

Integrating Counselors into Academic Courses: Using Case Studies to Identify Outcomes and Promising Practices

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Session Topics

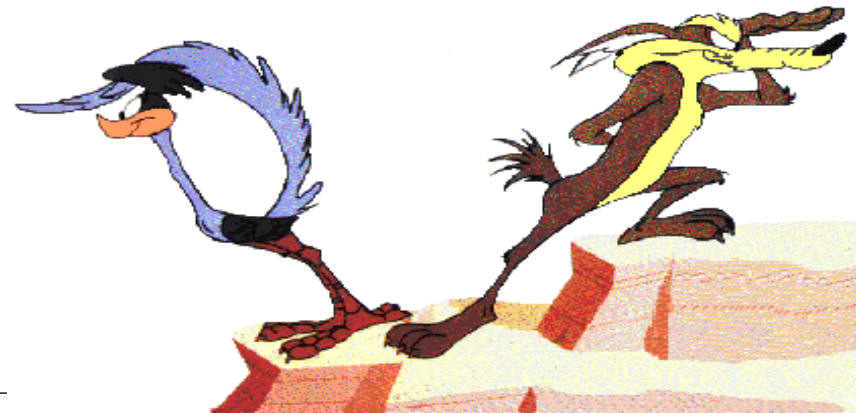
- Action Research
- Skagit's Counselor-Enhanced Developmental Courses
- Research Purpose
- Research Methods
- Findings
- Promising Strategies

Action, you say?



What is Action Research (AR)?

- A process in which faculty examine their own educational practice systematically and carefully, using the techniques of research, with the intent that the research will inform and change his or her practices in the future



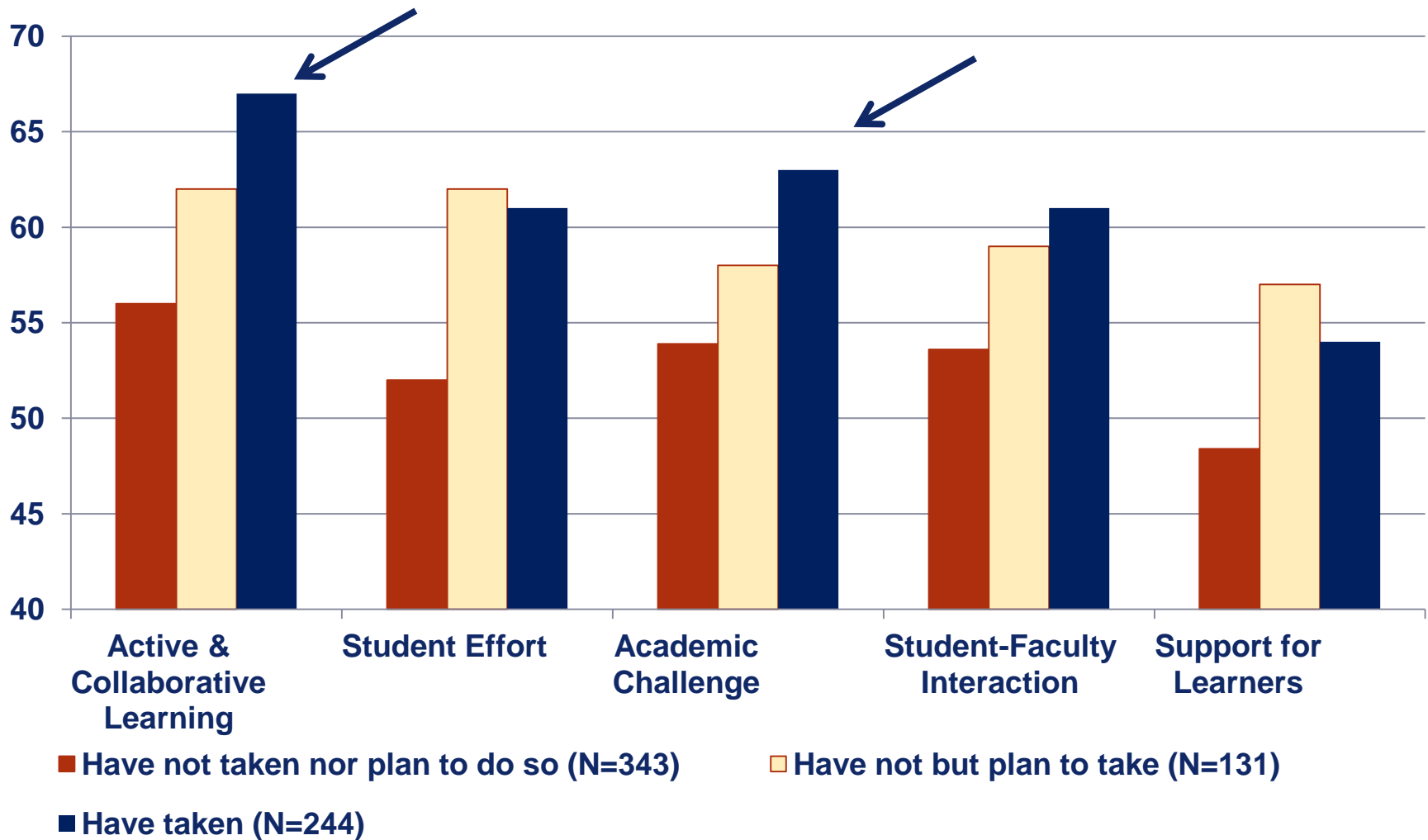
Collaborative Aspects of AR

- An individual action research project is a reflective process that allows for inquiry and discussion as components of the research
- A collaborative action research project involving two or more faculty interested in examining the same issue offers advantages of a larger sample, more opportunities to share, etc.

