

A Comparison of Basic Skills Success Rates and Basic Skills Action Planning Strategies in
the California Community Colleges

Prepared by

Academic Senate for California Community Colleges (ASCCC)

Jennifer Finton, MBA

Janet Fulks, EdD

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Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this study is to review the Basic Skills course success rates as reported in the Accountability Report for California Community Colleges (ARCC) from 2004-2008, focusing on the 2006-2007 academic year with relation to action planning strategies. Each community college action plan was required by the Chancellor's Office in an effort to create a locally-developed accountability for the Basic Skills Initiative funding. The plans were designed to link research on the 26 effective practices reported in *Basic Skills as a Foundation for Student Success in California Community Colleges* (2007) to the planning and spending of the Basic Skills Initiative funds. Colleges drafted Basic Skills Action Plans through a variety of methods listing planned actions and their corresponding **Effective Practice**, as well as identifying five-year goals. Although Action Plans were created for 2005-2006, 2006-2007 and 2007- 2008 academic years, the plans examined for this study were limited to the 2007-2008 Action Plans.

The Action Plans for colleges with the highest and lowest basic skills course success rates were examined in an effort to identify any correlation between the stated planned actions and basic skills success rate. For this paper, whenever course success rates or success rates are mentioned, it is referring Basic Skills coded courses only. The metric used in this analysis for each college was the Annual Successful Course Completion Rate for Credit Basic Skills Courses, from table 1.4 of the ARCC report. This ARCC metric includes students enrolled in credit basic skills courses that were retained to the end of the course with a final grade of A, B, C or CR, therefore in this context course completion is equivalent to course success. (The official definition and explanation is in Appendix A.) While many factors may contribute to basic skills success rates, such as local student population demographics, institutional support, funding, and basic skills remediation capacity, this study concentrated on investigating any correlations that may be indicators of institutional planning contributing to statewide success, or lack thereof, as reported in the locally developed Basic Skills Action Plans. In an effort to reduce inter-college comparisons and to concentrate on effective practices and success rates, the college identities have been removed from this report.

Research Questions

Are there any correlations between basic skills course success rates reported in the ARCC data and Basic Skills Action Plans indicating institutional intent to implement effective practices in basic skills?

- Do colleges with higher basic skills success rates have common action plans for similar effective practices that contribute to those higher basic skills success rate?
- Conversely, do colleges with low basic skills success rates have common action plans for similar effective practices that contribute to lower basic skills success rate?

What does the trend in basic skills success rate for colleges over the last three years indicate? Do these trends reveal anything about the colleges with the highest and lowest success rates? (Basic Skills funding has been available for 3 years and ARCC data can be reviewed for those three years.)

- Are colleges with low success rates doing the same practices year after year, which prove to be ineffective, rather than identifying and changing college culture to attain better success?
- Are successful colleges becoming more successful due to the structural changes implemented through the basic skills plans and strategies?

Methodology

The 2007-2008 ARCC data for basic skills success rates were examined to identify the highest and lowest statewide rates. Eleven colleges were identified as approximately the top 10% with regards to basic skills success rates (subset 1). These colleges are numbered college 1 through college 11 for identification purposes. Thirteen colleges were identified as approximately the bottom 10% of the colleges in their basic skills success rates (subset 2). These colleges were referred to as college 96 through college 109, for

identification purposes. First, these colleges were examined to determine whether any particular type of college, college community, geographic location or student population was inordinately represented in either group. Then the 2007-2008 Basic Skills Action plans of both subsets of colleges were analyzed for similarities and differences. Next, the 26 effective practices were used to isolate similarities and differences in the plans.

After completing the above analysis, the previous three years of ARCC data were examined to identify any trends in basic skills success rates for all 109 California community colleges. Rankings were assigned to each college based on their reported Basic Skills success rate trends. The rankings were defined as colleges with basic skills success rates varying between -2% and +2% were ranked as zero (0). Colleges with increasing trends from +2% to +4% were categorized as one (1) and colleges with trends indicating greater than 4% increase were categorized as two (2). Colleges with decreasing trends from -2% to -4% were categorized as minus one (-1) and colleges with trends indicating greater than 4% decrease were categorized as minus two (-2). A table indicating these categories can be found on page 11. The number of colleges in these trend categories was examined for an overall statewide picture. Then the two college subsets were analyzed for potential indications of longitudinal planning effectiveness.

Limitations to this Study

There are limitations to this study. The Action Plans are created locally as an accountability measure for BSI funding that supports local planning and college culture. A major concern is that the plans are only plans without a guarantee of actual investment or change in the college processes. Academic institutions often have plans to plan and expend numerous hours generating strategic plans and master plans but failing to implement them. In this same way the Basic Skills Action plans are projections or ideals creating a potential disconnect in the analysis concerning actual college actions. Examination of actual expenditure plans would provide better insight into the investment of BSI funding and the connections to basic skills success rates.

The basic skills success rates in this study were collected, analyzed and reported by the Chancellor's office, so while the analysis is consistent between the colleges (such as the definition for successful completion), the course data, coded at the institutional level, may vary between colleges or include errors, affecting the overall analysis. Another limitation involves changes to the coding by the individual colleges over the last three years which could produce apparent outcomes that are the result of recoding and not actual improvements or declines in outcomes.

Executive Summary

There is a wide range of Basic Skills course success rates across the state. The data describe two distinct subsets of colleges that this study examined: those California community colleges with approximately the top 10% of success rates (subset 1) and those in approximately the bottom 10% (subset 2). The difference between colleges with the highest and lowest success rates for 2006-2007 is 44.6%. Colleges exhibiting both high and low course success rates have anywhere from 1,458 FTEs per year to 22,101 FTEs per year. Colleges with both high and low success rates are geographically diverse, with representation from all corners of the state, including 21 Districts. Some colleges in both groups have district boundaries which include close proximity to transfer institutions; in addition, both groups have colleges that are very rural and distant from transfer institutions. Both groups have colleges within areas where populations exhibit either high or low post-secondary degrees.

