

Benefits of Using the *NADE Self-Evaluation Guides* for Program Development, Improvement, and Evaluation

Jane Neuburger

In its original inception, the NADE certification effort—now the NADE accreditation process—was and is based on the processes used by regional accrediting agencies. It remains an exceptionally strong way to prepare for regional accreditation, and use of the *NADE Self-Evaluation Guides* for an internal self-study is one of the fundamental steps for NADE accreditation. More on the actual accreditation process may be found in this *Digest* and at www.nadeaccreditation.net.

However, any program director may choose to use the *Guides* with or without application for accreditation. Why would this be a good idea? Simply put, the *NADE Self-Evaluation Guides* are a compendium of best practices in four areas: Tutoring Services, Course-based Learning Assistance, the Teaching & Learning Process, and Developmental Coursework, also recently known as transitional, co-requisite, accelerated, or bridge programs, all of which are preparatory-to-college post-secondary coursework. Each of these *Guides*—chapters, if you will—has over 100 listed best practices, some deemed essential and others recommended, gleaned by a canvass of those in the field and from workshops across the nation to ensure the continuing validity of salient points.

Each *Guide*, used singly or together, provides a blueprint for developing a program, a reminder of essential items in revamping a program, and/or items to consider for annual or long-term planning. Used for departmental discussions, it provides a non-threatening method to include pertinent stakeholders in assessing programs, evaluating strengths, and mapping out areas in need of improvement. In today's push to improve student outcomes, we look to numbers and percentages. The *NADE Guides* provides a detailed framework of *how* to improve those numbers and percentages: what instructional practices might be promoting success, what policies might be hindering progress, what intra- and inter-office communications might assist in increasing student success and outcomes, or what kinds of administrative support could be most cost-effective? Actively comparing program and institutional practices to the *Guides'* compendium of best practices helps to direct discussion on program practices and policy. Investing in and using the *Guides* can be one of the best things a pro-

gram's faculty and staff can do to improve success rates, ensure student learning, and maintain program quality.

As Martha Maxwell, pioneer in our field, said in the forward of the 1995 version of the *Guides*, “This book represents a significant step toward increasing the professionalization of Developmental Education and Learning Assistance Programs. . . . Self-study comprises the initial step of almost all academic accreditation efforts Readers should find the guides helpful in many ways: for planning, developing, maintaining, evaluating and improving their programs.” (p. iii).

There is an enormous benefit to having external validation of one's program. While full validation is embedded in the NADE accreditation process, the process begins with simply using the *Guides* for self-study. Even in its inception, people using the *Guides* reported back to NADE that “certification. . . encouraged their programs to be included as key players in decision-making processes that affect their program, a process they were otherwise excluded from in the past.” (Materniak, G. (2000, 28 April). LRNASST. Retrieved from <https://lists.ufl.edu/archives/lrnasst-l.html>).

For instance, what policies and practices might need to be examined in your institution, to be sure that “The [developmental program] works with academic departments to assure that the content, scope, and learning outcomes of the [developmental] curriculum are aligned with subsequent courses in the college curriculum” (*Guides*, p. 45) or that “Varied modes of access to tutoring are available to meet diverse needs of students (*Guides*, p. 91)? Consider for a moment, how just these two criterion statements—out of many—might impact student success outcomes, and you can understand how using the *Guides* for reflection can provide you with the “things to address” that will impact those success rates.

I've had personal experience in using the *Guides* in two separate colleges—one, a two-year college growing into a four-year college, and the other, a research institution. Although I did focus on the section of the *Guides* most pertinent to a given program, I did use parts of all four of the *Guides* to plot annual goals and subsequent reports on

those goals; in considering changes in my own teaching; in directing and teaching developmental reading; in advising; and in directing learning assistance services. I used the criterion statements in discussions with my upper administrators. I used them in discussions with faculty and academic departments when setting up targeted tutoring services. In fact, as chair of program accreditation across campus, I found the *Guides* indispensable for *any* program, not only academic support (if one takes out the words “developmental,” the *Guides* are applicable to any program).

In the two-year school, I inherited a set of wonderful para-professional tutors who had been hired for their content expertise. Together, we first explored the recommended topics for CRLA tutor training to compile materials—books and journals—for individualized professional development. We then investigated selected sections in the *Guides for Tutoring Services* to determine where improvements were most needed; I then had a unified and cohesive set of requests—backed by a national set of best practices—to bring to division administrators. Definitely, some of the criterion statements led us to consider items we’d not thought of before: Were all the paraprofessional tutors able to access campus personnel training on the campus shut-down emergency plan? Was compensation for the part-time tutors commensurate with other para-professional positions on campus? Did we have a “code” to use if we felt threatened or in trouble when working with an individual student? Other criterion statements were focused on the quality of the services and professional development support for continuous improvement. I used the expert voices provided in the *Guides* to collect and distribute readings paralleling the topics described in CRLA Tutor Training; to improve the distribution of human resource and safety materials on a variety of topics; and to ensure that salaries were commensurate with other, similar paraprofessional positions at the college. I used the areas in the *Guides* to find out staff members’ thoughts on how things operated, both in the tutoring center and in the college. What a great and non-threatening vehicle to provide a voice in how things might be improved!