Skagit's Counselor-Enhanced Developmental Learning Communities

1. Our CCSSE data indicated that students who have taken learning communities are more actively engaged in their courses, with other students and with the faculty.

Skagit's CCSSE Benchmark Scores Based on Learning Community Experience

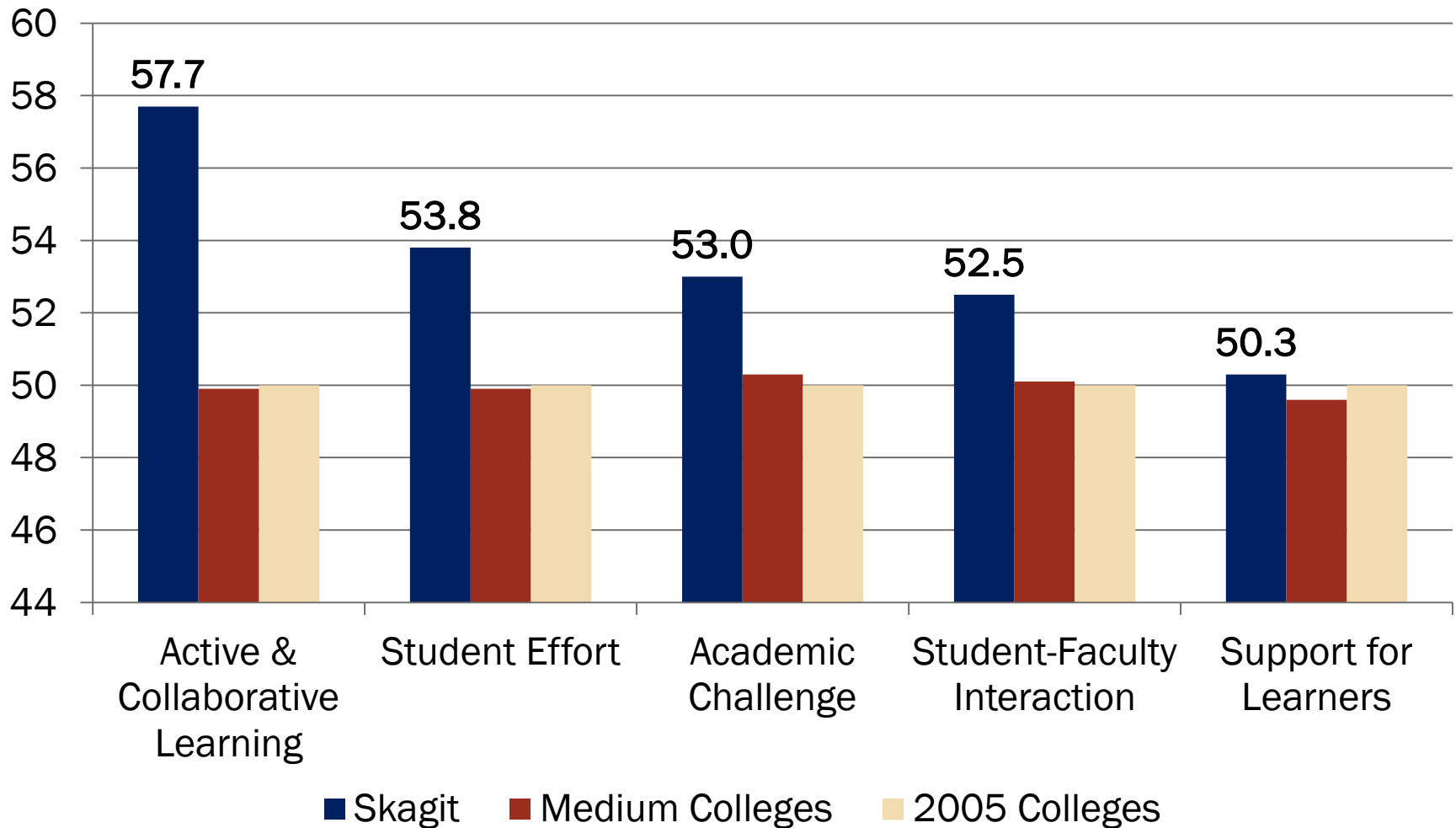


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2. Our benchmarks also indicated that our lowest benchmark was on 'Support for Learners'

Skagit's 2005 Benchmark Scores Compared to Medium & All Colleges



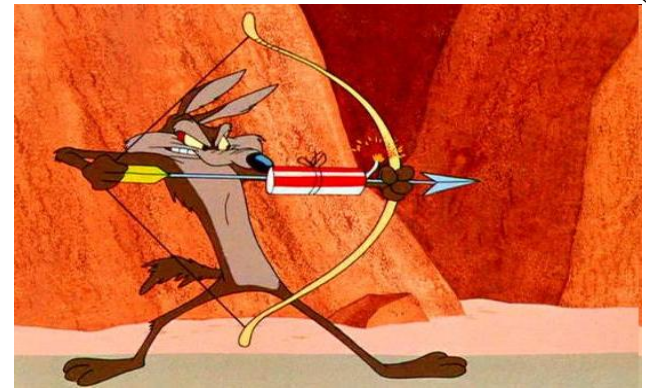
Skagit's Counselor-Enhanced Developmental Learning Communities

1. Our CCSSE data indicated that students who have taken learning communities are more actively engaged in their courses, with other students and with the faculty.
2. Our benchmarks also indicated that our lowest benchmark was on 'Support for Learners'
3. We wanted to leverage what we knew worked for students – our pedagogical approach to learning communities – to try to increase support for students.

