

Step 1: We Want to Help Remedial Students



Fall 2011

We were both hired for full-time positions in fall 2011. The department decided to throw us together immediately to team teach the integrated reading and writing course three levels below transfer. Fortunately, we worked well together, but we kept to our own disciplines in teaching the course and shared little more than a single novel. Essentially, students were taking two separate classes. We felt like we were helping remedial students because our pass rate was high and almost all of our students were going to the next level.

Step 2: We See the Remediation Dragon



Spring 2013

We wanted to do more to help students move through the remedial courses. We designed what we learned later was a stacked or compressed model: students would take our six-unit course in eight weeks and then would take the next level of reading and writing in eight weeks—completing a whopping two levels in one semester in a total of twelve units. We were proud of our new model and we were confident the students would benefit from moving at a summer-school pace.

Then, our colleague forwarded an email she received from the California Acceleration Project (CAP). We jumped at the chance to be part of it and quickly put together our application. We received conditional acceptance—we could only participate if we agreed to move students from our three-levels-below-transfer class to transfer level in one semester. We looked at each other and said, “They want us to do WHAT?”

We met with our dean and division chair. We agreed to the condition with a great deal of skepticism.

Step 3: We Fight the Remediation Dragon



Summer 2013

We attended our first CAP institute in June 2013 and came home completely overwhelmed. We both decided to overhaul our courses for the fall; we realized the need for rigor and critical thinking and we strove to meet that need.

We worked together to do what we could with our clunky twelve-unit team-taught accelerated class. We worried that our students were not like the magical students in Katie Hern's courses. We supported each other when one of us would second guess our CAP training and want to revert to the much easier material. Basically, summer 2013 was the summer of doubt and anxiety!

Step 4: We Wound the Remediation Dragon



Fall 2013

We began the fall semester by shocking our class. Our students had no idea they had signed up for an accelerated class—we surprised them on the first day by telling them the news. We explained in detail how much work the class would be (and we made the class sound twice as brutal because we only wanted dedicated students), but we also told them the huge reward (possible movement to transfer level in one semester). We let them take a break and we expected half the class to leave. Every single student returned after the break. We realized then how hungry students were for this opportunity.

We struggled greatly with team teaching. For the first half of the semester we tried to use the same material and pick up the next day where the other one left off. We were exhausted (after all, we were teaching other classes, too, and this class took 95 percent of our energy). We decided to focus on different, but coordinating, material for the second half of the semester. The new system worked better for everyone.

The first semester, we had students who hoped to move to transfer level submit a portfolio of their best work. Then, we had our colleagues read the portfolios and decide if the student should move forward. All eleven of the students who submitted portfolios moved on. Our department was shocked at our results—and to be honest, so were we!

