

## ACTION AREA 2

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# Streamlined Postsecondary Placement Practices To Smooth Student Transitions

With the new college- and career-ready standards and assessments that most states are implementing, community colleges have an opportunity to strengthen outreach and streamline the placement process for students. Community colleges that agree to honor the “college-ready” scores on high school assessments can place students directly into credit-bearing courses and remove at least one additional set of tests that students must take. Not only is using the tests for more than one purpose more efficient, but it also is an opportunity to enhance outreach to potential students and increase their chances of being successful by aligning with high school assessments and communicating these clear, consistent expectations to students and families. The use of these scores also provides the opportunity to identify those students who need catch-up work while still in high school.

Having community colleges use these scores for placement highlights for students, families, educators, and policymakers the rigor of the high school standards and courses *and* the reliability of the new assessments. It also likely will motivate students to work harder to meet the standards because they will see a more direct connection to their next steps after high school.

Notably, recent research has pointed to the value of using more information than scores on a single test alone — through “multiple-measures assessment” — to ascertain students’ readiness for college-level work. To the extent that high school grades reflect student achievement of higher standards for college and career readiness, both high school GPA and course-taking patterns can serve as valuable information in the college placement process.

State-level policies can accelerate colleges’ efforts to improve the pipeline for high school students. Washington and Illinois, for example, have

implemented new assessments that were designed to measure college readiness in high school (Smarter Balanced and PARCC assessments, respectively). Confident in these assessments’ ability to measure student readiness for credit-bearing coursework, the community college systems in both states have adopted policies for using scores on these tests as college-ready indicators. Most states have implemented new high school assessments designed to measure college readiness, but higher education systems have agreed to honor the PARCC and Smarter Balanced scores in only 10 of those states. This collaboration and engagement around standards and assessments has served as a springboard for systems and institutions in the 10 states with placement policies that use aligned assessments (Alaska, California, Colorado, Delaware, Hawaii, Nevada, Oregon, South Dakota, Washington, and West Virginia). There is a great amount of hope to see these numbers increase in the near future.

## PROMISING PRACTICES

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### WASHINGTON COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGE SYSTEM **Aligning Expectations with K–12 To Smooth Student Transitions**

Washington state is an early adopter when it comes to efforts to align K–12 and postsecondary expectations. Higher education has been involved in the state’s K–12 standards and assessment development process since it began in 2009, and as a show of confidence, the community and technical college system (34 colleges across the state) has forged a consistent, statewide agreement to use the Smarter Balanced assessment scores for decisions about placement into credit-bearing coursework. The policy will be reconsidered formally in winter 2018 based on student performance data.

Starting with the graduating class of 2016, students who score at levels 3 or 4 (out of 4) on the new high school assessment are automatically granted placement into first-year, credit-bearing courses. However, depending on what college math course they want to take, students who score at level 3 in mathematics may be required to take math courses as seniors to maintain their placements.

As part of the overall agreement, the community and technical college system, in partnership with the state K–12 system, has developed and implemented senior-year Bridge to College courses in English and math. These courses, currently being offered by 114 high schools in 74 districts across the state, provide students who score at level 2 and earn a B or better the opportunity to get college ready while in high school and receive the same placement agreement as students who score at level 3. Students who achieve a level 3 or 4 are eligible to speed up through dual enrollment courses, providing them an opportunity to earn college credit before they arrive on campus.

The new bridge courses are being developed and supported through local and regional partnerships that have been vital to building consensus and buy-in from the field for the new policy. They also will be critical as the state refines further which senior-year courses “count” for maintaining students’ placement eligibility.

#### FIND OUT MORE

[www.sbctc.edu/about/agency/initiatives-projects/bridge-to-college.aspx](http://www.sbctc.edu/about/agency/initiatives-projects/bridge-to-college.aspx)

[www.k12.wa.us/CurriculumInstruct/BridgetoCollege/pubdocs/CTC-SBAplacementagreement.pdf](http://www.k12.wa.us/CurriculumInstruct/BridgetoCollege/pubdocs/CTC-SBAplacementagreement.pdf)



### ILLINOIS COUNCIL OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRESIDENTS **Adopting a Statewide Placement Policy for PARCC Assessments**

In January 2015, the community college presidents in Illinois took an unprecedented action by adopting a statewide policy for the use of new high school PARCC assessments so students who earn a certain score on the test are placed directly into credit-bearing coursework.