Core Pedagogical Practices for Skagit Learning Communities

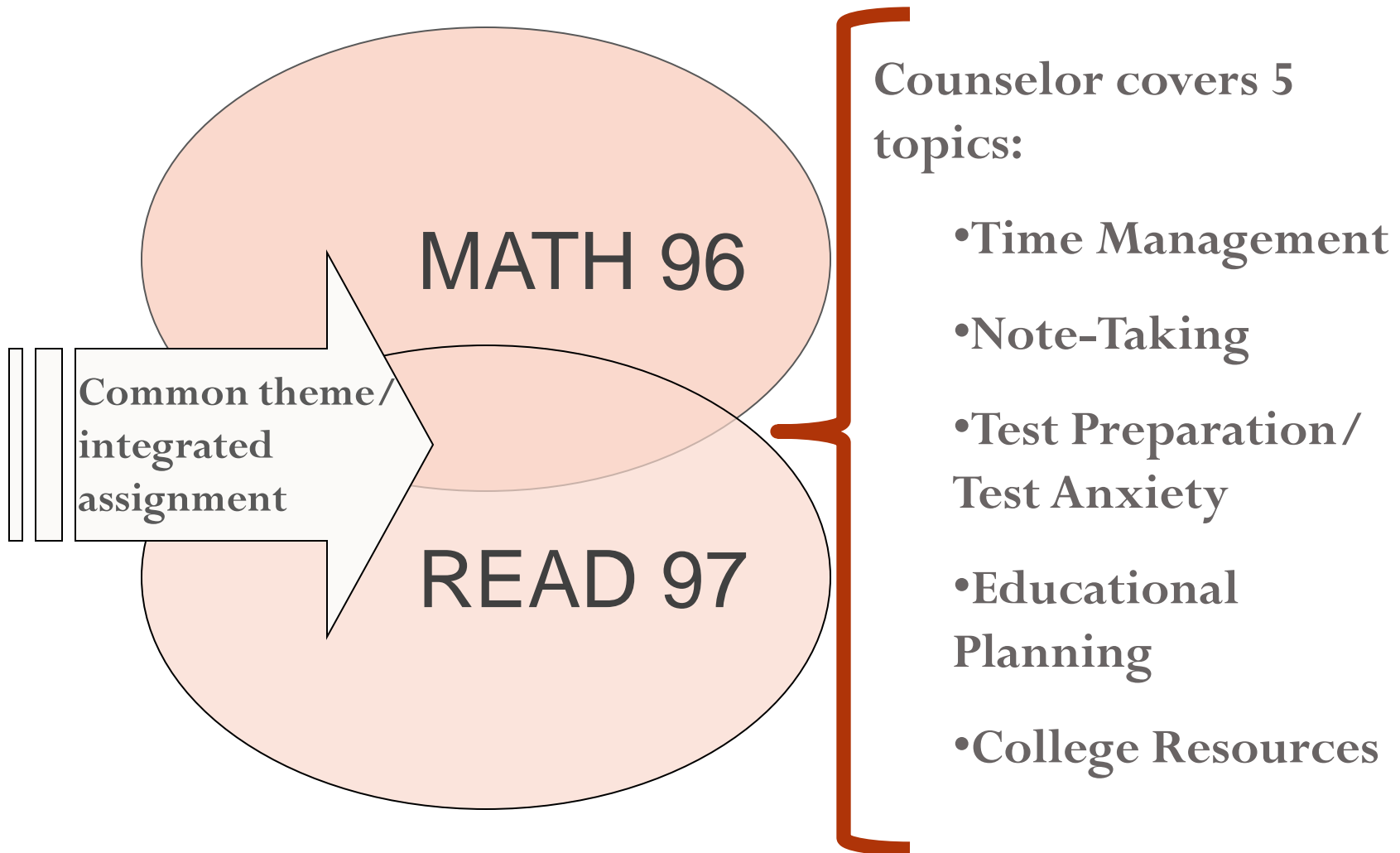
1. Value and build on students' existing abilities and experiences.
2. Create ongoing opportunities to collaboratively construct knowledge together in class.
3. Ensure active involvement in learning, i.e., solving problems, discussing ideas, writing, working on project teams.

Initial Project Goals



1. Expand our developmental Learning Community offerings to improve student success in Mathematics and English
2. Integrate student services with instruction to increase collaboration and to enhance faculty advising skills
3. Use a research model to inform project planning and measure success

Counseling-Enhanced Developmental LC: *“Reading Between the Numbers”*



Results for Fall 2008 Cohort

<i>Measures</i>	<i>Counseling- Enhanced Developmental Learning Communities</i>	<i>Stand-Alone Comparison Courses</i>
Pass rate - C or better	74%	68%
Fall to Winter Retention	91%	85%

Student Voices – Vanessa, Antonio, Kyle, Danielle & Alexsey

- “Having a counselor in the class helped a lot.”
- The counselor “taught us how to be successful,” “how to help ourselves;” “be here now;” “drink mint tea”
- “I take the strategies I learned [from the teachers and the counselor] and use them in my other classes.”