As the college changed from a two-year to a four-year school, the tutoring center began to add peer tutors to what had been a strictly para-professional tutoring staff, and we considered adding services for specific, difficult courses. As I created program goals for each coming year, the *Guides* provided the direction and the words to use. I could not have found a more helpful set of guidelines, and I have no doubt at all that the improvements we made led to better tutoring and better tutoring results. We saw increased demand for services, higher faculty satisfaction, and most importantly, increased percentages of students

who reported that “tutoring helped my learning” and “tutoring helped increase my grade.”

In the second instance, the research university, I used the *Guides* to develop an existing learning support program into one that more than tripled contacts and paved the way to begin assessing outcomes for tutoring received in specific courses. As in many large schools, tutoring services were spread across campus; each school/college had its own learning support programs and very strong advising programs, as did the athletic department. For students, it was difficult to determine which service to use, and the professional staff and advisors had a steep learning curve to know what services were available where, when, and for whom. And, those services changed each term. The first order of business, then, was to establish connections across campus and bring all the various voices together to simply know what each department offered. I used some of the dean’s funds to host several simple luncheons and used selected portions of the *Guides* to facilitate discussions of what each of us were doing, where we might collaborate, and what common issues we faced. In NADE Accreditation, we say that accreditation provides a voice to validate and demonstrate the value of what you and your program do for students and for your institution. In this instance, I found that the *Guides* contributed to providing me a voice on campus, and others could see how using the *Guides* would validate their programs’ efforts to provide valuable service to students and the university. (Later, the accreditation processes helped me establish assessment practices as well.)

As a result of these (and other) meetings, the group came to consensus on using only writing-center approved consultants for assistance in writing, assigning common training for tutors (to be handled in my center), collaborating on hiring standards and peer wages and increases. The honors program instituted tutoring as part of their students’ potential service projects; and my center and the athletic center collaborated on the hiring and salary bands for professional tutors. The near-by medical university used my center’s expertise to start a program for tutoring first-year medical students and training their honors students for appropriate assistance. The grant programs—TRIO and state grant programs—looked to my center for tutor selections, training, and providing the bulk of services. While I certainly had gained quite a bit of professional knowledge by the time I was hired for this position, I have no doubt that the *Guides* contributed to establishing that “outside expert voice” that helped me maximize opportunities to improve learning assistance across campus and consolidate services where possible.

And of course, early work with the *Guides* led me to join and then chair the ethics and standards committee

of our own NADE state chapter of NYCLSA (New York College Learning Skills Association). That led to sending suggestions to the NADE committee on the *Guides*, which led to joining the NADE Certification Board, which led to my continuing involvement with the NADE Accreditation Commission. Let me simply add comments from a recent NADE Accreditation Institute, where the Commission provides a full-day training on the application process for NADE accreditation. Only part of that is about using the *Guides*, but here are samples of what people say:

- The self-study will help me see what we can work on to improve our program.
- I learned that self-study is absolutely crucial to the program's development!

- I need to look at my data to see where improvements is needed. Then, I will write goals on improving outcomes. But I will use the *Guides* to create Action Plans to get us there!

So yes, the *NADE Self-Evaluation Guides* have been central to my professional life, on many levels. I hope they can be in yours, too.

Jane Neuburger is recently retired as the director of the Syracuse University Tutoring & Study Center in Syracuse, New York. She has been active in both the New York College Learning Skills Association as well as NADE, and is a long-time member of the Accreditation Commission. She is a past president of NADE and a CLADEA Fellow.

The Journey Toward NADE Accreditation: Investments Reap Benefits

Stephanie Kratz

Fall 2016 saw the completion of a multi-year process for my program as we completed our application for NADE accreditation. Happily, our application was approved, and as of February 2018, the developmental English program at Heartland Community College will be accredited. I won't lie: this rosy picture looks nicer from this side of all the work it entailed. The accreditation application was rigorous to be sure. But the benefits for the faculty, the college, and our students have been remarkable.

The multi-year process began in 2009 when English faculty reviewed data from the National Community College Benchmark Project. The data showed low success rates and poor persistence from developmental into college-level courses. As a member of the Developmental English Redesign Team, I studied various models of developmental English programs across the country. Research led us to a model of accelerated developmental education called the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) which was first developed at the Community College of Baltimore County. Several characteristics of the ALP model impressed us, and the redesign group decided to adopt an accelerated program at HCC.

Substantial institutional resources were afforded to us. We participated in a course redesign academy and attended the Conference on Acceleration in Developmental Education. The college invested in better institutional data reporting, in large part because of our requests for

accurate data for the accreditation process. I created a new course, trained faculty, launched the small (four-section) pilot, facilitated course adjustments, and eventually moved to program-wide implementation of ALP.

To describe my program's journey in NADE terms, the ALP implementation became our primary Action Project. Documentation of the baseline and comparative data, while tedious for an English teacher like me who thinks in words instead of numbers, was revealing and informative. Take falling withdrawal rates, for instance. Since the implementation of ALP, the number of students who withdraw from our developmental English classes has been cut in half. Furthermore, the ALP students actually have a lower drop-out rate than the regular college-level students with whom they sit in a co-requisite course. Similarly, we have also seen a significant improvement in success: nearly a 10% increase.

Not all of the data showed such dramatic improvements. For instance, developmental students are less likely to pass the college-level course than regular college-level students. However, we are confident that our trends from pre- to post-action project are moving in the right direction. All new programs will hit some bumps in the road, and we will continue to self-assess and revise as needed. Part of continuing NADE accreditation, for instance, encourages monitoring the data over time, allowing for small data sets