The policy decision came after months of deliberation by chief academic officers, chief student services officers, and faculty from across the community college system and builds upon the successful engagement of higher education in previous years with the adoption

of the K–12 standards and development of the aligned PARCC assessments.

The PARCC assessments are aligned with the new Illinois Learning Standards, and they emphasize higher-order thinking, application of knowledge, and college and career readiness. Third through 8th graders and some high school students are taking this summative assessment, used to evaluate student learning, skill acquisition, and academic achievement, for the second year in a row this spring.

The PARCC assessments use college- and career-ready determinations, which outline the academic knowledge, skills, and tasks that students must demonstrate in English language arts and math to show their ability to

succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing college courses. A goal of the PARCC exam is that students who earn this determination will be admitted to two- or four-year higher education institutions without having to take and pass a college placement test.

The new policy reflects a commitment by Illinois community colleges to accept a performance level of 4 or 5 (out of 5) in math or English language arts on the PARCC assessment to place students directly into credit-bearing classes, beginning in fall 2015 for most institutions. Additionally, community colleges may develop policies to accept a PARCC assessment

score of 3 for placement into a college-level general education math or English course when the student has demonstrated other indicators of readiness as determined by that institution.

By developing this policy voluntarily and as a system, Illinois community colleges have sent a clear signal to students that meeting standards in high school will prepare them for postsecondary success.

#### FIND OUT MORE

<http://icsps.illinoisstate.edu/2015/03/illinois-council-of-community-college-presidents-response-to-parcc>



### LONG BEACH COLLEGE PROMISE Using Early Assessments To Increase Readiness and Success

In 2008, leaders from the Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD); Long Beach City College (LBCC); and California State University, Long Beach (CSULB) came together in an innovative, award-winning partnership to provide all local students the opportunity to receive a college education by measuring and identifying student readiness early in high school rather than waiting until they get to college.

Known as the Long Beach College Promise, the program helps LBUSD students prepare for, enter, and succeed in college. The Promise builds on the

foundation provided by the state's Early Assessment Program (EAP) — an evaluation of students' readiness for entry-level, credit-bearing courses at California State University (CSU) and participating California community colleges that is administered in the spring of 11th grade using the Smarter Balanced assessments. Students who take the exam receive early feedback on potential remedial needs so they can address those needs before they leave high school and have the opportunity to be exempt from developmental education based on their test scores. LBUSD mandates that all eligible students take the test in their junior year, and LBCC was one of the first community colleges in the state to accept the EAP as a measure of student proficiency.



Benefits and services include:

- ◆ Early and continued outreach for students and families to raise awareness and provide targeted support for first-generation college-going students using statewide high school standards and assessments as readiness indicators;
- ◆ Guaranteed college admission at CSULB for students who complete minimum college preparatory or community college transfer requirements; and
- ◆ A tuition-free semester for all LBUSD high school graduates who enroll in LBCC within one year, beginning in the 2015–16 academic year.

The program seeks to reduce average time to bachelor's degree for LBUSD students by one-half semester and average time to transfer for LBCC students. Results already show a reduction in time to transfer in terms of units completed. For students taking a load of 12 units, this reduction equates to just under a full semester reduced time to transfer.

Since the Promise began in March 2008, the number of LBUSD students enrolled in LBCC has grown each year. Through 2015, nearly 12,000 students have

received a free semester at the school, and the Promise is seeking to expand to cover costs of the full first year. LBUSD students also are being admitted to CSULB at a higher rate, with admission increasing 43 percent between 2008 and 2013, even as CSULB admitted fewer students overall. In addition, nearly 80 percent of LBUSD applicants gained admission to CSULB compared to just 25 percent of nonlocal freshmen applicants. LBCC transfer students are admitted to CSULB at a rate that is 18 percent higher than that of transfer applicants from other community colleges.

Simultaneously, the percentage of students requiring math and English remediation has decreased substantially due to targeted advising and initiatives such as CSU Early Start, which helps admitted CSU freshmen fill gaps identified by EAP results before the beginning of the fall term. In addition, Promise Pathways, launched in fall 2012, uses predictive placement, so LBUSD graduates who enroll in CSULB and LBCC are placed into English and math courses based on their high school grades, and prescriptive scheduling, so these students also enroll in foundational courses beginning in their first semester.

#### FIND OUT MORE

[www.longbeachcollegepromise.org](http://www.longbeachcollegepromise.org)

### Promise Pathways Lead to Higher Achievement

Achievement of educational milestones in first two years for fiscal year 2012 Promise Pathways students, by ethnicity