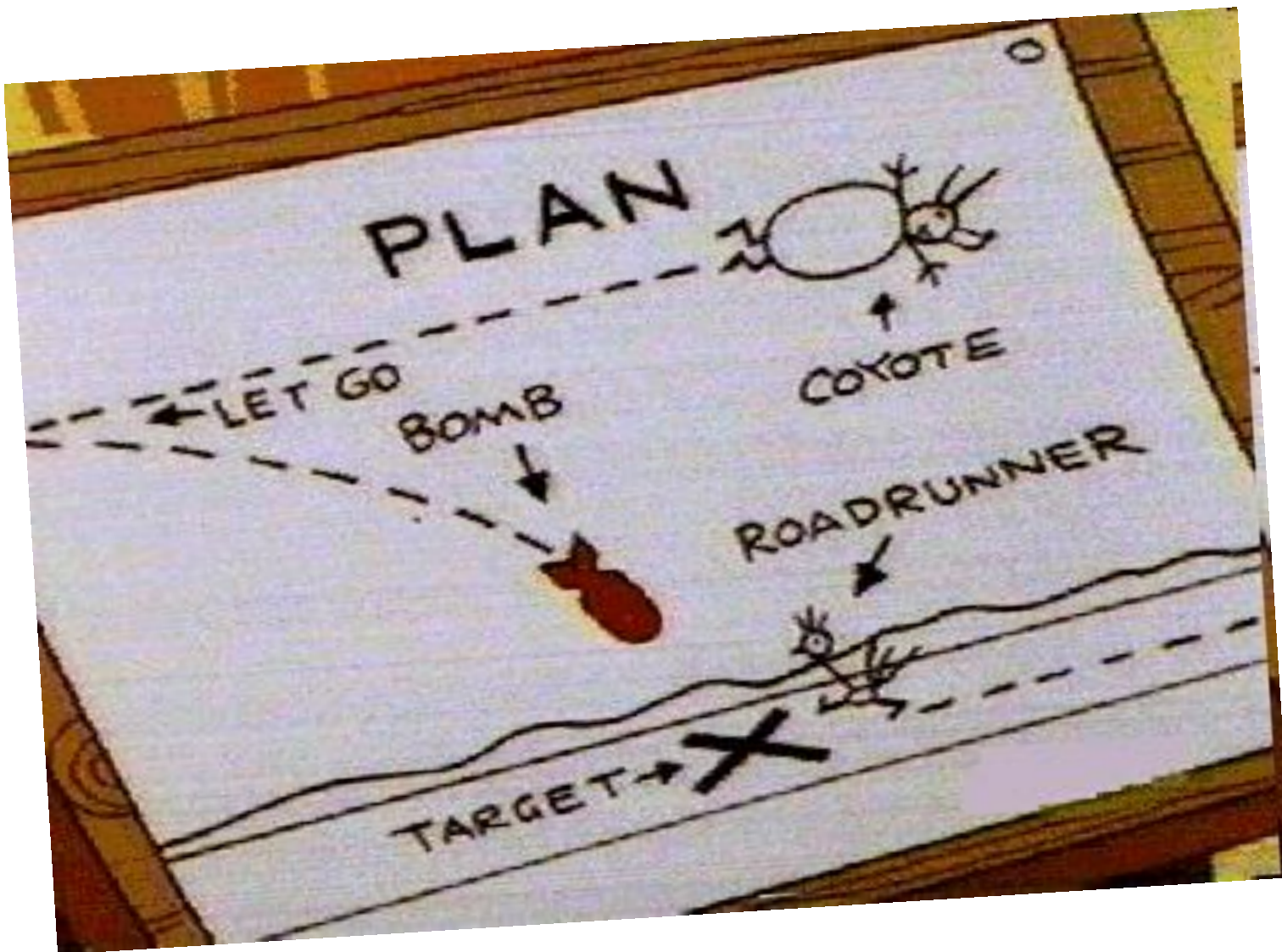
Current Study: Classroom-based research in developmental courses

*“No where is student success more important
than in the first year and in the classrooms of the
first year”*

–Vincent Tinto

Presentation at the AAC&U
Student Success Conference
Seattle, Washington (March 23, 2012)

You gotta have a plan...



Purpose of Research

- Identify the types of counselor practices and interventions that appear to have the greatest impact on students' academic progress.
- Focus on results for students at risk for passing
 - i.e., if they failed one or more of the three unit exams in a course or were missing a significant proportion of the required homework assignments
- Make public the results and conclusions so that other teaching and counseling faculty can adopt/adapt practices and interventions.

Method

- Study included two courses: a stand-alone English 97 (Fall 2010) and *Here & Now*, a learning community that combined English 97 and Read 97 (Winter 2012).
 - *CE-English 97* enrolled 24 students; *Here & Now* enrolled 28.
- Counselors and instructors compiled (1) records of students' academic progress, (2) observations of students' interactions in class, (3) information provided by students during conversations and/or conferences, and (4) details of interactions with students.

Why a Case Study?

Because they provide context; they tell a story.

“Most simply put, stories are a way of knowing. Telling stories is essentially a meaning-making process.”

I.E. Seidman (author of *Interviewing as Qualitative Research*)



Stories
at
Work

The purpose of a case study is to 1) arrive at a comprehensive understanding of the groups under study, and 2) develop general theoretical statements about regularities in social structure and process.”

