



DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION REFORM:

Ensuring Success for All In Connecticut



Connecticut Association for Human Services



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Ensuring Success
for All in Connecticut

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Published by

Connecticut Association for Human Services
Hartford, Connecticut
March, 2014

Designed by

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The *Working Poor Families Project* was established in 2002 with the assistance of the Annie E. Casey, Ford, Joyce, and Kresge Foundations to address the increasing challenges faced by America's working families. This national initiative annually examines the conditions of low-income working families and supports state non-profit organizations dedicated to strengthening state policies that promote family economic advancement and success. To learn more, see www.workingpoorfamilies.org

The *Working Poor Families Project* was launched in 2002 and is currently supported by Casey, Ford, Joyce, and Kresge Foundations for their support and acknowledges that the findings and conclusions presented in this report are those of CAHS and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of our sponsors.

Special thanks to Brandon Roberts, Deborah Povich, and the staff of other *Working Poor Families Project* organizations for their ongoing collegial support.

Thanks also to Elsa Nuñez, Stephen Adair and Merle Harris for their advice and support, and Brandon Roberts for his editorial contributions.

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1. The Challenge: Making Higher Education A Path To Success For All

Community colleges have long been a crucial component of the post-secondary education system. They are, for many Americans, the most direct, affordable avenue to post-secondary education. Community colleges are founded on the idea that providing the opportunity to earn a credential or degree to many who would not be able to attend college otherwise creates a clear path to a better job and a better future.

Many students, however, are not sufficiently prepared to take college-level classes when they enter community college. In a previous policy paper,¹ CAHS assessed how community colleges were readying students for college-level classes by placing them in remedial (also known as developmental) education classes. Although Connecticut invests considerable resources in remedial education, the results have been fairly dismal: less than half of the students who enrolled in basic skills math classes passed the course in 2007.² Only 8 percent of students who needed remediation earned a credential (that is – completed their education and received a certificate or degree) in three years. Making this issue worse, placement exams to determine if students must take remedial classes often prove unreliable.

The failure of remedial education means that the community college system is not serving a significant number of its students effectively. Far from a clear path to a college credential or degree, students are stuck in ineffective remedial

education classes that fail to be gateways to successful education outcomes.

To make things worse, remedial education programs are often the least effective for those students who need them the most³: adult learners who have been out of the education system for years, and students who need the most remedial work before being ready for college. Despite their willingness to learn and the daunting prospect of having to spend months in remedial classes to improve their skills, community colleges have struggled to bring these students to the system, let alone graduate them.

This is worrisome. Connecticut, with a slow growing, aging work force, can ill afford a low-skilled adult population that is not capable of helping the state's employers remain competitive. Students who languish in developmental education and fail to advance to credit-bearing courses are inadequately served by the current system. Employers need a skilled labor force, and the state remedial education system had become a dead end for far too many students who were spending time and money in these classes and never moving beyond them to a degree or certificate.

In 2012, the Connecticut General Assembly decided that the developmental education system was not working and in need of significant reform. The legislature approved Public Act 12-40 (*“An Act Concerning College Readiness and Completion”*) to revamp the developmental education system in higher education. The law aims to reform the

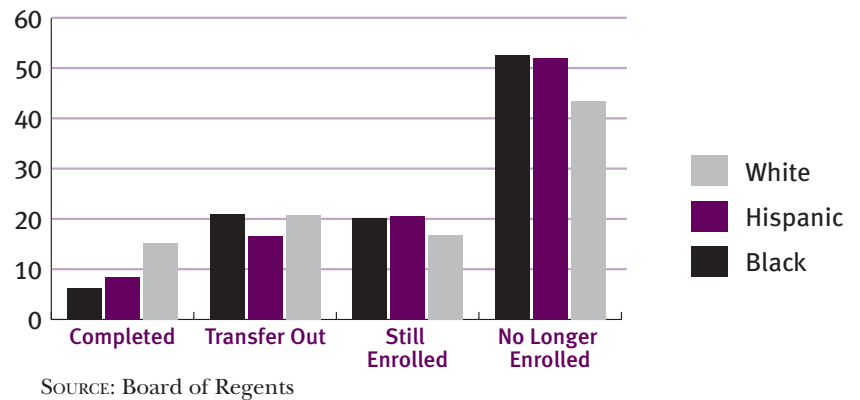
remedial education system, trying to make the public system more effective, leading to more students earning college-level credentials and degrees.

