of a veteran staff, the concerted effort to teach with a focus on student learning rather than covering content on a fixed schedule, and the much greater awareness of the importance of outcomes in designing curriculum, instruction, and testing. We are developing a formal database to document these impressive results.

More to Achieve

But, when we consider the full meaning of the outcome-based program, we know we have a long way to go. The calendar, the schedule, and the clock continue to have a stranglehold on almost everything we do. Many staff members and parents still believe that students should be given only fixed amounts of time and single opportunities to learn, regardless of their learning needs. They also believe that

The participating teachers reported increases in their students' attendance, motivation, attention to course work, self-esteem, and confidence.

a fundamental purpose of schooling is to sort and select, rather than to ensure "success for all." In addition, many teachers are still bound by their textbooks and the belief that keeping on schedule is their real job regardless

of the performance of some students. To cap it off, the Carnegie unit continually reminds us that seat time rather than learning is the real definer of credit and determiner of student advancement.

The good news is that our teachers have shown a continued willingness to organize for results. Because participating teachers have shared their enthusiasm with their peers, and because changes in student attitudes and achievement have been apparent throughout the school, an additional 54 staff members have indicated interest in the program by registering for summer design and development workshops. Outcome-Based Education has a secure future in our school. □

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