H. Becker, *Doing Things Together* (1968)

Framework for Analysis

- David Conley's *Redefining College Readiness*

- Available at:

<http://epiconline.org/files/pdf/RedefiningCollegeReadiness.pdf>



College Readiness Knowledge & Skills

**CONTEXTUAL
SKILLS &
AWARENESS**

KEY COGNITIVE STRATEGIES

- Intellectual openness, curiosity
- Analysis, interpretation
- Precision, accuracy
- Problem solving, reasoning

ACADEMIC KNOWLEDGE & SKILLS

- Overarching abilities as a reader, writer, researcher, and quantitative thinker
- “Big ideas” of content areas

ACADEMIC BEHAVIORS

- Persistence
- Time management
- Study skills
- Learning how to learn
- Self-monitoring

Academic Behaviors

- *Academic behaviors—self-monitoring*
 - develop awareness of their abilities and needs;
 - reflect on this awareness to develop learning strategies; and
 - remain motivated and able to persist through challenges;
- *Academic behaviors—success strategies*
 - manage their time;
 - prepare effectively for tests;
 - improve note-taking; and
 - maintain consistent communications

Knowledge and Skills

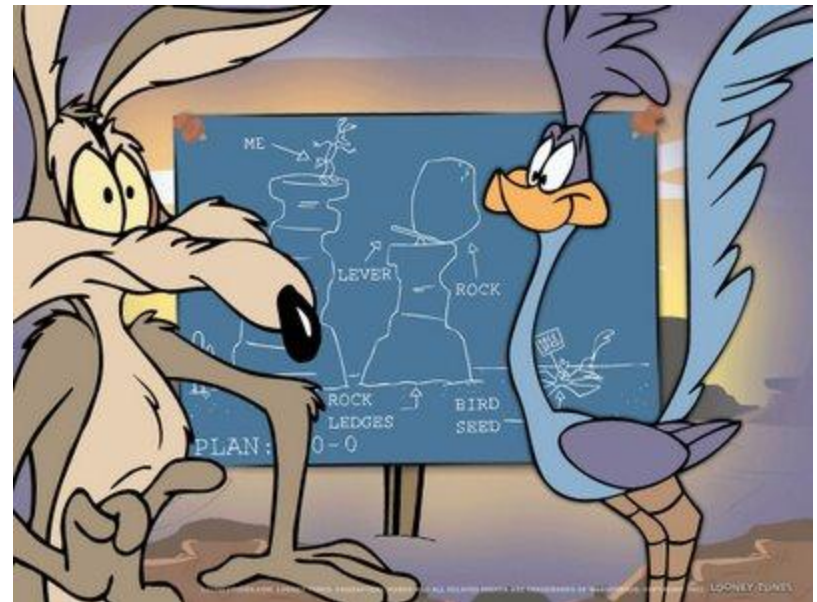
- *Contextual knowledge* of college norms, including academic standards and expectations;
- *Contextual skills* for following college procedures, including withdrawals and financial aid, and *knowledge* of standards, placement procedures, awarding of credits, course sequences;
- *Contextual knowledge* of degree pathways and *skill* in developing an educational plan; and
- *Contextual skill* of using support resources, including the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) services, tutoring, etc.

Evidence

- Forty (40) pages of case notes
 - Brief description of each student, including basic demographics, educational goals, challenges, etc.
 - Notes for each student in the course to include counselor and teaching faculty interactions with student and observations
- Grades and attendance records for each student

Analysis

- Types of interventions using Conley's framework
- Retention Rates
- Pass Rates



Interventions by Type

	% of all students	% of total for at risk
Academic behaviors	88%	76%
Self-monitoring	77%	73%
Success strategies	75%	77%
Contextual skills & awareness	92%	71%
College expectations	38%	60%
College requirements	19%	50%
Educational plan	67%	63%
Referrals to resources	25%	100%

