

School Name	MiraCosta College, Oceanside, CA
Course Name	English Skills Lab (developmental reading and writing)
Course Format	Lab-based, self-paced

Key Results With MySkillsLab, placement rates into credit-bearing courses have increased from 32 percent to 42 percent in English 100 (college-level writing) and from 46 percent to 60 percent in Reading 100 (college-level reading).

Submitted by

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Course materials

Custom workbook, MySkillsLab

MiraCosta's Adult High School Diploma Program (AHSDP) prepares adults for higher education and increased employability in a supportive, challenging, accessible environment that respects and honors diversity. The program is designed for students 18 years of age or older who wish to complete the requirements for a high school diploma or prepare to take the GED. English, reading, and math courses are also appropriate for persons who simply wish to increase their skills in preparation for college classes, employment, advancement in the workplace, or for personal growth. Courses are tuition-free; students pay for course materials only.

Challenges and Goals

The goal of English Skills Lab is to help students achieve reading and grammar competencies and be better prepared to enter into credit-bearing college courses. We chose to use MySkillsLab because it allows AHSDP students to work independently and at their own pace to gain the reading, writing, and grammar skills they need to take the program competency tests. Also, MiraCosta's 2013 AHSDP Self-Study Postsecondary Report states that, "the institution is actively engaged in integrating new technology into the instructional program of the school." Because technology literacy is critical to helping our students succeed in college and in life, using MySkillsLab gives them important experience in navigating the online world.

Implementation

The course is taken through the Computer Learning Lab. After a mandatory orientation session, students develop their individual schedule of attendance to meet the requirements for earning five high school credits. Student must complete the assigned work within the term and participate in a minimum of 48 hours of instruction.

Over eight weeks, students must spend at least six hours per week in MySkillsLab. They may come to the lab at any time, log in to the attendance tracking system, and complete their hours. Depending on their TABE score, students may need to take the reading and/or writing Path Builders (we use the shortened 55-question versions), after which they follow their individual Learning Paths. We set mastery for the posttest at 70 percent, and students have two chances to pass.

In a typical computer lab session, students work independently in MySkillsLab and take their posttests (we allow students to work on everything except the posttests outside of the lab). They answer questions in the workbook, record their post-test scores in the workbook, and present their workbook to the instructor on duty. Since this is an independent course with no lecture, this "mini-meeting" with the instructor serves as a checkpoint and holds students accountable. The workbook confirms that students are doing their work and not just clicking through the material. Students also complete writing assignments in MySkillsLab because we believe it is important for them to have practice with composing on the computer.

To give students a fast track to the competency tests, we allow them to take the Skills Check within the MySkillsLab modules to demonstrate topic mastery and test out of certain topics. Students who do not do well on the competency test the first time are assigned more work in MySkillsLab before they retake the test.

Often students need more than eight weeks to complete the course, so we allow them to enroll up to four times. We always start each term by having students take the Path Builder so they can see their improvement from term to term. After retaking the Path Builder, students pick up where they left off on their MySkillsLab Learning Path and in the workbook.

Assessments

80 percent	MySkillsLab posttests and writing assignments
20 percent	Competency tests (4)

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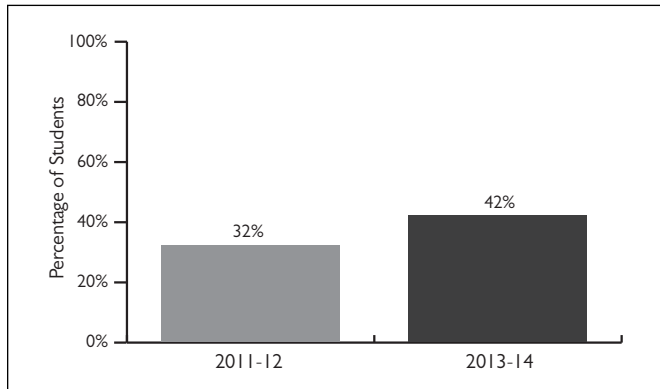