Extrapolating information from the numerical data proved fruitful, as success rate comparisons can be made as well as trends for colleges. The statistical data were relatively clear and easily compared. However, the Action Plan comparison was not as straight forward. The information was narrative in nature and commonality between the plans was not always readily apparent. The language used in the plans varied and

some colleges assigned specific actions to Effect Practice categories that did not always appear relevant. In order to reduce subjectivity of the narrative analysis, the college plans were compared using the 26 Effective Practices, producing a more objective qualitative review of the individually devised local plans. **There was a very significant difference in the success rates of the top 10% of successful colleges and the bottom 10%, overall with a 44.6% difference between the top college and the lowest. Another significant finding was that the specific Effective Practices identified most often by those colleges with the highest course success rates rarely overlapped with those colleges with the lowest course success rates.**

Course success rates from 2004-2007 were used for this analysis but 2007-2008 Action Plans were examined. Further explanations or evidence for 2004-2007 course success rates may have been found in earlier Basic Skills planning documents at each college. One question that must be considered is whether the highest success rate colleges are focusing on certain Effective Practices because they've already integrated the practices identified by the less successful colleges. In an attempt to mitigate some of these factors, an analysis of the basic skills success trends for all 109 colleges over the last 3 years was completed. The trends indicated that in many cases there are patterns. Over this three year time period, sixty-one (61) colleges have maintained their Basic Skills success rates within a range of -2% to +2%, while twenty-five (25) colleges improved their basic skills success rate by 2% or more and twenty-four (24) colleges have a declining success rate greater than -2%. **More importantly, within the college subsets, the majority of those within the top 10% success rate are maintaining or increasing their success rate, while colleges in the bottom 10% show a pattern of maintaining or declining that success rate.**

The findings in this study are not definitive, some success rate fluctuations may be due to coding changes over the three year period and some coding differences may exist between the colleges examined. However, the information in this study does provide an excellent foundation for further studies. In addition the twenty-four (24) colleges identified represent a diverse sample or subset within the California community college system where pilot testing of various interventions to improve basic skills success could occur. A summary of these potential studies is in the conclusion of this document. Identifying strategies when success data reveal large fluctuations may help those colleges struggling with low course success rates to explore successful programs at other colleges. Identifying replicable strategies from successful colleges should provide evidence-based strategies for colleges that need to improve.

FINDINGS

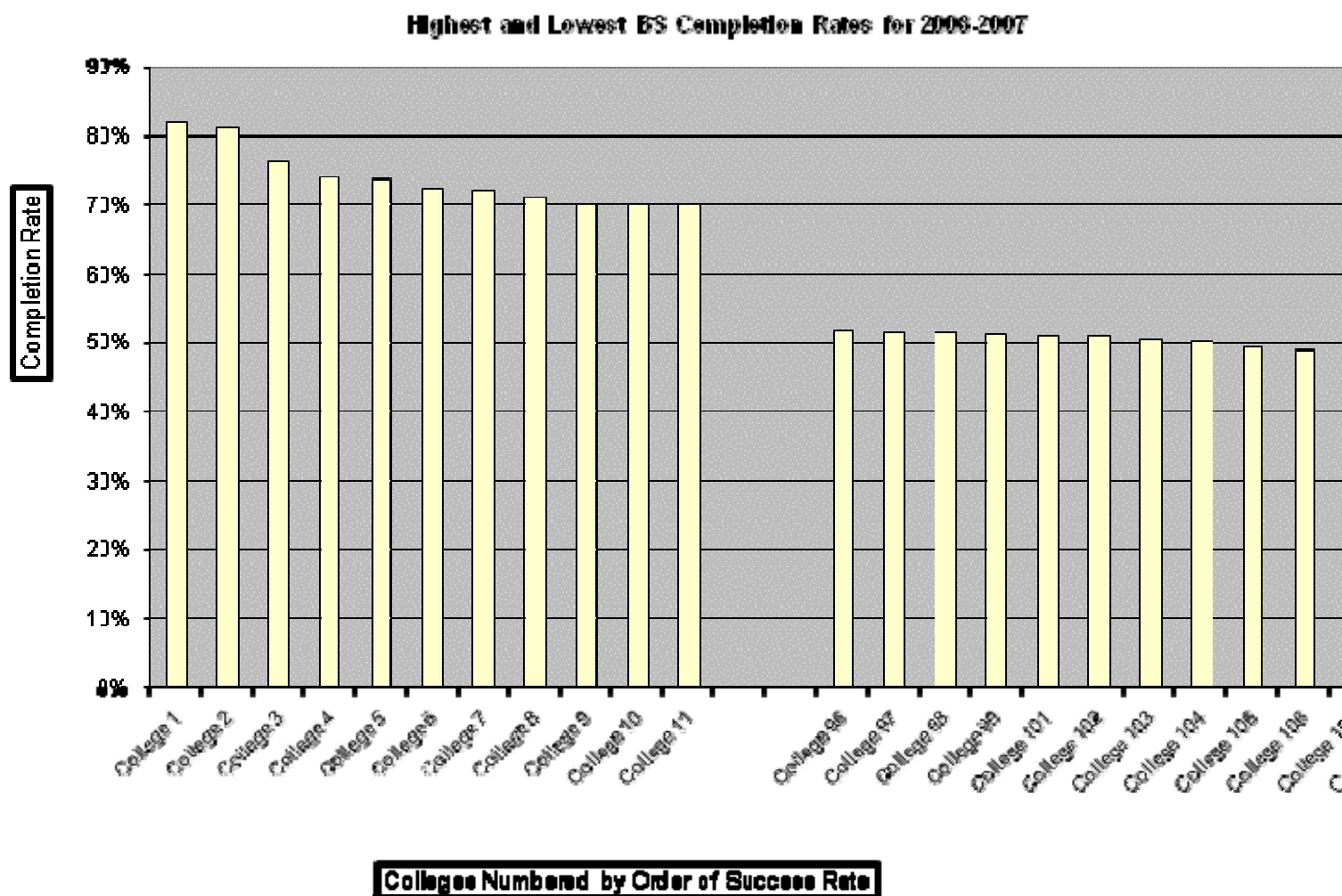
Highest and Lowest Basic Skills Course Success Rate Comparison

Data were obtained from ARCC (Accountability Reporting for the Community Colleges) for basic skills course completion/success among all 109 California community colleges included in that report. For comparison purposes, colleges representing approximately the top 10% basic skills success rates statewide and colleges representing approximately the lowest 10% statewide basic skills success rates were studied. Please see Figure 1 on the next page, which graphically displays the comparative success rates of the highest and lowest colleges in the state for 2006-2007. Eleven colleges recorded success rates of 70%-81.9% in subset 1 and were numbered colleges 1-11 for reference. In subset two, colleges with the lowest success rate, thirteen colleges had success rates between 37.3%-51.8 and were numbered colleges 96-109 for reference.

There is a difference of 44.6% between the highest and lowest success rates (College 1 and College 109). This represents a significant difference from highest to lowest but in addition the average of the first subset of eleven colleges is approximately 74% while the average of the second subset of thirteen colleges is only approximately 48%; an average difference of 26%. This represents a significant gap between the success rates that should be addressed.