In order to do so, PA 12-40 creates a three tiered system for remedial education, with students being placed according to their level of readiness. The “top two” tiers rely on intensive or embedded classes offered by the community colleges. The third or bottom level, labeled “transitional,” places students in specific, separate programs before enrolling them in college.

Adult learners, those not moving immediately from high school to college, may be the most affected by these changes. Many have been away from an educational environment for so long that they are less likely to test well and be considered capable of successfully completing college-level courses. Adult learners are often African American and Latino, low income, and trying to juggle higher education with full or part time jobs. These students are the ones who face the highest barriers to success in the community college system, and the ones who likely require the most support.

In this report, we will address how PA 12-40 will affect student success in the state of Connecticut. Our focus will be on the students assigned to the “bottom” tier of remedial education, the ones who are the farthest from being college ready – often working adults, low income, and minority students.

Community College Completion Rates–Fall 2009 Enrollees.
Outcomes by August 2012



Undergraduate Total Enrollment by Age
Fall 2010 CT Community Colleges

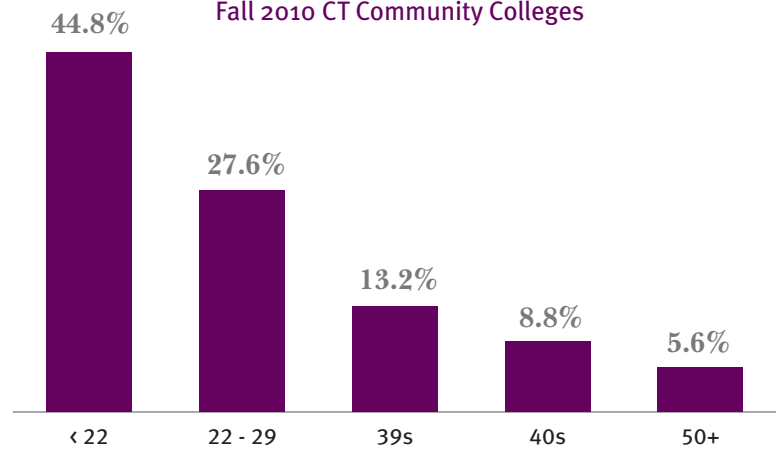
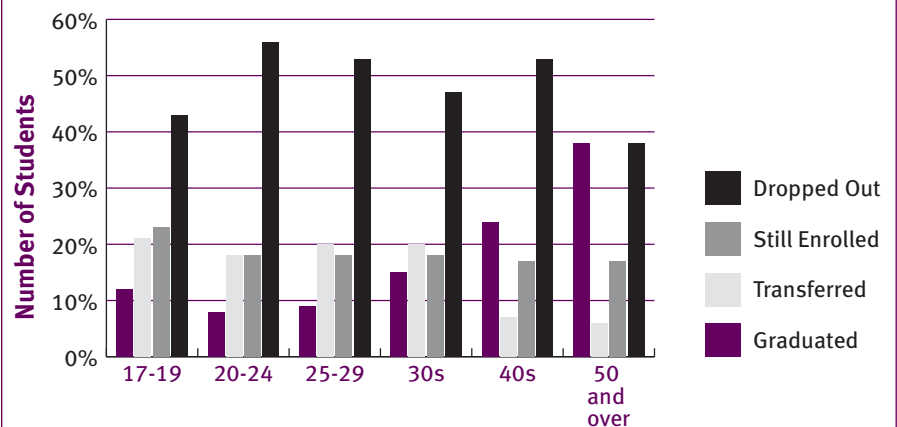


FIGURE 2. Office of Planning, Research and Assessment, Connecticut Community Colleges. *Fall 2010 Credit Enrollment Report*. Hartford, CT: Author.

