Preparing Dual Enrollment Students and Young Adults for the Workforce by Fostering Self-Regulation in the Classroom: Strategies and Applications
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Community college educators often express concern regarding the challenges faced by dual enrollment students (ages 14-18) and young adults (ages 18-24) in adhering to academic deadlines. Traditional academic policies and syllabi often include strict rules against late submission of work, emphasizing maintaining rigorous timelines. While a score in the gradebook may serve as a motivational tool to encourage timely submissions, they do not gauge the students' competency or mastery over the subject matter. Rather, they evaluate a student's ability to self-regulate and meet deadlines. As faculty shift our focus towards preparing these students for the workforce, it is important to separate these two metrics: mastery of subject matter and self-regulation capabilities.

The role of community college educators is integral in acknowledging the significance of self-regulation as a tool to manage time and set appropriate priorities effectively. It is critical to note that self-regulation is not an inherent skill that students obtain as they enroll in college. Instead, it is a capacity nurtured gradually, often not reaching its peak until the later stages of adulthood.

Understanding early childhood development, individuals readily accept that toddlers are still learning language skills and might not communicate in grammatically correct sentences. This understanding stems from an awareness of a toddler's ongoing brain development. Adults provide a supportive environment where they can learn and grow, correcting their errors with empathy and patience. The same principle should be applied in the context of teaching self regulation and time-management skills to community college students. Faculty should scaffold expectations and implement systems that equip students with the necessary skills to manage their time and set priorities efficiently. This scaffolding should be designed to progressively challenge the students until they reach established milestones based on their self-regulating ability.

In this way, faculty are not only preparing students for the next test or semester but equipping them with the self-regulation skills necessary for the workforce and lifelong success. These skills are not just about getting assignments in on time but about developing the capacity to manage tasks and priorities effectively in any future professional setting.

Defining Self-Regulation for Young Adults

Self-regulation refers to an individual's ability to monitor, control, and direct their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors to achieve personal goals (Zimmerman, 2002). It involves setting goals, planning actions, monitoring progress, and adjusting behavior as needed (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2011).

Self-regulation is a critical skill for academic success, as it enables students to manage their time effectively, maintain focus, and persist in the face of challenges (Pintrich, 2000). It is also closely related to motivation, metacognition, and self-

efficacy, which are all essential for learning and achievement (Schunk & Ertmer, 2000).

Self-regulation becomes even more crucial in online learning environments, where students often have more autonomy and less direct supervision. Students must manage their time effectively, stay motivated, and seek help when needed (student agency), which can be challenging without the structure and support provided in traditional classroom settings. Student agency refers to students' autonomy, control, and active participation in their learning process. It involves students taking responsibility for their educational experiences, setting goals, making choices, and engaging in self-regulation and self-assessment (Schunk & Greene, 2018).

Factors that Contribute to Self-Regulation Difficulties in Young Adults Developmental Factors

The prefrontal cortex, responsible for executive functions such as planning, decision making, and impulse control, continues to develop throughout early adulthood (Casey et al., 2008). As a result, young adults may experience difficulties with self-regulation due to ongoing brain maturation (Steinberg, 2005). College students' perceived reluctance to plan appropriately may not stem from a refusal to do so; rather, their planning abilities could be hindered by their brains not yet fully developed and a lack of exposure to co-regulation, which contributes to developing this cognitive function.

Personal Factors

Individual differences in temperament, personality, and cognitive abilities can also influence self-regulation (Rothbart & Bates, 2006). For instance, students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) may have greater difficulty with impulse control and maintaining focus (Barkley, 2015). Furthermore, the online environment provides several opportunities for distractions that do not exist in traditional classroom settings.

Mindset Factors

In addition to the developmental, personal, and environmental factors discussed above, students' mindsets also play an important role in their self-regulation abilities (Dweck, 2006). Individuals with a fixed mindset believe intelligence or talent is an innate trait that cannot be changed. As a result, they are more likely to avoid challenges and give up easily when facing setbacks. On the other hand, those with a growth mindset view abilities as malleable through effort and practice. This growth mindset fosters persistence, resilience, and self-regulation in the face of obstacles (Blackwell et al., 2007).

Faculty can help cultivate a growth mindset in students by praising effort over inherent intelligence, modeling their own learning processes, and framing challenges as opportunities for growth rather than indications of fixed ability (Yeager et al., 2019). Promoting a growth mindset helps students see their skills and abilities as changeable, supporting the development of critical self-regulation competencies. Table 1 provides examples comparing the responses of students with growth and fixed mindsets when encountering various situations.