Colleges with both high and low success rates are geographically diverse, with representation from all corners of the state, including 21 Districts. Both college subsets, those seeing both high and low course success rates, have anywhere from 1,458 FTEs per year to 22,101 FTEs per year. Colleges in both subsets are diverse in their proximity to a transfer institution with some colleges very close to numerous four-year institutions and others some distance from any transfer institutions. Both groups have colleges within areas where populations exhibit either high or low post-secondary degrees. The highest and lowest colleges include a diverse geography with some urban and some rural locations. The ethnic diversity of the colleges in each subset was not examined. Because basic skills success rates are distinctly varied within student populations, this represents an additional variable that should be considered in the future.

Figure 1



Action Plan Comparison

In a previous report (see “Effective Practices Summary with Actions” August 2008), the 2007-2008 Basic Skills and ESL Action Plans were examined and the number of colleges identifying each effective practice was tallied. Thirty-three to forty percent of colleges identified some of the same practices as part of their Action Plans. Specifically, practices B 3.2, B 3.1, C 2.1, A 3.2, D 2.1 were identified most often. Interestingly, the practices identified most often in the colleges with the highest success rates do not

correspond with those mentioned above. While some colleges did include the above practices in their Action Plans, other practices were identified more often. See Table 1 for a summary of the identified practices.

Table 1
Effective Practices Identified by Colleges with the Highest Basic Skills Success Rates

| <i>Highest Success Rates</i> | Practice identified by 3 (out of 10*) or more colleges | Practice identified most often with number in parenthesis |
|------------------------------|--|---|
| Practice A | A.1, A2.2, A.3, A3.1, A3.2, A4, A4.2, A5 | A2.2 (4), A.3 (4), A4.2 (4) |
| Practice B | B.2, B2.3, B2.4, B.3 | B2.4 (5) |
| Practice C | C.2, C.4, C.5 | C.4 (5) |
| Practice D | D1.1, D4.1, D.6, D6.1, D6.2, D9.1, D.10 | D.10 (5) |

* 11 colleges provided ARCC data putting them in the “Highest Basic Skills Success Rate” category for this study. It should be noted that when examining the Action Plans, not all of the action plans were available and usable; from the top 11 colleges only 10 had usable action plans and from the lowest 13 colleges, only 11 had usable basic skills action plans.

Only practice A 3.2 shows up as both a highly identified practice statewide and in the top 11 colleges with the highest success rates. Appendix B displays table comparing the planned actions of colleges with the highest success rates and the planned actions of colleges with the lowest success rates. The actions are organized using the Effective Practices general categories as identified in *Basic Skills as a Foundation for Student Success in California Community Colleges* (2007):

- Category A: Organizational and Administrative Practices
- Category B: Program Components
- Category C: Staff Development
- Category D: Instructional Practices

The purpose of this study is to try to identify the practices and actions that may explain why certain colleges have higher basic skills course success rates. The practices and associated actions shown in the above table were examined for the 11 colleges with the highest success rates.

Category A: Organizational and Administrative Practices

A complete listing of planned actions associated with practices in Category A comparing the two college subsets can be found in Appendix B. An overall summary for the highest basic skills success rate colleges is below:

Effective Practice A 2.2 is defined as, “Diverse institutional stakeholders are involved in developing the developmental education mission, philosophy, goals, and objectives.”

- Conduct faculty retreats for faculty teaching specific subjects.
- Establish a diverse task force to assess, review and implement developmental education programs focused on Basic Skills student success.
- Basic Skill Initiative Committees and Task Forces will work to develop a mission statement, philosophy, goals and objectives for the Basic Skills program.

Effective Practice A.3 is defined as, “The developmental education program is centralized or highly coordinated.”

- Establish a workroom suite for developmental education coordinators, faculty and students.
- Establish a committee representing basic skills instruction, advising, student services, Learning Center to coordinate basic skill support and funding.
- Appoint and/or create a visible presence for a college and basic skills coordinator.

Effective Practice A 4 is defined as, “Students are advised and encouraged to enroll only in college-level courses consistent with their basic skills preparation.”

- Inform students about developmental education courses appropriate to students’ skill levels through formal programs and expanded counseling and orientation.

Practices A 2.2, A.3 and A 4.2 were all identified by four out of the top eleven colleges. As previously stated above practice A 3.2 shows up as both a highly identified practice statewide. This strategy states, “Based upon the institutional structure, a dedicated administrator or lead faculty is/are clearly identified and accorded responsibility for college-wide coordination of basic skills program(s).”

Category B: Program Components

Please refer to Appendix C for a complete listing of planned actions associated with practices in Category B. An overall summary for the highest basic skills success rate colleges is below:

Practice B 2.4 was identified by almost half of the top 11 colleges. This practice is defined as “Multiple indices exist to evaluate the efficacy of developmental education courses and programs.”

The five colleges that identified this practice indicated that they would focus on:

- Evaluating academic and non-academic outcomes of basic skills students
- Reviewing basic skills success data and resources utilized and share or incorporate this information into program/curriculum planning.

Category C: Staff Development

A complete listing of Planned Actions associated with this Practice comparing the two college subsets can be found in Appendix D. An overall summary for the highest basic skills success rate colleges is below:

Practice C.4 was also identified by almost half of the colleges. Effective Practice C.4 is defined as “Staff development opportunities are flexible, varied, and responsive to developmental needs of individual faculty, diverse student populations, and coordinated programs/services.”

A brief summary of proposed actions is below.

- Securing development opportunities for faculty and adjunct faculty to participate in trainings on improved teaching basic skills students (ex. CATESOL conference).
- Identifying effective professional development practices for basic skills students.
- Creating a mentor program pairing experienced basic skills instructors with less experienced instructors.

- Host panels/workshops for basic skills students on course requirements and how to reach their goals.

Category D: Instructional Practices

A complete listing of Planned Actions associated with this Practice comparing the two college subsets can be found in Appendix E. An overall summary for the highest basic skills success rate colleges is below:

Practice D.10 was identified by almost half of the top 11 colleges. This Practice is defined as “A formal referral system exists between academic and student support services.”

A brief summary of proposed actions is below. For a full listing of planned actions in this category comparing the two college subsets, see Appendix E.

- Revise formal tutor referral and support systems for developmental classes.
- Provide additional tutoring and hours in specific subjects.
- Provide academic coaching in specific subjects.
- Hire full-time Basic Skills instructors and strengthen the Future Teachers Club.

A brief summary of proposed actions is below in Table 2.

Table 2

Effective Practices Identified by Colleges with the Lowest Basic Skills Success Rates

| <i>Lowest Success Rates</i> | Practice identified by 4 (out of 11*) or more colleges | Practice identified most often with number in parenthesis |
|-----------------------------|--|---|
| Practice A | A.1, A.3, A6.2 | A.3 (5) |
| Practice B | B.1.1, B1.3, B3.1, B.3.2 | B1.1 (5), B3.1 (5), B3.2 (5) |
| Practice C | C.1 | C.1 (4) |
| Practice D | D2, D2.1, D2.4 | D.2.1 (5) |

* 13 colleges provided ARCC data putting them in the “Lowest Basic Skills Success Rate” category for this study. However, only 11 of these colleges provided a usable Basic Skills Action Plan.