Outcomes for Fall 2010 Enrollees
CT Community College Students by Age



SOURCE: Board of Regents

PA 12-40 – An Overview

PA 12-40 has three main components:

- 1. Placement reform.** Higher education institutions are required to use “*multiple commonly accepted measures of skill*” to decide if new students need remedial education. The legislators believed that the overreliance on *Accuplacer*, the testing software used to evaluate students, was forcing too many into remedial classes. Under the act, colleges need to use at least two measures to gauge students’ level of knowledge.
- 2. Limits to the amount of time that students can spend in remedial classes.** Under PA 12-40, students cannot be enrolled in non-credit bearing remedial classes for more than one semester. (Classes in different subjects can be taken in different semesters.)
- 3. Tiered, three level system for developmental education.** Students will receive their remedial education either embedded in college-level classes, through intensive remedial courses, or via transitional programs associated with the community college structure. The Board of Regents estimates that a majority of community college students who need developmental education will fall into the “intensive” category.

The three remedial education tiers are:

Embedded remediation: Students who are close to being ready for college-level courses, but need some additional help to be fully up to speed. Students take part in college-level courses for credit, but with embedded remedial education, attending a regular credit-bearing class while receiving additional support from the teaching staff. Students can attend additional teaching hours, receive support from tutors, and undertake extra course work. The support is wedded into the subject of the class, so the student is not learning these concepts in a vacuum and can re-learn concepts without having to resort to a dedicated class.

Intensive remedial education: The embedded remedial education is viable for students who are close to being college ready. For those who will not

be able to follow a course with additional math or English built in, PA 12-40 allows higher education institutions to provide **intensive** remedial classes. Community colleges are shifting their programs to shorter courses with more class hours and teacher support, often including additional lab time.

Transitional students: For those students who are not yet college ready and need more than one semester of remediation, PA 12-40 requires higher education institutions to create a pre-enrollment program to get them college ready. We discuss these models in depth in this report, and these students are the focus of our concern with remedial education reform.

In 2013, the Connecticut General Assembly provided additional program and budget support to help implement the requirements of PA 12-40, including:

- \$250,000 for development of embedded and intensive model courses.
- \$2 million for implementation of pilot programs for community college remedial students at all levels.
- Additional money for guidance counselors at each campus, as well as the creation of new faculty positions.

In addition, the Board of Regents dedicated \$200,000 to develop transitional model strategies.



2. Implementing Reform: Transitional Programs

For students who are not yet college ready but need more than six months of intensive remediation, PA 12-40 requires higher education institutions to create a pre-enrollment program to get them college ready. Students will have access to focused, **transitional** college readiness programs to prepare them for remedial classes.

A. STUDENT STATUS

Students in transitional programs are technically not enrolled in college courses, although the classes will often take place on campus. Students cannot use financial aid or federal Pell grants for transitional programs, which are to be offered at little or no cost to them. PA 12-40 encourages community colleges to coordinate their work with the adult education system to organize and staff these programs. Separate legislation passed in 2013 allows local adult education agencies to serve students who have received their high school diploma or GED, as well as giving

these agencies the option to charge these students a small fee.

B. WHO IS ORGANIZING TRANSITIONAL PROGRAMS?

PA 12-40 gives colleges considerable leeway on how to set up and implement transitional classes. As with intensive courses, during the 2014 academic year they are expected to implement pilot programs to evaluate different possible models, adopting best practices to roll out the new system for all students in fall 2014.

