

Case Study

Improving Course Placement

**Thomas Jefferson High School
Denver, Colorado**

Target Students: 12th-Graders

Pilot Duration: 36 weeks

Implementation Model:
Independent Study with Guidance

Executive Summary

Use of ACCUPLACER®//MyFoundationsLab® helped 12th-graders at Thomas Jefferson High School make impressive gains in course placement for college when used as a resource for independent study. Pretest placement scores compared to posttest placement scores demonstrate that students saved significant time and money while preparing for college matriculation, with 17 students bypassing 21 courses in reading alone.

Implementation Details

In the 2013 school year, Thomas Jefferson High School became part of a three-school pilot program conducted by Denver Public Schools in partnership with the College Board ACCUPLACER program and Pearson. Forty-five students began the pilot by taking ACCUPLACER placement tests in Reading Comprehension, Sentence Skills, Arithmetic, and Elementary Algebra to establish initial course placements in the Colorado Community College System curricula sequence in reading, English, and math. Next, they took the corresponding diagnostics to define their learning paths in MyFoundationsLab and provide additional instructional data for teachers. Students worked on assignments during the school day as part of their English and/or math classes as well as in the AVID classroom during lunch and other available times. At the conclusion of the school year, 29 students were posttested with ACCUPLACER placement tests in Reading Comprehension, Sentence Skills, and Elementary Algebra once again to determine score and/or course gains.

While results were most dramatic in Reading Comprehension, all content areas showed improved achievement from pre- to posttesting.

| | Average Pre-Test Score | Average Post-Test Score | Average Gain | Percentage of Students with Score Gains |
|------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|--------------|---|
| Reading Comprehension | 58.4 | 70.9 | 12.5 | 75.90% |
| Sentence Skills | 72.4 | 75.8 | 3.4 | 62.10% |
| Elementary Algebra | 52.7 | 56 | 3.3 | 51.70% |

Table 1 Pre- to post-placement testing shows impressive gains in average scores as well as the majority of students gains from their intervention experience.

| <i>N</i> = 29 | Number of Students Gaining Course Placement Levels | Number of Courses Bypassed | Number of Developmental Courses in the Curricula | Students Placing Into College Level Course Work |
|------------------------------|--|----------------------------|--|---|
| Reading Comprehension | 17 | 21 | 3 | 8 |
| Sentence Skills | 7 | 7 | 3 | 2 |
| Elementary Algebra | 10 | 19 | 4 | 2 |

Table 2 When using test scores to determine potential course placement in the Colorado Community College system, students demonstrated impressive gains in placement that translated to significant savings in both time and tuition dollars. (Note that math placement is estimated for some students because the system's placement policy includes the Arithmetic test, which was not given as a posttest here.) Particularly in Reading Comprehension, a significant number of students placed directly into college-level, credit-bearing course work.

| | Available Topics | Average Number of Topics Assigned | Average Number of Topics Mastered | Average Time Per Student |
|-----------------|------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Reading/Writing | 40 | 14.8 | 1.2 | 1:52:06 |
| Math | 77 | 36.4 | 3.1 | 3:43:09 |
| Total | 117 | 46.9 | 1.8 | 2:52:24 |

Table 3 While students had lengthy learning paths assigned in MyFoundationsLab, improvement in test scores and course placement does not require a large time commitment.

*Students may have worked on and benefited from instructional activities in a particular topic without attempting the Mastery Quiz, which is not counted here.

Lessons Learned

- Targeted instruction delivered by ACCUPLACER//MyFoundationsLab delivers strong gains in student achievement as measured by pre- and post- ACCUPLACER placement testing.
- Independent study through ACCUPLACER//MyFoundationsLab monitored and guided by a teacher can make a significant difference in student achievement.

Implementation Model

Independent Study with Guidance

This instructional model allows students to work on their own in the ACCUPLACER//MyFoundationsLab online intervention curricula while also receiving some monitoring and guidance from a teacher/instructor. There is no provision for dedicated class time or access to hardware; students must provide their own computer and manage their own learning with minimal support.

Measure of Success

Improvement in Placement Levels

Pilot program sites were able to identify the percentage of students who improved their course placement and the number of courses bypassed by comparing students' placement levels from pre- to post-assessment. Pilots used the ACCUPLACER placement test as the pre- and post-assessment measure.

Implementation Model

- Independent Study
- Independent Study with Guidance
- Lab Class
- Blended Instruction

Measure of Success

- Improvement in Scores
- Improvement in Placement Levels
- Improvement in Proficiency Levels
- Performance in Subsequent Courses

Location

- Urban
- Suburban
- Rural
- Online

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