After looking at the practices identified most often statewide (see “Effective Practices Summary with Actions” August 2008), practices B 3.2, B 3.1, C 2.1, A 3.2, D 2.1 came to the top. The practices that overlap between those identified most often statewide and those identified most often by the colleges with the lowest basic skills success rates are B 3.2, B 3.1, and D 2.1. Of particular note, practices B 3.2 and B 3.1 were identified most often over all other practices statewide and D 2.1 was identified most often in Category D “Instructional Practices”.

Below is a summary of the planned actions associated with the effective practices identified most often per category for those colleges with the lowest basic skills success rates.

Category A: Organizational and Administrative Practices

Practice A.3 states. “The developmental education program is centralized or highly coordinated.” A complete listing of Planned Actions associated with this Practice comparing the two college subsets can be found in Appendix B. A summary for those colleges with the lowest basic skills success rates is below.

- Establish or strengthen an existing Committee/Group focused on Basic Skills instruction by adding additional members, increasing communication and utilizing all existing campus programs and services.
- Encourage faculty to meet to better integrate Basic Skills into specific disciplines across campus, including adjunct faculty.
- Expand or create a position to coordinate, support or inform about programs and services available relating to Basic Skills students.

Category B: Program Components

B 1.1 states, “Mandatory Orientation exists for all new students.” A complete listing of Planned Actions associated with this Practice comparing the two college subsets can be found in Appendix C. A summary for those colleges with the lowest basic skills success rates is below.

- Create a non-credit ESL course or use technology to enhance existing orientation.
- Review existing orientation process and curriculum.

Practice B 3.1 states “A proactive counseling/advising structure that includes intensive monitoring and advising serves students placed into developmental education courses.” A complete listing of Planned Actions associated with this Practice comparing the two college subsets can be found in Appendix C. A summary for those colleges with the lowest basic skills success rates is below.

- Develop a retention program including hiring an advisor.
- After evaluating and identifying issues specific to developmental education students, design an action plan and/or expand existing programs to address findings.
- Establish a process for student referrals to counselors.
- Implement a new program designed to provide on-going, proactive counseling throughout the school year.

Practice B 3.2 is “Counseling and instruction are integrated into the developmental education program.” A complete listing of Planned Actions associated with this Practice comparing the two college subsets can be found in Appendix C. A summary for those colleges with the lowest basic skills success rates is below.

- Increase counselor hours through new hires or reassignment.
- Create an Early Alert program allowing for faculty intervention.

- Create a presentation to be given in college skill level courses focusing on key learning strategies and where to go for assistance.
- Create a new learning community model that links courses and is advised by a counselor.

Category C: Staff Development

Practice C.1 “Administrators support and encourage faculty development in basic skills, and the improvement of teaching and learning is connected to the institutional mission.” A complete listing of Planned Actions associated with this Practice comparing the two college subsets can be found in Appendix D. A summary for those colleges with the lowest basic skills success rates is below.

- Increase training/workshop opportunities for faculty both on campus and statewide, as part of a staff development plan.
- Develop new and revive old curriculum.
- Improve all aspects of a basic skills staff development program, including increased communication, best practices and adjunct faculty inclusion.

Category D: Instructional Practices

Practice D 2.1 “Developmental courses/programs implement effective curricula and practices for English (reading/writing integration, writing across the curriculum, and use of writing labs).” A complete listing of Planned Actions associated with this Practice comparing the two college subsets can be found in Appendix E. A summary for those colleges with the lowest basic skills success rates is below.

- Develop a ‘First Year College Experience’ program.
- Create a program that supports faculty innovation and increases communication regarding best practices.
- Re-evaluate basic skills curriculum focusing on sequence, skill- and knowledge-building
- Conduct research to determine student retention, success and persistence rates.

Comparing Effective Practices from colleges with the highest and lowest basic skills success rates

Table 3 below, compares the Effective Practices identified by those colleges with the highest and lowest course success rates.

Table 3

Specific Effective Practice Comparison between the Two College Subsets

| | <i>Highest Success Rate</i> | | <i>Lowest Success Rates</i> | |
|------------|---|--------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|
| | Practice identified by 30% or more colleges | Practice identified most often | Practice identified by 36% or more colleges | Practice identified most often |
| Practice A | A.1, A2.2, A.3, A3.1, A3.2, A4, A4.2, A5 | A2.2, A.3, A4.2 | A.1, A.3, A6.2 | A.3 |
| Practice B | B.2, B2.3, B2.4, B.3 | B2.4 | B.1.1, B1.3, B3.1, B.3.2 | B1.1, B3.1, B3.2 |
| Practice C | C.2, C.4, C.5 | C.4 | C.1 | C.1 |
| Practice D | D1.1, D4.1, D.6, D6.1, | D.10 | D2, D2.1, D2.4 | D.2.1 |

| | | | | |
|--|---------------------|--|--|--|
| | D6.2, D9.1, D.10 | | | |
|--|---------------------|--|--|--|

Practices A.1 and A.3 in bold are the only practices identified often in both colleges with the highest and lowest basic skills success rates. It is interesting to note that there is very little overlap in practices identified by colleges with high and low success rates. Again please refer to Appendix B includes displays table comparing the planned actions of colleges with the highest success rates and the planned actions of colleges with the lowest success rates.

Basic Skills Course Success Rates Compared Over Three Years (2004-2007)

The ARCC data also provided information on the basic skills success rates for 2004-2007. These trends are plotted in the graph below for all 109 colleges. Rankings were assigned to each college based on their reported Basic Skills success rates. Table 4 displays how the rankings are defined:

Table 4
Three Year Trend Ranking Methodology

| Ranking | Definition | Number of colleges in each ranking statewide | Number of colleges in each ranking that defied their trend of last two years |
|---------|------------------------|--|--|
| 2 | Increased more than 4% | 14 | 2 |
| 1 | Increased 2-4% | 11 | 2 |
| 0 | Between -2% and 2% | 61 | 5 |
| -1 | Decreased 2-4% | 11 | 3 |
| -2 | Decreased 4% or more | 13 | 1 |

Figure 2

Changes in Basic Skills Course Completion Rates Over Three Years (2004-2007)