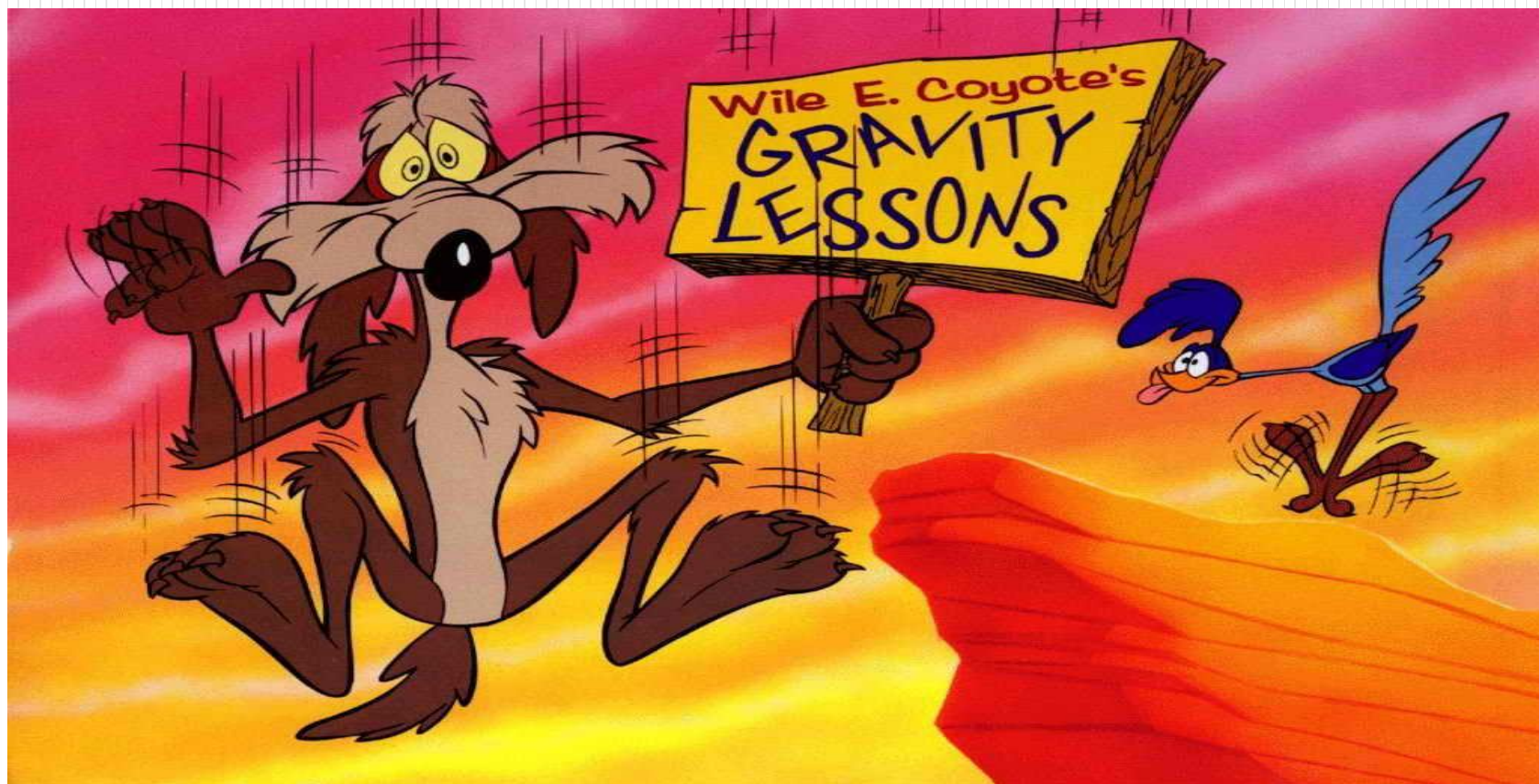
Findings – Retention Rates

- 38 (73%) of the 52 students enrolled in both counseling-enhanced courses were identified as being at risk for passing by mid-quarter.
- Nevertheless, most of the students, 81% overall and 74% of those identified as at risk, persisted, that is, continued to attend, complete assignments, and take tests through the end of the quarter.

Findings – Pass Rates

- Of the 52 students enrolled:
 - 39 (75%) passed with a C- or higher
 - 36 (69%) with a C or better in English 97, the required grade for progressing to English 99
- Of the 38 students at risk:
 - 24 (63%) passed English with a C- or better
 - 21 (55%) with a C or better

Promising Practices



Counselor Strategies

- Attended class at least three days during the first week of the quarter and engaged in the activities that week as part of establishing the collaborative, integrative experience of learning in the course.
- Attempted -- with moderate success -- to meet with every student within the first three weeks of the quarter.
- Conducted supplemented formal sessions with scheduled and impromptu class visits.

Teaching/Counseling Faculty Collaborative Strategies



Counselor/Instructor Team

- monitored student progress and collaborated to identify student behaviors and areas of concern and to strategize appropriate levels of support.
- followed up quickly on shared information and recommendations.
- collaborated to integrate student development learning outcomes into the existing course curriculum.

Collaboration Example

Counselors and instructors followed up quickly on shared information and recommendations.

- On the basis of instructor reports, counselors would call or email students or come to class for brief in person conferences. In turn, counselors would notify instructors of concerns or propose strategies that instructors could use to help students develop the necessary skills, behaviors, and attitudes.

Collaboration Example

The counselors and instructors also collaborated to integrate student development learning outcomes into the existing course curriculum.

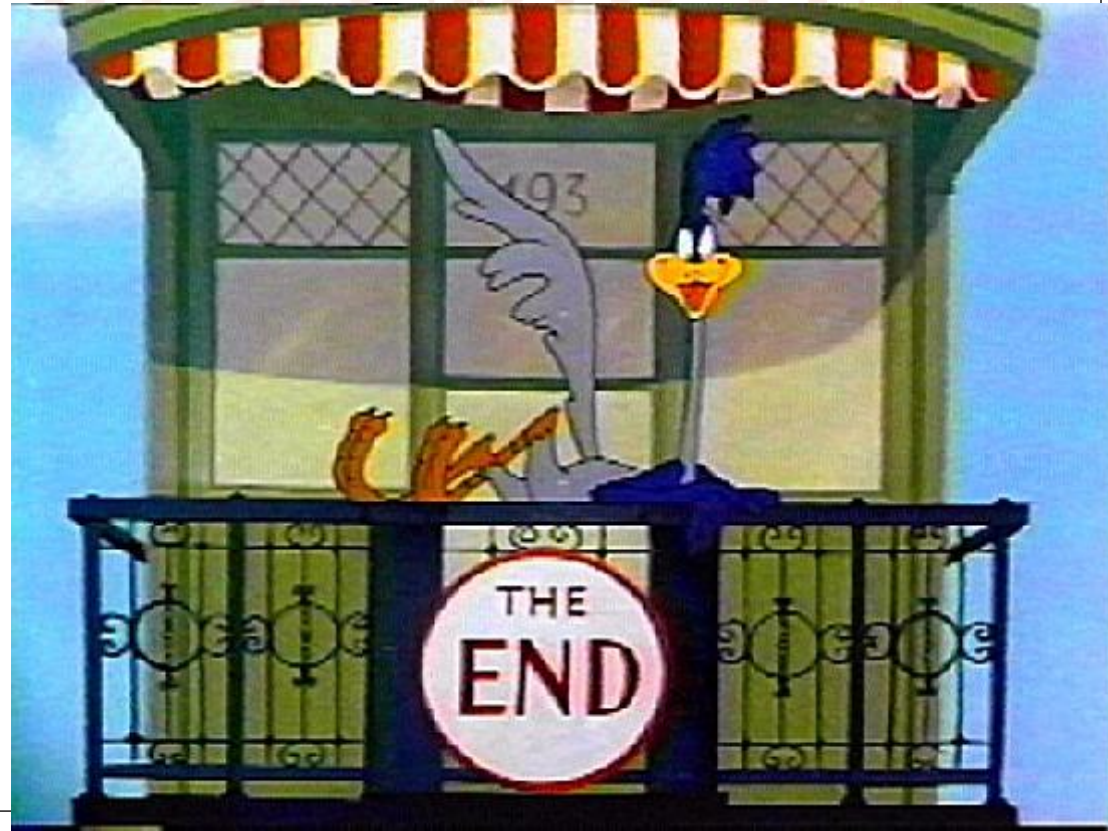
- The importance of self-monitoring skills was reinforced when students were asked to write reflections about what they had learned from activities assigned by the counselors and to submit those for course credit.
- Similarly, sessions on test preparation were reinforced when course instructors guided students through strategies for analyzing their performance on tests and then gave credit for reflecting on what they learned from the analysis and describing how they would use that knowledge to prepare for the next unit.