Environmental Factors

The home, school, and social environments impact a dual enrollment student or young adult's ability to develop and apply self-regulation skills. Factors such as family dynamics, peer pressure, and access to resources can support or hinder self-regulation development (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998). The digital social environment in the last decade has increased the impact of environmental factors on a young college student's ability to develop and apply self-regulation skills (Greenfield, 2009). For instance, multitasking across various digital platforms can negatively affect students' focus and attention, making it more challenging for them to self regulate their learning process. A college student living in an environment with external distractions and a lack of family support may contribute to a lack of focus on schoolwork. This environment is prevalent among first-generation college students.

Table 1
Growth Mindset versus Fixed Mindset Responses

Situation	Growth Mindset Response	Fixed Mindset Response
Struggling to understand a concept	"I will keep trying different strategies until I master this concept."	"I'm not good at understanding concepts like this."
Receiving critical feedback	"This feedback will help me improve my skills."	"This means I don't have the natural ability."
Facing an obstacle	"I will look for ways to overcome this obstacle through effort and help from others."	"I want to give up because this obstacle means I can't succeed."
Seeing others succeed	"Their success inspires me to keep developing my abilities."	"They must be naturally smarter or more talented than me."
Setback on an assignment	"I will learn from this experience so I can improve next time."	"I failed because I'm not good at this."

Faculty's Role in Co-Regulation

Faculty teaching and interacting with dual enrollment students and young adults must recognize that young students may have never had proper co-regulation to develop self regulation skills. Co-regulation is a concept that refers to the interactive process between an individual and their social partners (e.g., parents, instructors, peers) to support the development and maintenance of self-regulation skills. Co-regulation involves a combination of guidance, modeling, feedback, and emotional support provided by the social partner to help individuals regulate their behavior, emotions, and cognition (Hadley et al., 2015). College faculty may assume the K-12 school system has provided co-regulation, but that is often a false assumption, and faculty must be prepared to meet students where they are and guide them to where they need to be.

The concept of co-regulation highlights the importance of social contexts and interpersonal relationships in developing self-regulation. It acknowledges that self-regulation is not solely an individual skill but is also influenced by social interactions and environmental factors (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Co-regulation emphasizes the importance of establishing relationships with students because students are more likely to develop long-lasting self-regulation skills when faculty and staff develop interpersonal relationships with students.

Building strong relationships with students is crucial for fostering self-regulation, as these connections create a supportive environment in which students can learn and grow. When faculty and staff invest time and effort into getting to know their students on a personal level, they can better understand each student's unique needs and challenges. This, in turn, allows educators to provide tailored guidance and resources to help students develop effective self-regulation strategies. Furthermore, a positive rapport between students and educators can boost motivation, engagement, and a sense of belonging, all of which contribute to the overall success of students in their academic and personal lives. By prioritizing the establishment of meaningful relationships with students, faculty and staff can play a vital role in fostering the long-lasting self-regulation skills essential for success in the workforce.

Strategies for Supporting Self-Regulation in Dual Enrollment Students and Young Adults

Recognizing the role of self-regulation, coregulation, and metacognition in a student's ability to manage deadlines and due dates in college courses is crucial for addressing this issue in learning. Community college faculty have long appreciated that their job extends beyond simply teaching content. As such, educators should not only explain self-regulation to

students but also emphasize the importance of metacognition—the ability to reflect on and monitor one's learning process—as a critical component of self-regulation. Faculty can better support their student's growth in these areas by reframing the development of self-regulation and metacognition as essential skills. To further highlight their significance, faculty may consider identifying self regulation skill development and metacognitive awareness as secondary learning objectives on the course syllabus.

Faculty can foster self-regulation in a non-punitive way while scaffolding student behavior to meet expectations. Developing self-regulation skills is crucial for students to succeed academically and personally, particularly in online learning environments. To support students in cultivating these essential skills, educators can implement various evidence-based strategies that foster goal setting, planning, time management, self-monitoring, and reflection. These strategies not only empower students to take control of their learning process but also promote the development of critical soft skills that are invaluable in today's fast-paced, ever-evolving world. By incorporating these strategies into the curriculum and providing ongoing guidance, community college faculty can help students navigate their college courses effectively, overcome challenges, and ultimately achieve their desired outcomes.

