

School Name Cleveland Community College, Shelby, NC

Course Names Integrated Reading and Writing

Course Format Lab-based, accelerated

**Key Results** From 2013 to 2015, students who had completed developmental reading and writing subsequently passed Freshman Composition at a rate of 87.5 percent, exceeding the 85 percent benchmark, a testament to their preparedness for college-level work.

**Submitted by**  
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**Course materials**  
*Cleveland Community College Manual for Integrated Reading and English* (Custom text); MySkillsLab

### Setting

Cleveland Community College (CCC) is a public, two-year, suburban institution located in a rural county. With an annual enrollment of 6,300 students (2013–2014), approximately 50 percent enter immediately following high school graduation while the other 50 percent are nontraditional students returning to school after time spent in the workforce.

Each year, approximately 200 students at Cleveland Community College are determined to need remedial education and are required to complete one or more courses in developmental studies before progressing on to credit-bearing courses. A 2013 *Multiple Measures* policy established new criteria for determining recent high school graduates' readiness for college-level courses based on high school GPA and ACT/SAT scores, and as a result, this is a lower number of remedial students than in the past.

### Challenges and Goals

In fall 2013, CCC was one of five schools to pilot a new three-level, eight-week integrated reading and writing (DRE) sequence developed as part of a state initiative in North Carolina to redesign developmental education curricula at community colleges.

The primary goals of the redesign initiative were to increase the number of students who complete developmental education and enroll in college-level courses and to accelerate this process. The initiative launched statewide in January 2014. The primary course goals of the DRE sequence are for students to:

1. Demonstrate the use of reading and writing processes.
2. Apply critical thinking strategies in reading and writing.
3. Recognize and compose well-developed, coherent, and unified texts.

From 2010–2013, CCC offered two levels of integrated reading and writing courses with MySkillsLab. When the redesign initiative required three levels of instruction, we felt that MySkillsLab could facilitate this change and enable us to reestablish common standards for topic coverage through mastery-based learning. In addition, we believed that MySkillsLab's adaptive learning feature (powered by Knewton) would further personalize each student's experience working through topics.

### Implementation

Fifteen to seventeen sections of integrated reading and writing courses are currently offered each semester with 10–15 students per section. Students meet in a computer lab for two hours and 45 minutes twice a week. In spring 2015, Cleveland Community College began using the MyLabsPlus version of MySkillsLab for ease of batch registration and data collection.

Three master courses were created in MySkillsLab. Each level of integrated reading and writing corresponds to the introductory, intermediate, or advanced level of MySkillsLab. We edited the content coverage of modules and topics in MySkillsLab to match the requirements set for each level by the state of North Carolina. We embed a course schedule in Blackboard, our school's Learning Management System, with due dates and expectations for what students should be working on in each of the 16 class meetings. Students may work ahead if they wish, but they must continue to attend class until all of the course requirements are met.

#### Students work primarily in two areas in MySkillsLab:

**Reading and Writing Skills.** Students begin by taking the diagnostic Path Builder which generates a personalized Learning Path for each student. We also post a list of required topics

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on our Learning Management System. The level one course covers 41 topics from five modules; level two covers 45 topics from five modules; level three covers 52 topics from six modules.

Prerequisites are set in all MySkillsLab courses so that students can demonstrate topic mastery, and earn credit, on either the Path Builder or Skills Checks for skills in which they are already proficient. Setting prerequisites at the topic level ensures that students work through the material in an organized manner and cannot skip to the post-test without first working through the topic content.

For topics not mastered via the Path Builder or a module-level Skills Check, students must complete one Recall, Apply, and Practice. They have two chances to achieve an 80 percent or higher on each post-test to earn completion credit. Students complete this portion of the course by taking the Mastery Check, again with two chances to achieve 80 percent or higher.

We enable the Adaptive Learning Path (powered by Knewton) in MySkillsLab, which responds in real-time to individual student performance and activity and recommends topics for the student to work next.