CAHS is most concerned about the students in the transitional group, as they are the ones who face the hardest climb to graduation. Students in this group are more likely to be poor, minority or adult learners. The legislature's intent with PA 12-40 was to improve access to community colleges. How transitional programs are set up is key to



ensure that the law does not prevent low income students or any other groups from completing their education, hindering their educational goals.

Remedial education reform will be fully implemented by the start of the 2014 academic year, with all the new systems in place and the new transitional course structure fully defined. To prepare the community colleges for the new system, the law requires higher education institutions to roll out pilot programs during the 2013-2014 academic year to gather data and identify best practices.

C. PROGRAM OVERSIGHT

The Board of Regents, the state agency that oversees Connecticut's public higher education institutions (other than the University of Connecticut), is coordinating and supervising the implementation of PA 12-40. The Board has opted to give community colleges and universities a great deal of flexibility on how the legislation is implemented. Each institution can choose how it will structure its transitional programs, seek partnerships with its local adult education districts, and configure the new courses. The main idea is that even though Connecticut is a small state, the community colleges and universities serve very different populations and needs. For the pilot transitional programs, the Board of Regents determined that it made sense for each institution to experiment with different models tailored to its students, and these differences would help to determine the most effective models.

Even with this flexibility for pilots, the Board of Regents is involved with the initial roll out of the reform. The Board has created several working groups to share best practices within the system, as well as four regional committees to help the colleges and universities share information.



More crucially, the Board of Regents will contract with an external evaluator to gather data from each of the pilots and evaluate the success of each program, acting as an information repository for best practices. The Board of Regents will be working closely with all colleges to foster the adoption of best practices across the system. There are constant dialogues at both the regional and state levels discussing each transitional pilot, with the Board establishing shared performance indicators to compare data effectively.

D. IMPLEMENTING TRANSITIONAL PROGRAMS: INITIAL PILOTS

The transitional level courses are by far the most relevant if Connecticut wants to ensure success for all community college students. They are the students who need the most support to gain access to credit-bearing classes.

Students in these courses are technically not college students, and are not expected to pay more than a reduced or nominal fee for their class. Community colleges are encouraged to partner with the local adult education system to deliver these courses, although they are not mandated to do so.

To implement PA 12-40, community colleges have so far steered clear of partnering or “outsourcing” remedial education to the adult education system. The most common model in the pilots is intensive two to five week Math and English boot camps, often

in the shape of workshops that will help students perform better on the Accuplacer. Colleges assumed that a significant number of students score poorly on placement tests simply because they are unprepared for the test itself, and some preliminary results seem to confirm this theory. Middlesex Community College created a workshop focused on the Accuplacer test, offered through Continuing Education during the summer of 2013. Out of the 40 participants, 31 completed the full course; 14 increased placement by one level, and 9 by two; 5 others increased their scores (and were satisfied with their progress), and 2 did not re-test. As a result, during the first semester Middlesex Community College had 13 percent fewer students taking intensive remedial courses; poor test scores were more related to students being “rusty” and requiring test preparation, not from truly needing remedial education.

Some colleges have gone in a different direction, combining computer assisted learning with intensive tutoring. Manchester CC is partnering with the Lumina Foundation on a three year pilot, the Developmental Math Demonstration Project. This model relies on materials prepared specifically for developmental and gateway math courses by the Khan Academy, a free web-based education site with video lectures, interactive exercises and materials. The delivery model includes modular based, online instruction, led by a classroom coach. The program is strongly focused on preparing students for the Accuplacer test. Naugatuck Valley CC is using a similar approach, but built around the MyFoundationsLab software package. Northwestern Connecticut CC is using the ALEKS online learning software instead.