Goal Setting and Planning

Instruct students in creating SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time bound) goals and developing detailed action plans that outline steps, deadlines, resources needed, and potential obstacles. Provide examples differentiating vague goals from SMART goals. Review students' weekly SMART goals and action plans, giving feedback to ensure they meet the criteria. Ask students to regularly evaluate their progress on goals, adjusting plans as needed. End each week with self-reflection on their performance and obstacles faced. Periodically, have students analyze how their short-term SMART goals contribute to long-term definitions of personal growth and success. Implementing this scaffolded, structured model for weekly SMART goal-setting and reflection (see Appendix A) can enhance students' motivation, focus, persistence, and self-regulation.

Time Management Strategies

Model and teach students effective time management techniques, such as prioritizing tasks, breaking assignments into smaller parts (chunking), and using a calendar or planner to track deadlines and progress. Ask students to submit a calendar that allocates time towards their extracurricular activities and the time dedicated to an online course. This strategy helps students develop their time management skills by guiding them through the process of creating and implementing a personalized plan. By providing feedback and holding regular check-ins, instructors can support students as they learn to balance their responsibilities and prioritize their time effectively. See Appendix B to apply the strategy, *"Personalized Time Management Plan and Review."*

Self-Monitoring and Reflection.

Encourage students to regularly assess their progress toward their goals and reflect on their learning experiences. Self-reflection is critical to developing self-regulation skills, and students will only self-reflect if prompted by the instructor. This will help students identify areas of improvement and adjust their strategies accordingly.

The strategy, Guided Self-Monitoring and Reflection Journal (Appendix C) promotes regular self-monitoring and reflection by providing students with a structured approach to assess their progress and evaluate their learning experiences. The guidance from instructors and opportunities for peer collaboration will help students develop their self-regulation skills and continuously improve their strategies.

Co-Regulation in Action:
Late Work Application

One of the struggles for faculty in accepting late work is that it increases their workload by having to keep track of which student submitted each assignment. It also interferes with a faculty's ability to get in the proper frame of mind to grade a set of submissions, grade more efficiently, and score students' work equitably. However, faculty can invert the responsibility of tracking late work to the student. Each time a student submits a late assignment, delegate the workload to the student with an intervention strategy to build self-regulation skills.

The Late-Work Application (LWA) strategy shifts the responsibility back to the students while aiding faculty in maintaining grading efficiency and, more importantly, requiring students to reflect on why an

assignment is late and how to prevent this. As with most "applications," the LWA submission can be denied. If the student does not put a good-faith effort into self-reflection, the instructor is not required to accept the late submission.

The LWA can be designed using web-based forms like Google or MS Forms. Recommended fields for this form may include (See Appendix D for a sample Late Work Application):

- Name
- Date
- Course
- Section
- Module
- Assignment Name
- Current Course Average
- Self-Reflection

The "Section," "Module," and "Assignment Name" fields help the instructor locate the assignment in the learning management system. In addition, web-based forms often have a "notification rule" that will email the instructor to let them know that an LWA has been submitted.

The "Course Average" field aims to train students to monitor their course progress and see the effect a missing assignment has on their overall average. The "Self-Reflection" field allows students to pause and consider why the assignment was late. The "Self-Reflection" prompt may be phrased this way: "What are the reasons for the assignment(s) being late? Be honest - your answer does not affect your ability to make up your work. What will you do to prevent this from happening again?"

The Late Work Application is one of many strategies that work as co-regulation strategies. College faculty should build a repository of time management strategies that can be leveraged to ask students to build self-regulation skills in exchange for submitting an assignment for full credit. Students who have already developed the necessary self-regulation skills, as evidenced by submitting before the due date, are excused from these co-regulation intervention strategies.

