

**Northeast State Community College**  
**STEP: Strategies for Teaching Excellence Program**

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After a thorough assessment of qualitative and quantitative data, Northeast State identified a significant key issue relative to student learning in that many students lack the knowledge and/or skills regarding “how to learn.” Therefore, the College extensively researched various learning paradigms that, based upon best practices, had significantly increased student learning through increased student engagement and awareness of the learning process. As a result of this learning paradigm and best practice research,

1. Constructivism was selected as the primary learning paradigm upon which the College’s QEP would be founded.
2. The QEP topic/goal was established: ***Increasing Student Learning Through the Implementation of Student-centered Instructional Best Practices***. This topic/goal dovetails with the constructivist learning paradigm that the professor is the facilitator, aiding the student as he/she constructs meaning. However, the College’s research also revealed a challenge for higher education professors in acting as the coach to facilitate student learning: faculty often lack training in instructional pedagogy (e.g., how to effectively present and transfer information to students). Therefore, professional development for faculty shall be an integral part of the QEP to ensure that faculty members have the skill sets necessary to carry out their duties as facilitators.
3. The following four learner-centered instructional best practice themes that are associated with constructivism were selected as the foundational elements of STEP’s initiatives: self-regulated learning, active learning, collaborative/cooperative learning, and higher-order thinking. These themes will be implemented in a series of annual steps to build one-upon-another and to provide students with a strong foundation to be more engaged and successful learners.
4. The following three student learning outcomes were established:
  - i. Students will be more self-regulated, active, and collaborative/cooperative in their learning processes,
  - ii. Students will demonstrate improved success rates in classes utilizing selected instructional best practice initiatives, and
  - iii. Students will demonstrate improved competency in higher-order thinking.

The initial focus of the QEP shall be the development of a Center for Teaching Excellence and a pilot of the first student-centered instructional best practice theme, self-regulated learning. An early implementer pilot group, which consists of faculty and student advisors and leaders, shall research and pilot each student-centered instructional best practice theme and correlating initiatives one year in advance of implementation by all full-time faculty. The early implementers shall also aid in hosting workshops and divisional meetings to train the faculty at-large.

It is Northeast State’s belief that focusing on these themes of constructivism, in a purposeful and step-by-step manner, shall increase student learning success at the College by providing students with the skill sets necessary to be successful learners – regardless of their major. Furthermore, it will give faculty members the skill sets to be expert facilitators of learning in addition to being experts in their select fields of study. The accomplishment of this endeavor shall aid in the achievement of Northeast State’s mission and vision, which states *Northeast State Community College shall be recognized for excellence in teaching, learning, and service.*