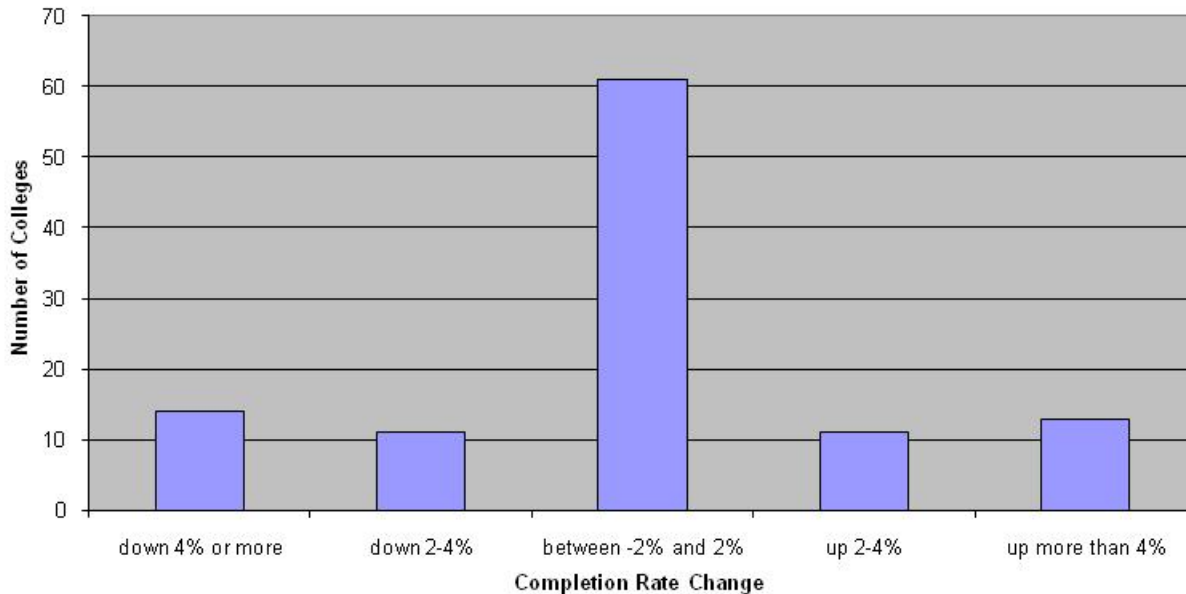


Figure 3 graphically represents the trends observed over the three years for the 109 Community colleges. However, if the 2004-2005 success rates did not support the trend observed in the last two years, it was noted and the 2005-2007 trend was used for the graph. For example, one college had success rates for the three years between 2004 and 2007 as 63.0%, 67.7%, and 61.1%, respectively. That college was given a -1 ranking to reflect the change in the last two years, but noted that the first year didn't support this trend. The graph shows that the majority of colleges (61) are maintaining their Basic Skills success rates within a range of -2% to +2%. Twenty-five colleges improved their basic skills success rate by 2% or more and twenty-four colleges have a declining success rate greater than 2%. In addition it was noted that some colleges have extremely large fluctuations, over +20% as well as -20%. This kind of change in success should be examined in order to determine whether coding or reporting changes or errors may contribute for this change.

Table 5 below, shows the number of the colleges with the highest and lowest basic skills course success rates and the basic skills success rate trends.

Table 5
A Comparison of Trends between the Two College Subsets

| | Highest BS Success Rates (out of 11 colleges) | Lowest BS Success Rates (out of 13 colleges) |
|------------------------|---|--|
| Increased more than 4% | 3 | 0 |
| Increased 2-4% | 1 | 2 |
| Between -2% and 2% | 6 | 5 |
| Decreased 2-4% | 0 | 0 |
| Decreased 4% or more | 1 | 6 |

These figures show that those colleges with the lowest Basic Skills course success rates are struggling to maintain their success rates even as low as they are. Almost half of the colleges with the lowest success rates saw their success rates decline by 4% or more over between 2004 and 2007. Some of the other colleges saw success rates decline more than 10% and one college had a decline of -25%. It would be important to determine whether this change was due to coding changes or other factors.

Additionally, 36% of those colleges with the highest course success rates saw increased course success rates over the three-year period. It is difficult to determine from the data used in this comparison, the cause for both the highest and lowest success rate colleges, and their trends. Especially concerning is the decline in success rates for the colleges identified as the 10% lowest basic skills success rates in the system.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The data describe two distinct subsets of colleges to examine: those California community colleges with the top 10% of success rates and those in the bottom 10%. Both subsets were very diverse and representative of the California community college system. A significant difference was observed in the success rates of the top 10% of successful colleges (subset 1) and the bottom 10% (subset 2), with an overall 44.6% difference between the top college (college 1) and the lowest (college 109). The average difference between the two subsets was 26%. Significantly, the specific Effective Practices identified most often by those colleges with the highest course success rates rarely overlapped with those colleges with the lowest course success rates.

In a previous report (see “Effective Practices Summary with Actions” August 2008), the 2007-2008 Basic Skills and ESL Action Plans were examined and the number of colleges identifying each effective practice was tallied. 33%-40% of colleges identified some of the same practices as part of their Action Plans. Specifically, practices B 3.2, B 3.1, C 2.1, A 3.2, D 2.1 were identified most often. Interestingly, the practices identified most often in the colleges with the highest success rates do not correspond with those mentioned above. Only A 3.2 (identification of a lead faculty or administrator to coordinate the basic skills program) shows up as both a highly identified practice statewide and colleges representing the 10% highest basic skills success rates. This feature relates directly to the centralized coordination of the program.

Within the college subsets, the majority of those within the top 10% success rate are maintaining or increasing their success rate, while colleges in the bottom 10% show a pattern of maintaining or declining that success rate. What does this mean and how can it be interpreted? It could be that those colleges with low basic skills success rates are doing the same ineffective practices, and even more so, leading to a lack of success. The analysis of the planned actions indicate that colleges with the highest success appear to have more plans to research, evaluate and generate data, perhaps informing resource allocation and structural decision-making more completely. The highest subset of colleges appear to be building upon existing structures whereas the lower subset of colleges appear to be in the developmental stage for many of the identified effective practices.

We acknowledge that the findings in this study are not definitive. Some fluctuations may be due to coding, either changes over the first 3 years of the ARCC report or differences between the college coding practices, none-the-less this information provides an excellent foundation for further studies. In addition, the twenty-four (24) colleges identified in the two subsets, represent a good sample of colleges where pilot testing of various interventions could occur. In addition, sample surveys and further basic skills success data could be collected from these 24 colleges in order to have adequate sampling of the 110 community colleges. Further study could look at the actual practices instead of the planned strategies for these colleges. In order to

examine the issues raised in the study the following suggested studies of existing data, survey data, and local college data are suggested.