Gateway CC in New Haven has pursued a different model with a stronger focus on teacher

interaction education and more class hours. Gateway offered a 12 hours per week, Monday to Thursday three-week course with very small class sizes and mandatory attendance (students who missed a class had to make up for it on Fridays). The Gateway program is goal oriented with a strong focus on class and lab work. Instructors gave lessons with computer work, and students were encouraged to work together during the class. Preliminary results from the first pilot this past summer were very encouraging, with 68 percent of students completing the course and 64 percent improving test scores by one or more levels (96 percent of those who finished the course). Three Rivers CC’s approach is similar to Gateway’s; its Jump Ahead! MATH Boot Camp program is a three-week course with three-hour classes, three days a week, morning and afternoon sections. In the first pilot, 35 students enrolled, with 29 completing the program. 17 students were able to progress to intensive classes, and 4 could transition to credit-bearing embedded remediation courses.

E. PROGRAM COSTS:

The cost to the student of each model varies significantly. Some of the transitional courses are grant-financed, and are offered at no cost to the student. Others, like Gateway CC’s, are charging a nominal fee, with the college incurring most of the costs because it wants to move the students to revenue generating courses in an effective manner. Of the nine pilots offered this past summer, the costliest for students was Naugatuck Valley CC, with a \$220 out of pocket fee.

Although PA 12-40 opens the door for adult education departments to serve students who have completed their GED and even enables them to charge a fee, community colleges have been reluctant to partner with them. There



is ample evidence and several successful developmental education strategies built upon partnerships between community colleges and adult education in other states (the Bridges model), but there has been limited interest in moving in this direction in Connecticut, with few exceptions.

According to several policy makers, adult education programs usually do not have the resources to offer these services and have

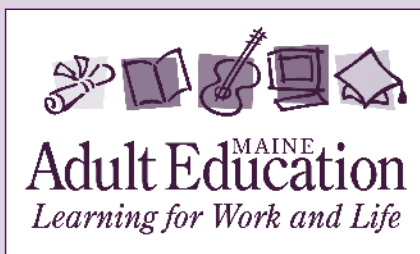
shied away from offering college preparation courses. Adult education in Connecticut is extremely decentralized, usually run by local school districts. Outside of the largest cities and multi-district programs, they are usually too small to provide additional classes. Adult education programs, however, have the potential to be used very effectively in remedial education. We explore some successful models from other states below.

Linking Adult and College Education: Maine's "College Transitions" Model

Maine is one of the states working to link the adult education system with access to higher education. "College Transitions," Maine's college preparation and advising program, consists primarily

of a course offered to adult education students who could become college ready within a relatively short time.

The program started in 2001, with seed funding from the Nellie Mae Education Foundation, building partnerships between seven community colleges and adult education providers. The initial pilot was part of the New England ABE-to-College Transition Project by World Education Inc. The Lumina and Melmac Education Foundations, as well as the Maine Department of Education, have funded additional sites in subsequent years. The target population was adults who had never attended college who could build skills to pursue higher education within 12-18 months. The pilot was successful, and the program was expanded statewide in 2006 by the legislature.⁷



In the College Transitions model, the adult education providers receive funding through state adult education and federal WIA Title II programs. The courses are branded separately from adult education and are often located on college

campuses to avoid stigmatizing them as "remedial" or "adult literacy" classes. Many students are referred from the college to College Transitions after poor placement test scores, although most referrals come from adult education. From 2007 to 2011, College Transitions enrolled 5,354 adults.⁸

The core element of College Transitions is a combination of academic skill building with academic counselling and mentoring. The program has been very successful: 75 percent of students increased their placement test scores, and during its first years of operation 85 percent enrolled in a postsecondary institution after completing the program.⁹ Most students (62-67 percent) are over 25. Maine offers a good model of how adult education systems can successfully work with community colleges to improve college access.

Integrating Basic Education and Skills Training: The I-BEST Model

Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) is an educational model developed by the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) in which basic instructors and technical faculty jointly design and teach college-level occupational classes for basic skills level students.