Figure 1

Late-Work Application Fields and Purpose
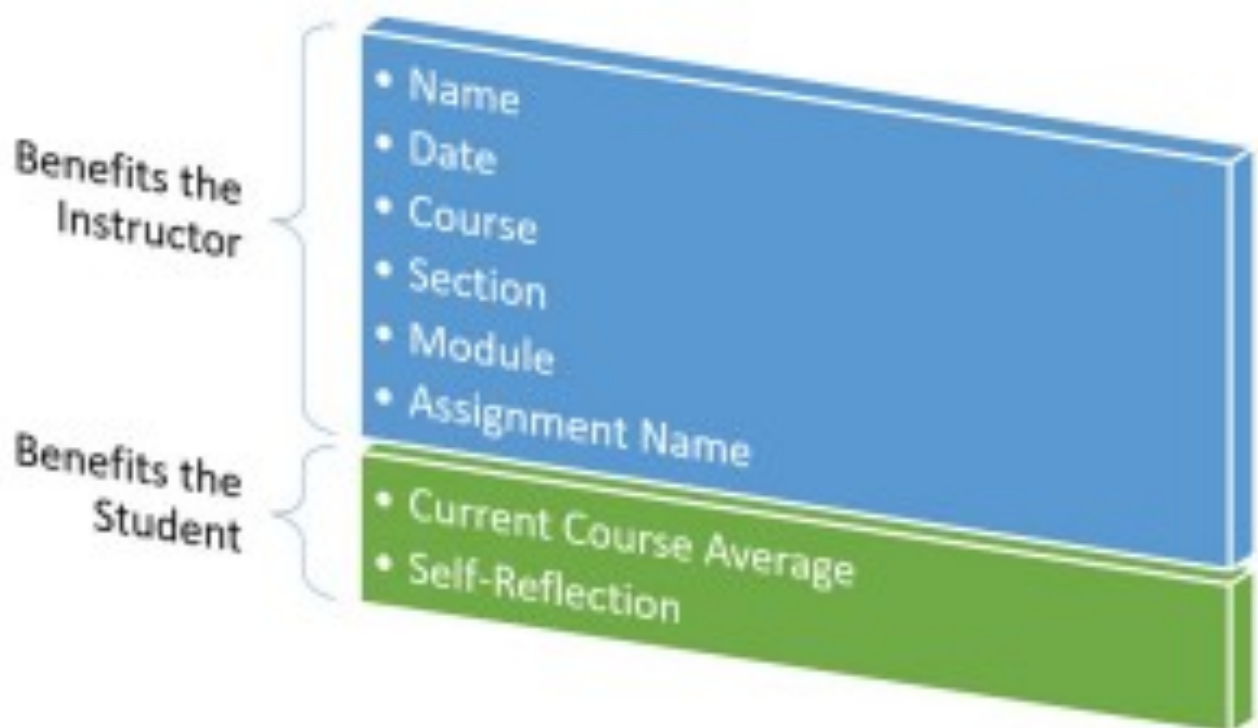
Potential Challenges and Limitations of Implementing Co-Regulation Strategies

Some students may resist adopting self-regulation strategies, especially if they perceive them as too demanding or unrelated to their immediate academic goals. Additionally, implementing these strategies may require additional time and effort from faculty, which could be challenging considering their existing workload and responsibilities. Over time, the investment in time and effort will pay dividends for faculty, but initially, this will require collaboration, development, and implementation of these new strategies. These abilities are not merely academic tools but essential competencies employers value, which can significantly impact their career progression. The process will require collaboration, development, and implementation of these new strategies to foster a workforce-ready student body.

Faculty must consider that students come from diverse backgrounds and personal experiences and may possess varying self-regulation skills. This requires a customized approach to accommodate each student's unique needs, which can only be achieved through developing rapport with students. Adopting a flexible mindset is crucial, as it allows faculty to determine whether every student should participate in all co-regulation strategies. Lastly, assessing the effectiveness of these strategies in enhancing self-regulation skills can be challenging, given that self-regulation is a complex, multidimensional construct that is difficult to measure directly. The impact on students' workforce readiness can be a significant indicator of the strategies' successful implementation. By aligning these strategies with real-world applications, students can better understand the importance of self-regulation for their academic success and future professional development.

Conclusion

Community college faculty often face challenges with students, especially dual enrollment students and young adults, in meeting deadlines and submitting work on time. This issue is not solely about academic mastery but also reflects students' self-regulation skills. Self regulation, which involves managing thoughts, emotions, and behaviors to achieve personal goals, is essential for academic success. Dual enrollment students and young adults may face difficulties in self-regulation due to developmental factors, personal factors, and environmental factors, such as the influence of digital social environments.

To support students' self-regulation skills, faculty must recognize the importance of co regulation, which involves guidance, modeling, feedback, and emotional support from social partners, such as instructors, to help individuals regulate their behavior, emotions, and cognition. This highlights the significance of establishing relationships with students.