Additional information could be examined from existing statewide data, such as:

- Disaggregating the student populations based upon ethnicity and comparing their success rates, may be important. Because basic skills success rates are distinctly varied within student populations, this represents an additional variable that should be considered in the future.
- Examination of the coding structure of each of the colleges e.g. while we knew some colleges coded intermediate algebra (the graduation requirement beginning Fall 09) as basic skills and others have not, we discovered that some colleges have coded algebra (and all courses in between) as basic skills, while others have not. Because the course coding determines the numbers of students analyzed for the basic skills success rate, these fourteen colleges should be examined for their coding practices and subsequent affect on the success rates.
- Whether the disaggregated data on ethnicity for each college leads to further helpful information

Some information could be collected by surveying these 24 colleges to find out:

- If the basic skills/developmental education program is centralized or decentralized. This is the number one effective practice identified by the majority of CCC's and one of the major considerations of NADE evaluations. Questions asked should include whether the college has identified and accorded responsibility to a point person, Basic Skills Coordinator (whether faculty or administration) for coordination of the basic skills program.
- What the pre-collegiate assessment and placement, methods and practices are. Questions should include the use of mandatory assessment and mandatory placement or attention to remediation needs within the first year.
- Whether the college supports programs exhibiting high levels of success e.g. Early Alert, First Year Experience, Accelerated Summer Program, Learning Communities, and other integrated services and the scale of those programs (% of students served)
- Faculty and administrative opinions about the BSI Action Plan development
- Faculty and administrative opinions about the progress of BSI Action Plan implementation

Information from local college databases could provide data regarding:

- What percent of students assessing into basic skills actually take a basic skills course
- What the average length of time to complete remediation is for individual students
- What the common number of courses students at each institution assess in to. In other words, the number or percentage of students assessing into 1, 2 3 or more basic skills classes are.
- The number or percentage of students testing into the various levels of reading, writing, math and ESL
- What the number of available basic skills course sections are compared to the number assessing into a basic skills course
- What percentage of basic skills students complete a degree or certificate
- What the comparison of outcomes is between those students completing the remediation work and those that do not
- What the ratio of counselors to student headcount at each institution
- The number of full-time and part-time instructors teaching the basic skills courses

Identifying strategies when success data reveals significant differences may help those colleges struggling with low course success rates to explore successful programs at other colleges and eventually improve. Getting a clear picture of what interventions work in California community colleges and why they might work under specific conditions will be invaluable to the system. After all, students with these needs represent

the majority of our students today and we should be diligent to explore how we can improve their success rates in every area. Improving basic skills student performance will improve all student performance and success in the CCC's. Neglecting to attend to these needs will guarantee that our student success will not remain constant, but rather continue to decline based on population growth and socioeconomic needs in the next decade.

Appendix A

ARCC Definition of Annual Successful Course Completion Rate for Credit Basic Skill

Appendix B: Methodology for College Performance Indicators**TABLE 1.4: ANNUAL SUCCESSFUL COURSE COMPLETION RATE FOR CREDIT BASIC SKILLS COURSES**

Methodology: The cohorts for basic skills course completion rate consisted of students enrolled in credit basic skills courses in the academic years of interest (2005-2006, 2006-2007, 2007-2008). These cohorts excluded "special admit" students, i.e., students currently enrolled in K-12 when they took the basic skills course. Basic skills courses were those having a course designation of B in CB08 (basic skills course). (Note that the CB08 = P for "Pre-collegiate basic skills" designation is no longer used under Title 5 or in COMIS and has been eliminated from these specifications). Success was defined as having been retained to the end of the term (or end of the course) with a final course grade of A, B, C, or CR.

Data Source: Chancellor's Office Management Information System (COMIS)

Cohort

All of the following must be true:

1. SB11 STUDENT-EDUCATION-STATUS NE 10000
2. CB04 COURSE-CREDIT-STATUS = C
3. CB08 COURSE-BASIC-SKILLS-STATUS = B
4. SX04 ENROLLMENT-GRADE = A, B, C, D, F, CR/P, NC/NP, I*, W, DR

Outcome

The student must complete the course with:

SX04 ENROLLMENT-GRADE = A, B, C, or CR/P

Calculation: Successful Course Completion Rate = Outcome/Cohort

The ARCC reports are posted on the California Community College Chancellor's Office website at <http://www.cccco.edu/SystemOffice/Divisions/TechResearchInfo/ResearchandPlanning/ARCC/tabid/292/Default.aspx>

Appendix B - Comparison of Basic Skills Action Plan Activities (Between the 10% Highest Colleges and 10% Lowest Basic Skills Success Rates)
 Specific Actions Identified Effective Practice Area B: Program Components

| <i>Effective Practice Area B: Program Components</i> | | | |
|--|---|--|---|
| | Colleges with the top 10% success rates | Colleges with the lowest 10% success rates | Observations |
| <p>Specific Planned Actions Category A <i>Practice A 2.2: Diverse institutional stakeholders are involved in developing the developmental education mission, philosophy, goals and objectives.</i></p> | <p><i>Practice A 2.2:</i> College 1: Conduct faculty retreats for Language Arts, Math and Science Divisions. College 9: Form a BSI Task Force in 2007-08, including diverse institutional stakeholders, to complete an institutional BSI Assessment in Spring 2008 in preparation for initiating a more detailed 2008-09 planning process that will define developmental education and will result in an adopted developmental education mission, philosophy, goals and objectives; a regular timeframe for future reviews and updates; and a process for communicating this information throughout the college. College10: The Basic Skills Initiative Committee will work closely with the Academic Senate and the college administration to develop a mission statement, philosophy, goals, and objectives. College 11: Establish a representative task force to identify appropriate administrative structures and practices that will adequately support and implement District policies and procedures to assure BSI student success and goal attainment. Centralized and distributed approaches will be scrutinized as well as committee and positional leadership option.</p> | | <p><i>The lowest 10% of schools did not indicate significant plans to spread the Basic Skills concept across the college.</i></p> |