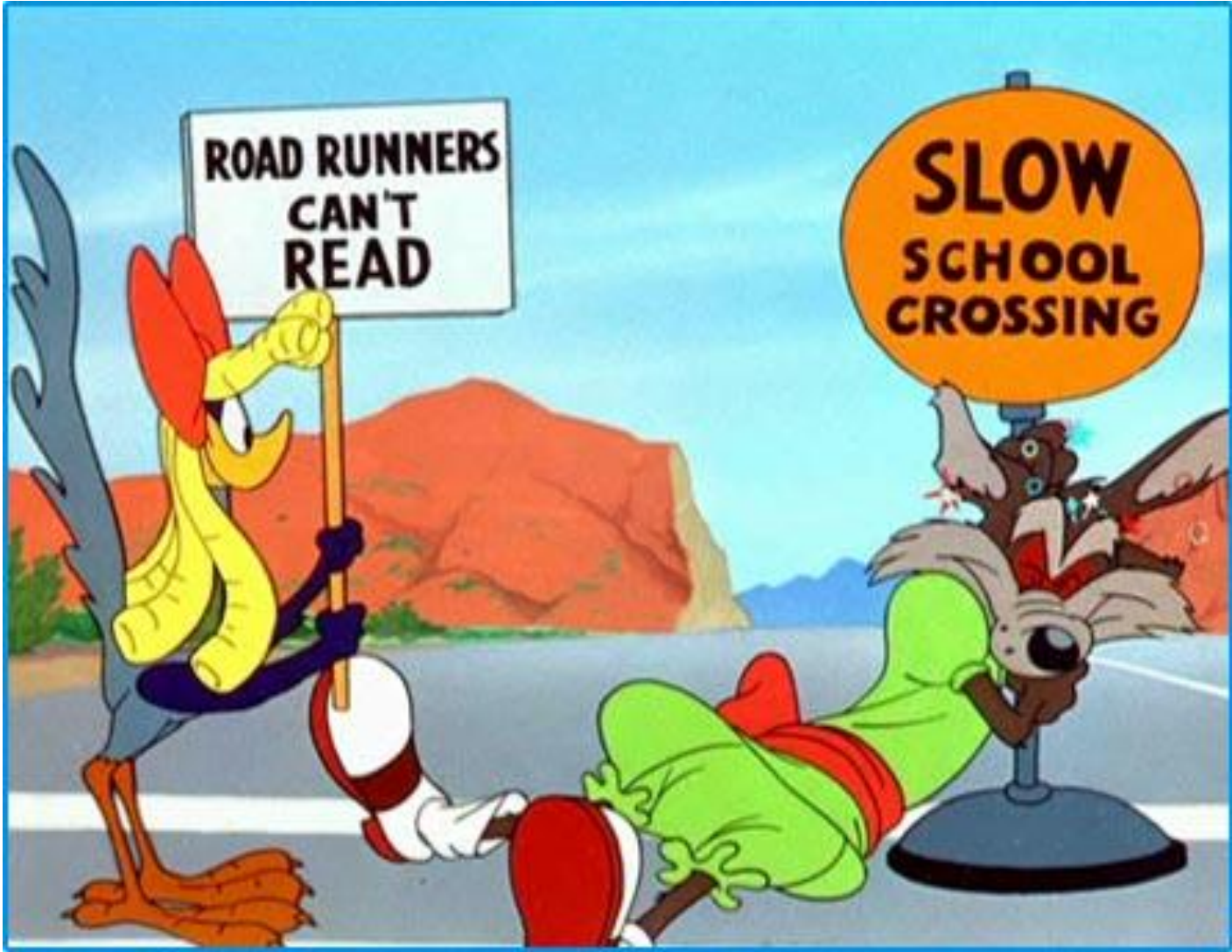
Faculty Teams' Conclusions

- Having counselors in Counselor-Enhanced developmental courses fosters improvements in the third and fourth dimensions of college readiness as defined by Conley (2007), that is, in the development of effective academic behaviors and contextual knowledge.
- Evidence from this small sample suggests that—in terms of retention, persistence, and successful pass rates—assigning counselors to stand-alone developmental courses may produce results similar to those for Counselor-Enhanced developmental learning communities.

