

School Name Florida State College at Jacksonville, Jacksonville, FL

Course Name P.E.R.T. (Postsecondary Education Readiness Test) Diagnostic, Remediation, and Retest Pilot

Course Format Online

Key Results More than 50% of students retest as college-ready on the PERT after a low-cost, self-directed remediation course using MyFoundationsLab.

Submitted by

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Course materials

MyFoundationsLab; Smarthinking

Studies show that students who start college fully college-ready are more likely to persist term-to-term and to degree or certificate completion. With this in mind, in summer 2012 Florida State College at Jacksonville (FSCJ) ran a PERT Diagnostic, Remediation, and Retest pilot at Kent Campus using developmental skills software from a non-Pearson vendor. The goal of the pilot was to accelerate student progress from developmental courses to college credit-bearing courses for the fall semester. Students who tested into two or fewer upper-level developmental courses (based on their PERT scores) were selected to participate. In this 2012 pilot, 34.7 percent of students passed their PERT math, reading, or writing retests. We determined that the non-Pearson software program did not meet school expectations and lacked adequate tutorial support.

In addition to evaluating our course materials, we also looked at how our students' success correlated to where they scored on the PERT assessment. PERT data from fall 2012 indicated that the test's cut score ranges are a predictor for likelihood

of success. Students who scored in the upper half of the PERT placement score range had a 75.8 percent average likelihood of success in the course compared to 54.2 percent of students with PERT scores in the lower half of the range. Further analysis in upper-level developmental math, reading, and writing courses comparing course success to PERT placement score ranges divided into quartiles showed a high correlation between students who had math PERT scores in the upper two quartiles of the placement range and likelihood of success in the course.

We used this data in planning our summer 2013 pilot, targeting this group of students. We also reassessed our materials and decided to use Pearson's MyFoundationsLab and Smarthinking math tutors in the revised course. The goal of the program is to provide a zero-cost way to accelerate a specific group of students into college credit-bearing courses. The program is run out of each campus's Assessment and Certification Center and is funded by the \$22 PERT retest fees. A total of 250 students from FSCJ's five major campuses completed this pilot.

Implementation

Students take the PERT in their Campus Assessment Center. If a student's PERT scores fall within the required range, the assessment manager calls the student and explains the program, emphasizing that, after working in MyFoundationsLab for a short amount of time, the student may retest. If their scores improve sufficiently, they may then accelerate into college credit-bearing courses for the fall. We let all students know why they are candidates for the program, and we are completely transparent with the data, showing them that, if they put in the effort in MyFoundationsLab, they are likely to succeed.

Each student takes the MyFoundationsLab Path Builder. Assessment managers review the scores and personalized Learning Paths with each student, explaining which areas are mastered, which still need mastery, and how to progress through the MyFoundationsLab Learning Path. Assessment

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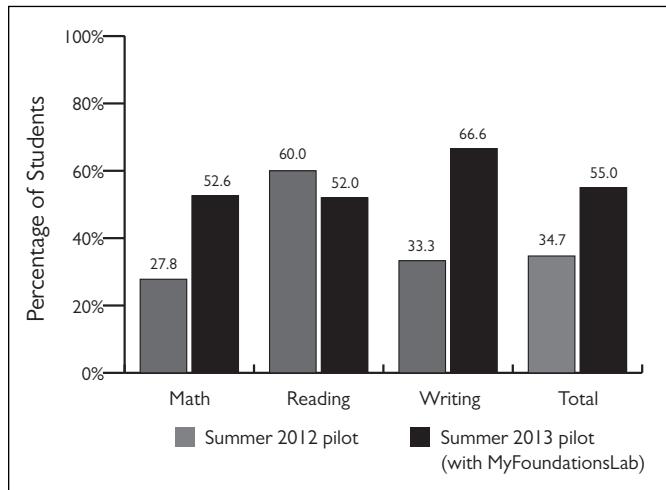


Figure I. Percentage of Students Who Retested College-Ready on the PERT (2012 Pilot: n=72 students / Math n=54, Reading n=15, Writing n=3; 2013 Pilot: n=127 / Math n=78; Reading n=25; Writing n=24)

managers also demonstrate how to use Smarthinking online tutoring. PERT retests are scheduled a minimum of two weeks out. Students who need to retest in more than one area are given at least four weeks before retesting. When students take this retest, they know it is a big deal: they definitely do not want to have to take developmental courses.

Benefits and best practices

We customized the Path Builder to harness the robust math portion of MyFoundationsLab, to facilitate navigation of the technology by students who can easily become overwhelmed, and to align the assignments with the learning outcomes of Elementary and Intermediate Algebra. Some students choose not to retest and instead start the fall term in upper-level developmental courses, recognizing that they aren't ready for college credit-bearing courses. This in itself is a success story: because students can see how well they are doing on the MyFoundationsLab modules, they learn to evaluate their own academic needs and take responsibility for their progress.

Results and data

- Student success rates on the PERT retest jumped from 27.8 percent to 52.6 percent in Math, and from 33.3 percent to 66.6 percent in Writing. Reading rates slightly dropped.
- On average, 55 percent of the students who retested placed into college credit-bearing courses.
- Students who spent more than 40 hours in the math portion of MyFoundationsLab showed the most success when retested.

The student experience

Students were completely self-directed and self-motivated to succeed. Instead of spending 16 weeks and hundreds of dollars on developmental course that do not carry course credit, they can start their college education earning credit toward their degree right away.

Conclusion

We attribute the increased PERT retest rates to the following factors:

- MyFoundationsLab is more effective and more fully aligned to our program than the software used in the 2012 pilot.
- The 2013 pilot targets students who are more likely to be successful in the program based on their PERT placement scores.
- The Assessment Center managers take a proactive approach in interacting with and encouraging students.

Data analysis tracking the short- and long-term results of students who have completed the pilot program with MyFoundationsLab has already begun. We are examining whether the MyFoundationsLab students are more academically successful than their on-campus counterparts who take traditional developmental courses and if they are more likely to persist to degree or certificate completion. In the future, I see MyFoundationsLab being used for all developmental education students, as a low-cost, boot camp remediation with faculty oversight, as a gateway course, or in a modularized course.