| <i>Effective Practice Area B: Program Components</i> | | | |
|--|--|---|---|
| | Colleges with the top 10% success rates | Colleges with the lowest 10% success rates | Observations |
| <p>Specific Planned Actions Category A</p> <p><i>Practice A.3 The developmental education program is centralized or highly coordinated.</i></p> | <p><i>Practice A.3</i></p> <p>College 2: As part of the freshman experience program, create a visible presence for a coordinator of college skills.</p> <p>College 3: Establish a Basic Skills Committee chaired by the CIO & CSSO with representative members from basic skills instruction, advising, student services, and the Learning Center that coordinates basic skills support and recommends funding allocations.</p> <p>College 7: Lead faculty/coordinators are appointed for ESL, English, Math and Counseling. A Basic Skills Coordinator is appointed.</p> <p>College 8: An office and workroom suite to support the Foundations for College Success program is established, with areas for use by the developmental education co-coordinators, and with drop-in resource areas for faculty and students.</p> | <p><i>Practice A.3</i></p> <p>College 98: Support work of Core and Steering Committees and Focused Inquiry Groups (FIGS) including efforts to make projects visible. Specifically, use reassigned faculty time to support planning and coordination activities relating to basic skills. Approach SLO Taskforce for integration of some generic Basic Skills SLOs into individual disciplines.</p> <p>College 101: Develop position that will oversee the coordination and deployment of services in the college</p> <p>Create organizational structure that defines duties and responsibilities. Expand and coordinate academic support services. Create a dedicated Math Tutoring Center and bring all tutoring services into same location.</p> <p>College 102: Institutionalize the Basic Skills Committee.</p> <p>College 105: Fund weekly meetings for faculty teaching basic skills to maintain communication about individual students and design curriculum; design ongoing, effective program evaluation processes</p> <p>College 109: Establish a Basic Skills Organizational Structure encouraging faculty and staff to participate in the Basic Skills Initiative activities. Develop a timely, systematic and efficient communication mechanism which bridges instruction and support services (NAVIGATOR, First Alert, Academic success Center, etc.) Conduct meetings of basic skills faculty to work together across disciplines and include adjunct. Include at least one adjunct or two on the Basic Skills Committee. Have instructors who teach common courses to agree on a common skill set. Develop email group to share ideas.</p> | <p><i>Both the lowest and the highest colleges addressed centralization, a key factor in basic skills success. However, the highest success rate colleges appeared to have established central committees</i></p> |
| <p>Specific Planned Actions Category A</p> <p><i>Practice A 4.2</i></p> <p><i>Students are advised and encouraged to enroll in college-level courses consistent</i></p> | <p><i>Practice A 4.2</i></p> <p>College 5: Formally adopt a “basic skills first” or “mainstreaming model” for developmental education.</p> <p>College 9: Inform students about available developmental education courses appropriate to their skill levels.</p> <p>College 10: The Basic Skills Initiative Committee recommends</p> | | <p><i>Addressing remediation is a concern for some of the colleges with highest rates but not the lowest.</i></p> |

| <i>Effective Practice Area B: Program Components</i> | | | |
|--|--|--|--------------|
| | Colleges with the top 10% success rates | Colleges with the lowest 10% success rates | Observations |
| <i>with their basic skills preparation.</i> | that all students receive orientation before registering for classes. College 11: Expand counseling, orientation & Welcome Center | | |

Appendix C- Comparison of Basic Skills Action Plan Activities (Between the 10% Highest Colleges and 10% Lowest Basic Skills Success Rates)
Specific Actions Identified Effective Practice Area B: Program Components

| <i>Effective Practice Area B: Program Components</i> | | | |
|---|---|--|--|
| | Colleges with the top 10% success rates | Colleges with the lowest 10% success rates | Observations |
| Specific Planned Actions Associated with Category B Practice 1.1 <i>Mandatory orientation exists for all students.</i> | | <i>Practice B 1.1</i> College 102: Technology assisted orientation program available to all community students; Inmate student orientation improved with more counselor contact. College 103: Create a non-credit orientation for non-credit ESL students to introduce them to learning strategies, student support services and tutoring. This program would create a bridge to college credit classes and programs. College 104: Orientation- Mandatory orientation for all students; Comprehensive review of orientation process and curriculum College 108: Success of an on-line Orientation Program. | <i>The focus on mandatory orientation is important to the schools with low success. Could this already be a practice at the higher success colleges?</i> |
| Practice B 2.4 <i>Multiple indices exist to evaluate the efficacy of the developmental education courses and programs.</i> | <i>Practice B 2.4</i> College 2: Incorporate basic skills evaluative components into all formal institutional and program review and planning processes for both academic and non-academic programs. College 5: Complete a basic skills program review. Identify non-course related student learning outcomes in the developmental education program in the areas of advising, counseling, and learning support services and create a data plan to gather information on these outcomes. College 9: Create initial research capacity to track FLC developmental education students' progress throughout the curriculum and their use of support services. Share research findings with BSI Task Force members. | | <i>Notice the emphasis on research, evaluation, review collection of data and student learning outcomes amongst the top 10%.</i> |

| <i>Effective Practice Area B: Program Components</i> | | | |
|--|--|---|--|
| | Colleges with the top 10% success rates | Colleges with the lowest 10% success rates | Observations |
| | <p>College 10: Measure the student success and retention for those who completed their basic skills courses and have gone on to take transfer courses.</p> <p>College 11: Provide relevant data to assess and improve Basic Skills courses and programs.</p> | | |
| <p>Specific Planned Actions Associated with Category B <i>Practice B3.1</i> <i>A proactive counseling/ advising structure that includes intensive monitoring and advising serves students placed in developmental education courses.</i></p> | | <p><i>Practice B 3.1</i> College 97: Develop and implement a cohort model through Counseling. Through FYE, a cohort made up of 30 students enrolled in developmental education courses, will be assigned to one Counselor. Five cohorts will be in place in the fall 2008. Students will be assigned to a Counselor prior to enrollment. On-going, proactive counseling will take place throughout the year.</p> <p>College 102: A retention/follow-up program is developed to follow-up students in developmental courses coordinated by an academic advisor. Includes funding and hiring retention advisor.</p> <p>College 103: Using existing data and research, identify and define issues affecting CSS students enrolled in current college skills courses. Investigate and evaluate current First Year Experience program offerings. Design action plans to address problem areas unique to our CSS students, and expand the current First Year Program to meet those needs.</p> <p>College 104: CC&C Faculty Involvement-Establish a process for students to be referred to personal/crisis counselors.</p> <p><i>Practice B 3.2</i> College 97: Develop and implement a learning community model that links developmental math, English and Personal Growth. The counselor will not only counsel/advise students, but will also serve as the instructor for Personal Growth.</p> <p>College 102: Counseling services availability is expanded for ESL students. Requires additional staffing. An integrated courses and program is developed for the lowest level developmental student. Creation courses and additional staffing and Coordination with DSP&S. Provide increased basic skills counseling/advising, coordination support for vocational programs.</p> <p>College 103: Establish an Early Alert program that will allow faculty intervention early and at frequent intervals from the first day of class. Provide a strategy to increase faculty participation. Create a CSS presentation that can</p> | <p><i>In this section the top 10% indicate a desire to review data and do research to determine the efficacy of methods at colleges. Many of the colleges have plans to engage students more directly.</i></p> |

| <i>Effective Practice Area B: Program Components</i> | | | |
|--|---|---|--------------|
| | Colleges with the top 10% success rates | Colleges with the lowest 10% success rates | Observations |
| | | <p>be given in each college skills level course to introduce students to key learning strategies and encourage follow up counseling sessions mid-semester. Counseling strategies being used with the current ENGL 081 model should be expanded to include other CSS curriculum. Include Financial Aid information in the presentation.</p> <p>College 105: Hire .5 counselor or assign equivalent counseling hours dedicated to basic skills and hire psychological counselor.</p> <p>College 108: Provide a counselor for at least 20% assignment to work with BSI</p> | |