To address the challenges in developing self-regulation skills in students, faculty can implement strategies such as goal setting, planning, time management techniques, self monitoring, and reflection. One example of a co-regulation strategy is the Late-Work Application, which shifts the responsibility of submitting late work to the student while promoting self-reflection on their progress and behavior.

By implementing co-regulation strategies and promoting self-regulation skill development as a fundamental soft skill, faculty can equip students with essential competencies that extend beyond the academic sphere and into their future careers. Through a focus on self regulation, educators can better prepare students for the demands of the modern workforce, fostering not just academic success but lifelong success. In a rapidly evolving world, equipping students with the ability to self-regulate their behavior, time, and priorities effectively is an invaluable investment in their future.

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Author's Note

APPENDIX A

SMART Goal Setting and Reflection Activity

1. At the start of each week, have students develop 1-2 academic or personal SMART goals for the week:
    a. Specific - Clearly defined, straightforward, and detailed.
    b. Measurable - Quantifiable criteria for progress and achievement.
    c. Achievable - Within student's capabilities; provide support if needed.
    d. Relevant - Aligns with overall objectives; focuses effort.
    e. Time-bound - Defined timeline indicating by when.

2. Instruct students to create a SMART action plan for each goal detailing:
    a. Steps to complete/progress.
    b. Deadlines for each step.
    c. Resources required.
    d. Potential obstacles and solutions.

3. Have students track and assess progress on SMART goals and adjust plans as required.

4. At week's end, students self-reflect on SMART goal achievement, including:
    a. Performance analysis
    b. Review of effective and ineffective strategies
    c. Identification of improvements

5. Periodically relate weekly SMART goals to overall growth and definitions of success.

APPENDIX B

Strategy: Personalized Time Management Plan and Review

1. Begin by introducing students to effective time management techniques, such as prioritizing tasks, breaking assignments into smaller parts (chunking), and using a calendar or planner to track deadlines and progress.

2. Instruct students to create a personalized time management plan that allocates specific time slots for their extracurricular activities, online course commitments, and other responsibilities (e.g., work, family). Encourage students to use a digital or physical calendar/planner to visualize their schedule. Provide a template, if necessary.

3. Ask students to submit their personalized time management plan for review. Provide feedback on their plan, identifying any potential areas of concern and offering suggestions for improvement.

4. Throughout the semester, hold periodic check-ins with students to assess how well they are adhering to their time management plan and whether any adjustments are needed. Encourage students to reflect on their experiences and to share any challenges they are facing or techniques they have found particularly helpful.

5. Towards the end of the semester, have students evaluate the effectiveness of their time management plan in helping them balance their various commitments and achieve their goals. Encourage them to consider what adjustments they might make in the future to further improve their time management skills.

APPENDIX C

Strategy: Guided Self-Monitoring and Reflection Journal

1. Introduce the concept of self-monitoring and reflection, explaining their importance in developing self-regulation skills and fostering continuous improvement.

2. Provide students with a structured reflection journal template that prompts them to assess their progress toward their goals, evaluate their learning experiences, and identify areas of improvement. The template should include questions that guide students to think critically about their performance, learning strategies, and any challenges they have encountered.

3. Instruct students to complete their reflection journal on a regular basis (e.g., weekly or biweekly) throughout the semester. Encourage them to be honest and thorough in their reflections, as this will help them gain valuable insights into their learning processes.

4. Periodically review students' reflection journals and provide constructive feedback on their self-monitoring and reflection practices. Offer guidance on how they can improve their self-assessment skills and make necessary adjustments to their learning strategies.

5. Facilitate group discussions or peer-review sessions where students can share their reflection experiences and learn from each other's insights. This will help create a supportive learning environment that fosters collaboration and continuous growth.

APPENDIX D

Late work Application

If you are seeing this form, this means you have missed a deadline or submitted work that was not satisfactory. In order for the late work to be considered for grading, this application must be completed in its entirety.

Sign in to Google to save your progress. Learn more

Course

Choose ▾

Module

Choose ▾

Assignment Name

Choose ▾

Current Course Average

This is so we can document how much your overall average will increase by submitting the late work.

Your answer

Today's Date

Date

mm/dd/yyyy 🗓

Self Reflection

What are the reasons for the assignment(s) being late? Please be honest - your answer has no bearing on your ability to make up your work. What will you do in the future to prevent this from happening again.

Your answer

Submit   Clear form