Step 5: We Shrink the Remediation Dragon to a More Manageable Size



Spring 2014

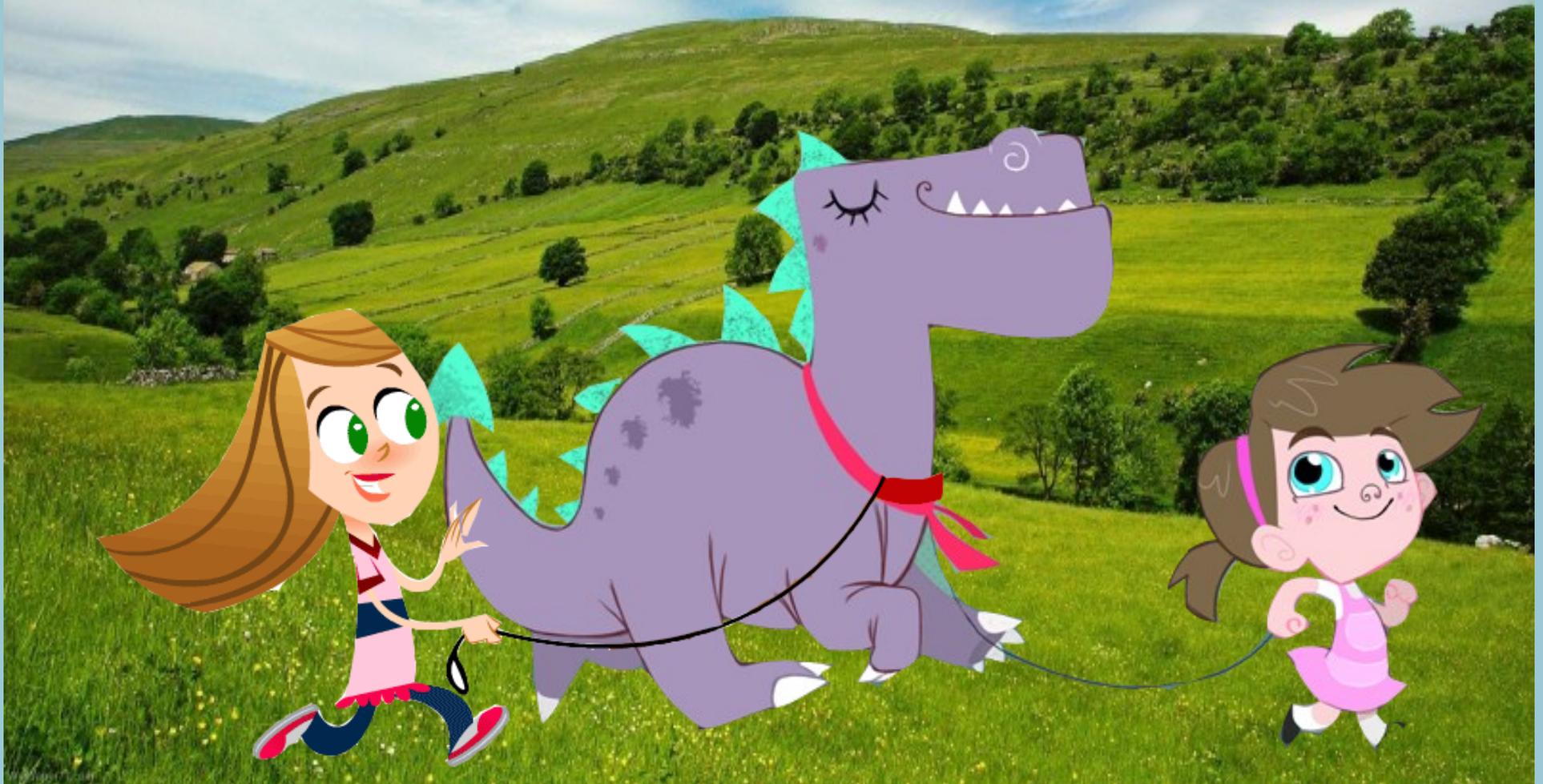
We spent the next year fine-tuning our class. In spring 2014, we could only change the structure of the class enough to make it two six-unit corequisite courses. Our students were still taking a twelve-unit accelerated class essentially, but we were able to teach our own course.

We were working hard to build our course outline and develop all the materials we would need to create a more sustainable class. We were riding the wave of our initial success with colleagues and counseling and we started to promote the acceleration class.

Again, we required a portfolio for those students who wished to move to transfer-level composition. This time, seven of the nine students who submitted portfolios passed to the next level.

We were accepted into the fourth cycle of CAP and were able to bring new team members into the acceleration lifestyle!

Step 6: We Train the Dragon to Work for Us



Fall 2014

We were finally able to teach our own six-unit accelerated course! We even gave the course a snazzy new name—73X. We were able to compare notes and continue to work together, but we were able to offer two sections of the course and double the number of students we were able to help.

Our department was convinced of the course's success by reading the portfolios and therefore left the decision for movement to transfer level to the instructor.

Step 7: We Recruit Others Interested in Training Dragons



Spring 2015

We recruited two new instructors to teach acceleration. Unfortunately, they were thrown into the course with very little training. Luckily, they both had a great deal of enthusiasm and they are both excellent instructors, so they were able to make it work. We offered three sections!

Step 8: We Find Other Ways to Effectively Use the Remediation Dragon



Shrinking the Remediation Dragon Even More



Using the Remediation Dragon As a Sidekick



Using the Remediation Dragon to Create a Shorter Pathway



Continuously Look for Ways the Remediation Dragon Can Work with Us instead of against Us