The I-BEST model started in 2004 with 10 pilot programs funded by the SBCTC to test different models to increase the rate at which basic skills students move on to college-level programs. Researchers found that combining basic skills and college-level technical education by a team of instructors proved the most effective, as hands on experience complemented higher level learning. By 2007, all community and technical colleges were offering I-BEST programs.¹⁰

The model has proved successful. Students are more likely to continue on to credit-bearing coursework, earn college credit or obtain a certificate, and increase scores on basic skill tests.¹¹ College retention rates improved markedly; 78 percent of I-BEST students were still enrolled the



following year, compared to 61 percent for regular students, and 55 percent of I-BEST students earned a certificate, compared to 15 percent of students not taking I-BEST courses.

Connecticut has implemented some I-BEST based programs in Hartford and New Haven, often with good results.¹² The scale and scope of these pilots, however, has been modest; PA 12-40 should bring the opportunity to further expand this model.

The Career Pathways Model: Minnesota's FastTRAC

Minnesota's FastTRAC Adult Career Pathway initiative aims to create a fully integrated system from the lowest level of literacy to associate degrees. FastTRAC aims to build links between each level of the adult education system, enabling students to follow a guided, aligned path towards higher education.

The program started in 2007 with support from the Joyce Foundation's Shifting Gears Initiative. Three state agencies developed and planned the roll out of the program jointly: Minnesota Department of Education- Adult Basic Education (ABE), Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) and the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED). They designed a five stage system that spanned several agencies and funding streams, built under a career pathways system.

The FastTRAC program is based on creating a series of connected education and training programs that guide low skill students to advance from level to level, improving their education levels and skills along the process. Unique to the state, FastTRAC begins with basic skills instruction within adult education.

Transitions between levels are carefully designed. For the crucial step between

adult education and college, Minnesota has created a series of integrated career/technical programs similar to Washington's I-BEST program. Each transition also has support systems built in, offering career counseling, system navigation and barrier mitigation.¹³

To date, 88 percent of participants in FastTRAC credit-bearing integrated Adult Basic Education/postsecondary courses have successfully completed the integrated course.¹⁴ Minnesota has been steadily increasing the reach of the model. Although results are still preliminary, the state expected to serve 3,000 adults in 50 FastTRAC adult career pathways by the end of 2013. The model is designed from the ground up, with data collection and evaluation in mind, with integrated databases and standardized indicators.



3. Issues and Challenges

As the state higher education system starts implementing the reforms required by PA 12-40, some potential issues and challenges have emerged that could complicate its roll out or make it less effective. Addressing these potential problems in the coming years should be the focus of the Board of Regents and higher education institutions.

As stated earlier, a major concern with PA 12-40, and one that appears to be shared by some of those implementing the law, is the possibility that transitional students might be excluded from the community college system. The reform's tiered system creates a series of steps for students to move towards college readiness. Climbing those steps, however, might prove challenging for adult students who have not been in an academic setting for years or have low skills. Community colleges are devoting considerable amounts of time and resources to ensure that these transitional students, who are the least prepared to complete credit-bearing classes, can access the system. It is important, however, that they take into account the different needs of the student populations they serve, including adult learners.

A. SOUND ANALYSIS OF INITIAL PILOT RESULTS AND FORTHCOMING EFFORTS

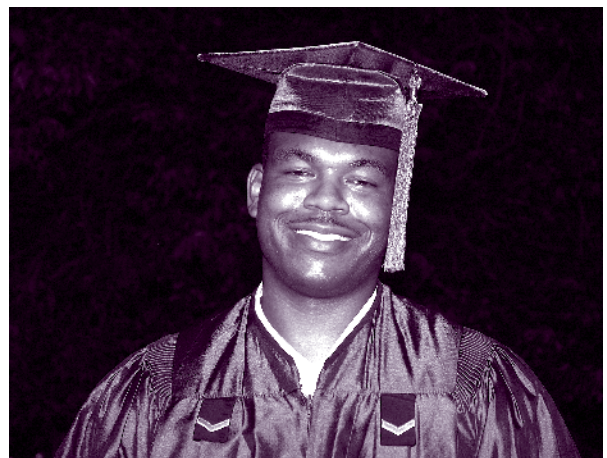
Although the preliminary results from this past year's pilot transitional programs seem promising, there is not yet real analysis that examines what worked well and what did not and for students with varying characteristics and needs. This is compounded by the general recognition nationally that there is little solid evidence that points to how to best serve this "bottom tier" of the remedial education population. As Hunter Boylan, Director of the National Center for