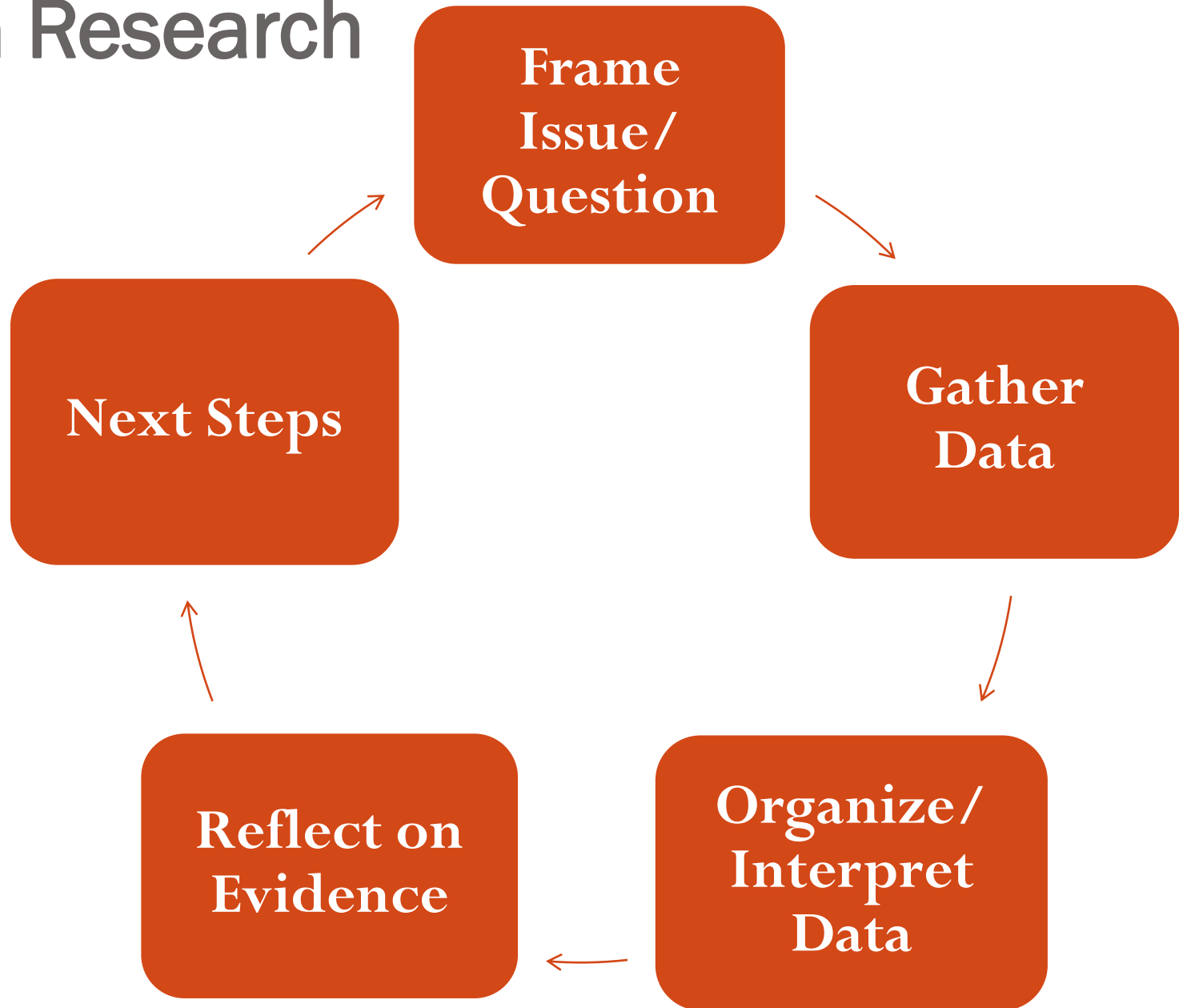


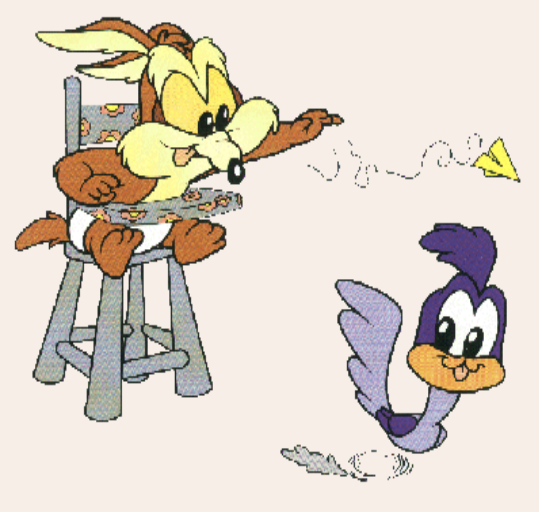
THANK YOU SO MUCH!!





Action Research Cycle





Qualitative Data

...involves analysis of data such as words (e.g., from interviews), pictures (e.g., video), or objects (e.g., an artifact).



"All research ultimately has a qualitative grounding"
-- Donald Campbell

Quantitative Data

...involves analysis of numerical data.



"There's no such thing as qualitative data.
Everything is either 1 or 0"
-- Fred Kerlinger

Why Case Studies?

Because they provide context; they tell a story.

“Most simply put, stories are a way of knowing. Telling stories is essentially a meaning-making process. When people tell stories, they select details of their experience from their stream of consciousness...In order to give the details of their experience a beginning, middle, and end, people must reflect on their experience. It is this process of selecting constitutive details of experience, reflecting on them, giving them order, and thereby making sense of them that makes telling stories a meaning-making experience.”

— I.E. Seidman

2012 CCSSE Benchmarks