Figure 1. AHSDP Students Successfully Placing into English 100: Composition and Reading in 2011–12 and 2013–14

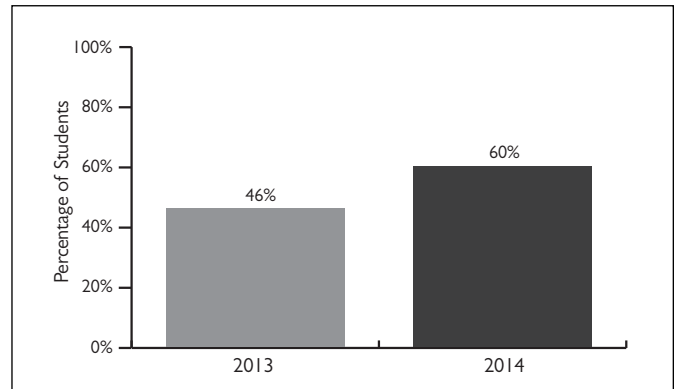


Figure 2. Percentage of AHSDP Students Successfully Placing Into Reading 100 in 2013 and 2014

Results and Data

Students who complete their MySkillsLab coursework and take the college placement test are placing in much greater numbers into English 100.

At the end of the 2011–12 school year, approximately 32 percent of AHSDP students who took the college placement test placed in English 100: Composition and Reading. By 2013–14, 42 percent of students were placing into English 100 (Figure 1).

Additionally, while 46 percent of students placed into Reading 100: Critical Reading and Thinking in 2013, this figure rose to 60 percent in 2014, following a greater programmatic emphasis on the reading portions of the MySkillsLab program (Figure 2).

Evidence of the program’s success is that, while enrollment for the English Skills Lab course has steadily increased, our retention rate has also risen as students adjusted to the increased rigor of our curriculum. In fall 2012, we offered eight sections of English Skills Lab and had a 70 percent retention rate. By fall 2014, we had increased to 10 sections per semester with a retention rate of 85 percent (Figure 3).

Benefits

The course tools in MySkillsLab allow me to see how much time students spend working in the program, which informs my conversations with students about how their study efforts correlate with success or failure. While most students work in the computer lab, many want tools available outside of class. MySkillsLab allows students to access their work whenever and wherever they want.

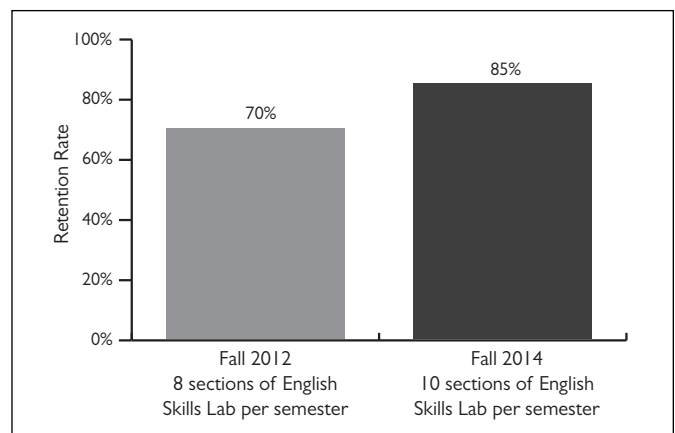


Figure 3. Retention Rates for Fall 2012 and Fall 2014

Conclusion

Because we’ve seen such success with this course, we are working with MiraCosta’s testing center to offer MySkillsLab as a non-credit boot camp for other students who want to take advantage of this opportunity. We hope more students will be able to use MySkillsLab to prepare for and succeed on the college placement test, going directly into college credit-bearing courses from the start.

Finally, one of my long-term goals is to increase the number of AHSDP students enrolling at our college. We communicate clearly to the students that their work in English Skills Lab prepares them to succeed as college students. MySkillsLab has proven to be a rigorous and effective program; I feel confident that students leave our program ready for the future.