**Reading Level (Lexile).** Students must meet certain Lexile benchmarks to pass each level of integrated reading and writing. The level one Lexile benchmark is 960; level two is 1070; level three is 1185. In the past, we required a certain number of readings, but because Reading Level work accounts for 20 percent of the course grade, students are generally motivated to reach or exceed the benchmark scores independently.

We remove some of the lower-level Lexile content to help students get started at a level that will help them reach the appropriate benchmark: In level 2 we remove Lexile levels 400 and 500. In level 3 we remove 400 through 700.

Although not required, about five percent of students also work on topics in the English as a Second Language (ESL) area of MySkillsLab and/or the Study Skills area. We do not currently have students write in MySkillsLab, but rather implement MySkillsLab to help students use higher thinking skills in writing their essays. During the first week of class, we have students write a response to a reading selection from our custom text.

Students write an essay and answer two discussion questions. At the end of the semester, we give students the same reading passage and ask them to write an extended response that counts as the final exam. Using the same rubric gives us an easy way to measure improvement from the beginning to the end of the course.

#### Assessment

Grades for all DRE courses are Pass (P) or Re-enroll (R) for students who do not reach 80 percent mastery on all major assessments.

30 percent	Essays (3)
20 percent	MySkillsLab Lexile work
20 percent	Completion of MySkillsLab topics and Mastery Check post-assessment
20 percent	Writing sample final exam
10 percent	Reading quizzes (4)

#### Results and Data

We measure the success rate of former DRE students taking Freshman Composition with a success rate benchmark of 85 percent. We have exceeded the benchmark in the last two academic years (see Figure 1). These success rates are a testament to the DRE program preparing students to succeed in the subsequent college-level course.

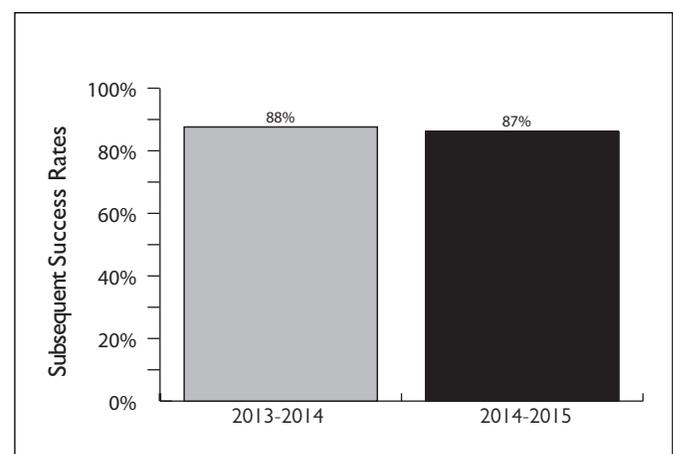


Figure 1. Subsequent Success Rates in Freshman English for Former DRE Students Exceed 85 Percent Benchmark: 2013–2014 ( $n=66$ ); 2014–2015 ( $n=77$ )

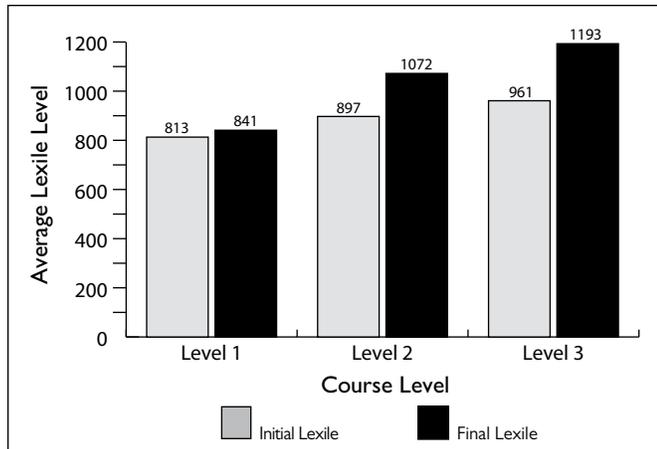


Figure 2. Average Initial and Final Lexile Levels, Spring 2015: DRE Level 1 ( $n = 19$ ); DRE Level 2 ( $n = 24$ ); DRE Level 3 ( $n = 57$ )

Student improvement from initial to final Lexile level, as well as improvement from Path Builder to Mastery Check, increases at each level of DRE, indicating a building of skills as they move through the sequence. (See Figures 2 and 3).