Development Education, recently declared "These students typically have low graduation rates from college. We have not learned how to serve them best yet."¹⁵

It is important, consequently, to specifically understand these results in order to ensure that the programs implemented in the fall 2014 semester reasonably can be expected to effectively meet the needs of this population. It also would help to define the expectations of success for each college's effort.

Looking toward fall 2014, it will also be important to make sure the reforms work as intended by starting from the outset to collect accurate information on how students are performing under the new system. Higher education institutions need to compile accurate longitudinal numbers on students' test scores, track their progress from transitional remediation to intensive and embedded, and track how they perform once enrolled in full college courses.

In addition, the evaluation needs to compare how effective the new remedial classes are for



different demographics. Community colleges not only serve students recently graduated from high school, but a significant number of adult learners as well. The data so far is inadequate to evaluate the new transitional and intensive courses, as it does not include enough demographic information about the population served. As a result, any analysis of their effectiveness at this time is very limited. It is crucial to take into account their specific outcomes to ensure that they are serving all groups effectively.

To evaluate best practices and compare different pilot programs, the indicators need to be consistent across the system. PA 12-40 tasks the Board of Regents with compiling data and evaluating the outcomes of the reform. In order to do so, the Board has established a series of shared performance indicators to be gathered by all colleges and universities in the system. The Board will gather the data from each institution and compare the results, using them as a basis to issue best practices as the reform moves ahead. The indicators cover test scores (from *Accuplacer*), student advancement through the system, completion and drop out rates at each level, and grades once they reach credit-bearing courses. Evaluators will also compile demographic data for each student, both to compare performance between rural, suburban, and urban areas and to analyze how the pilots serve different racial and ethnic and age groups.

The Board of Regents' efforts try to address the problem of a short time frame to roll out and compare the new course models, but they need to make sure that they do so after receiving complete, accurate data. Two semesters are unlikely to be enough time to evaluate specific pilots in the short term, and are definitely insufficient to analyze how students move through the system (or fail to do so) on their way to complete their degree or certificate. Even if colleges and universities



might have enough information at least to discard those pilots that do not seem to work at all, rolling out the reform in full while evaluating its true effectiveness will require a lot more data and analysis. A successful roll out of PA 12-40 will need both a long term commitment to solid, reliable data collection, and a willingness to analyze the outcomes and make changes on its implementation accordingly.

B. CLARIFYING PLACEMENT CRITERIA

Pursuant to PA 12-40, community colleges and universities can define the criteria they use for student placement as long as they use two measures. This freedom has resulted in a variety of benchmarks, with *Accuplacer* test scores usually being the common thread across the system. The cut off scores differ considerably from one institution to the next, as well as the weighting given to each individual *Accuplacer* sub score. The result is a system of often confusing, differing requirements that could encourage students to “shop” for the easiest entrance when trying to access the system.

The different cut off points also make evaluating the success of each individual program more difficult. Students who access intensive or transitional remediation under a lower benchmark will be less likely to move to embedded on time, while colleges with very demanding cut off points to access intensive

will probably have more successful than average intensive students. When comparing pilot programs, the Board of Regents needs to take these differences into account, as well as their effect on open enrollment.

A secondary issue relating to the reliance on *Accuplacer* is that colleges may offer transitional workshops or boot camps focused on testing, but not on content. Students might place out of transitional at high rates, but then become more likely to fail once they move to intensive remedial course. Continued data analysis will be needed to detect this potential issue.