**Appendix D - Comparison of Basic Skills Action Plan Activities (Between the 10% Highest Colleges and 10% Lowest Basic Skills Success Rates)
Specific Actions Identified Effective Practice Area C: Staff Development**

| <i>Effective Practice Area C: Staff Development</i> | | | |
|--|---|--|--------------|
| | Colleges with the top 10% success rates | Colleges with the lowest 10% success rates | Observations |
| <p><i>Specific Planned Actions Associated with Category C Practice C.1 Administrators support and encourage faculty development in basic skills, and the improvement of teaching and learning is connected to the institutional mission.</i></p> | | <p><i>Practice C.1</i> College 98: Send team to MAC3 (Math Across the Curriculum) conference. Investigate expanding ESL sites. Investigate and develop vocational ESL (hospitality and child development). Develop new and revive old curriculum. Investigate a specifically named college’s Staff Development Institute of Teaching and Learning.</p> <p>College 108: Develop a staff development plan for faculty members serving basic skills students. This should include attendance at state and regional meetings as well as on campus activities.</p> <p>College 109: Conduct a staff development program to assist faculty who teach basic skills students. Include faculty sharing their expertise on what works. Provide training for tutors and peer mentors on how to teach study skills and time management and tie to actual class assignments. Provide training for supplemental instruction specialists. Inform faculty of the financial aid process. Involve staff and faculty in planning staff development activities.</p> | |

| <i>Effective Practice Area C: Staff Development</i> | | | |
|--|--|--|---|
| | Colleges with the top 10% success rates | Colleges with the lowest 10% success rates | Observations |
| | | Include adjunct faculty in the staff development activities. Provide training about learning disabilities and learning readiness. Have instructors write a 'best practice' to share. Promote faculty collaboration on what to address basic skills students and on how to teach collaborative learning. Provide diversity training and ways to incorporate diversity activities into the basic skills courses. Have 100% of the faculty involved in some basic skills activity. Provide training to establish a Teaching Excellence Center. Provide incentives for participants in staff development (e.g. adjuncts) | |
| <p>Specific Planned Actions Associated with Category C</p> <p><i>Practice C.4</i></p> <p><i>Staff development opportunities are flexible, varied, and responsive to developmental needs of individual faculty, diverse student populations, and coordinated programs/services.</i></p> | <p><i>Practice C.4</i></p> <p>College 2: Build mentor programs for faculty with Basic Skills student experience to mentor others. Bring the 'On Course' workshops back. Host a panel for Basic Skills students as an orientation/reality flash to the requirements in reading and writing for a variety of courses. Host a panel for Basic Skills students encouraging persistence in their educational goals. Help faculty develop active listening skills for conferences with Basic Skills students. Design panel to discuss ways to mitigate the culture of cheating. Also to discuss ways to convince students that learning is the objective not only the grade. More basic skills study skills classes and training for instructors.</p> <p>College 3: Faculty flex and other professional development opportunities for improving the teaching and referral of basic skills students are planned by a committee of instructors in consultation with the Basic Skills Committee. Guidelines are stipulated by the Office of Instruction for receiving stipends, release time, and service credit for professional development related to basic skills and ESL instruction.</p> <p>College 4: Conduct meetings for instructional and counseling faculty to identify effective professional development practices that serve ESL/Basic Skills students.</p> <p>College 7: Provide faculty training in developing and presenting the</p> | | <p><i>Many of the top 10% colleges are focusing on professional development directed at basic skills issues for faculty and counselors.</i></p> |

| <i>Effective Practice Area C: Staff Development</i> | | | |
|---|---|--|--------------|
| | Colleges with the top 10% success rates | Colleges with the lowest 10% success rates | Observations |
| | <p>writing component of their classes. Provide faculty training in effective teaching practices in the content areas of World Languages, English, Math, and Business; as well as ways to address the topic of incorporating study skills into their classes. Provide college wide faculty and staff with training in meeting the needs of basic skills students in an effective and supportive manner. Integrate adjunct faculty into training and professional development opportunities focused on enhancing the success of basic skills students and provide stipends to adjunct faculty to support their participation in these trainings. ESL and Bridge English faculty participation in professional development activities (for example, CATESOL Conference).</p> | | |

Appendix E – Comparison of Basic Skills Action Plan Activities (Between the 10% Highest Colleges and 10% Lowest Basic Skills Success Rates)

Specific Actions Identified in Effective Practice Area D: Instructional Practices

| <i>Effective Practice Area D: Instructional Practices</i> | | | |
|---|--|--|--------------|
| | Colleges with the top 10% success rates | Colleges with the lowest 10% success rates | Observations |
| <p>Specific Planned Actions Associated Category D <i>Practice D2.1 Developmental courses/programs implement effective curricula and practices for English</i></p> | | <p><i>Practice D 2.1</i></p> <p>College 97: Design and implement research studies to determine rates of student retention, success, and persistence (such as transition to Engl 101, success in ESOL 40, self-paced math classes vs. traditional, impact of Learning Communities, and impact of portfolio testing).</p> <p>College 103: Create a coordinated program to support faculty innovation and information dissemination.</p> <p>Re-evaluate the basic skills curriculum with a focus on sequence, skill- and knowledge-building.</p> <p>College 104: (Inst. Effectiveness) Writing, Reading, and Computation Across the Curriculum- Workshops regarding evaluation of reading, writing, and computational assignments across the curriculum.</p> <p>College 108: Develop a ‘First Year College Experience’ program.</p> | |
| <p>Specific Planned Actions Associated Category D <i>Practice D.10 Programs provide comprehensive academic support mechanisms, including the use of trained tutors.</i></p> | <p><i>Practice D.10</i></p> <p>College 4: Refine academic support systems to improve course persistence rates.</p> <p>College 5: Revise guidelines and processes for formal tutor referral in developmental courses, including those online.</p> <p>College 7: Provide academic coaching in math. Provide academic coaching in English in the classroom and in the writing center. Provide tutoring in ESL. Provide tutoring in GED classes.</p> <p>College 10: Hire full-time Basic Skills instructors (at 2 sites). Strengthen the Future Teacher Club in every facet of development.</p> <p>College 11: Increase the number of tutoring hours and other instructional support hours in the Tutoring Centers</p> | | |

| <i>Effective Practice Area D: Instructional Practices</i> | | | |
|---|---|--|--------------|
| | Colleges with the top 10% success rates | Colleges with the lowest 10% success rates | Observations |
| | and labs across the curriculum and throughout the District. | | |

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