We acknowledge that it is a challenge for students to move through the DRE sequence. Our college's open-enrollment policy brings us students with a wide range of ability levels, and we are continuing to tweak our curriculum to improve success rates. For example, in level 1 we are substituting different readings in our custom text that we think will resonate better with our students' reading abilities. Course redesign is an ongoing process, and we continue to be open to making changes to help improve learner outcomes.

### The Student Experience

MySkillsLab enables students to work at their own pace and targets specific skills that they need to strengthen. If students are not hitting the established benchmarks, they know that they need to ask for help. Class lectures have become more pertinent because instructors can spend time teaching skills that the majority of students need help with, rather than marching through a lesson on skills that everyone has already mastered.

MySkillsLab fosters accountability and helps students take control of their learning and their success. I have had many Composition instructors tell me that former DRE students are the most prepared students in their classes!

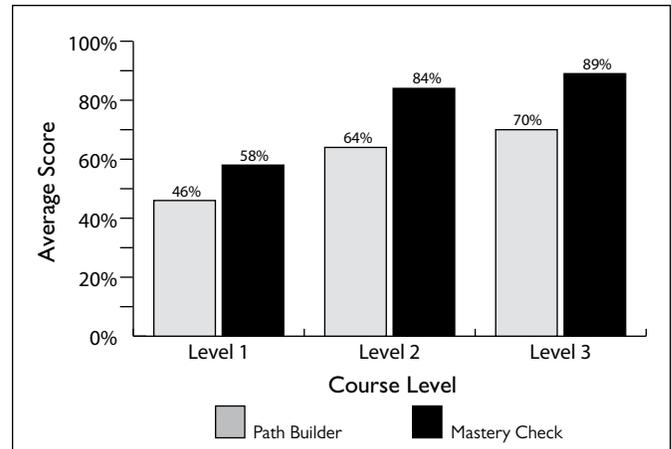


Figure 3. Average Path Builder Scores, Spring 2015: DRE Level 1 ( $n = 19$ ), DRE Level 2 ( $n = 24$ ), DRE Level 3 ( $n = 55$ ); and Average Mastery Check scores: DRE Level 1 ( $n = 10$ ), DRE Level 2 ( $n = 17$ ), DRE Level 3 ( $n = 36$ )

What students are saying:

- “MySkillsLab helped me by giving hints when I missed a question.”
- “MySkillsLab is a great resource for returning students. It provides great learning material, and it's easy to follow.”
- “MySkillsLab helped me to learn more about the different ways to write essays.”

### Conclusion

We couldn't teach our DRE courses without MySkillsLab. It acts as a “teaching assistant” in class, allowing students to bolster the skills they need while instructors can concentrate on teaching students critical thinking and reading skills. I believe MySkillsLab offers our students the highest-quality personalized learning resource available.

When we think about the course redesigns sweeping the nation, it is important to remember that we are not reinventing the wheel—we are simply helping it roll in a different way. I believe integrating reading and writing makes sense for our students. It is encouraging to see that students who pass developmental courses are succeeding in Composition at such a high rate.

Implementation and results case studies share actual implementation practices and evaluate possible relationships between program implementation and student performance. The findings are not meant to imply causality or generalizability within or beyond these instances. Rather, they can begin to provide informed considerations for implementation and adaptation decisions in other user contexts. For this case study, mixed-methods designs were applied, and the data collected included qualitative data from interviews, quantitative program usage analytics, and performance data. Open-ended interviews were used to guide data collection.