C. THE HIGH COST OF TRANSITIONAL COURSES

Transitional level pilots have proven to be a challenge for community colleges. As the students are technically not enrolled in higher education yet, they cannot use student loans and grants to pay for the cost. From the community college perspective, then, it is crucial to move these students from transitional level courses to the intensive remedial level effectively and swiftly. The pilot programs show that this might be feasible, although the evidence is still scarce. The challenge is that in order to do so, both the college and the student need to invest a considerable amount of resources.

A successful transitional remedial class, like the one offered by Gateway CC, involves hours of daily instruction, and dedicated faculty and students who are willing and eager to attend class four times per week. This represents a considerable investment from the community college that is hard to recoup even if the student enrolls in regular classes. It is also a considerable entry barrier for working adult students who might have trouble

finding this much time to dedicate to school without academic credit. In addition, the cost for the student is not just time, but money; not all colleges have the resources or grant funding to provide these courses at a reduced cost, meaning that the out of pocket costs of some pilots have proved steep.

Community colleges are aware of these issues, and are considering offering both morning and evening sections for the programs. In other cases, they are relying on computer-assisted self-paced learning with full faculty support, which might provide additional flexibility for adult learners. The financial cost, however, might be a harder problem to solve and likely requires additional resources from the legislature.



D. TRANSITIONING BETWEEN REMEDIAL LEVELS

As written, PA 12-40 envisions a system where students steadily progress from transitional to intensive and from intensive to embedded remedial courses as they get ready to complete their degrees or credentials. For many students, this continuum of education may not work as intended. The statute, however, is largely silent on what happens if a student completes a course but does not learn enough to move to the next tier.

There are two possible break points. Most transitional pilots have been designed as short, intensive courses that run in the weeks prior to start of the academic semester. A student who participates in a course but is not yet ready to move to intensive remediation is likely to have a three or four month gap before he or she can retake the course, a delay that can be discouraging.

The step by step design of remedial programs might also represent a missed opportunity for students at the transitional level. There is nothing in the law preventing community colleges from setting up these classes in a way that prepares students for college-level classes, instead of another level of developmental education. But a lengthier class with the same level of commitment as the short pilot courses might prove challenging both for students and budgets.

This relates as well to the diverse population of transitional students. Working adults are likely going to have different needs regarding scheduling and course content than recent high school graduates. As a result, transitional classes will have to be adapted in order to be truly effective. Unfortunately, the evidence on what works for each demographic is still thin, so creating both effective courses and effective transitions will be challenging. With each community college taking its own slightly different approach, comparing programs might not be feasible without very proactive program evaluation efforts.

For students enrolled in intensive remedial courses, the one-semester limit established in the law can be a potential problem. A student not yet ready to move to the embedded tier by the end of the course does not have any alternatives other than face a class that might be too challenging. Considering that community colleges have a strong incentive in moving students from transitional to intensive, this issue might become more common.

It is too early to tell if these transitions are going to be a problem for students, or how widespread they may be. After one year of pilots, the Board of Regents will not have enough data to evaluate how students move up through the system. Tracking these paths, however, will be necessary to see if the reform is delivering results.



4. Policy Recommendations

The Board of Regents and Connecticut's public higher education institutions are committed to implement PA 12-40 effectively. The law is a big change for a system that had been stagnant for years and needed reform. Moving the reform forward has been challenging, but all actors (Board of Regents and college and university administrators and faculty) appear to be committed to make it work. Some challenges remain, however, to ensure that PA 12-40 reaches its full potential, especially for the most vulnerable students: those placed at the transitional level.

A. FOCUS ON PROGRAM EVALUATION

The decentralized and somewhat experimental structure of PA 12-40 will require very proactive, focused data gathering and program evaluation to ensure that the reform truly improves remedial education in the state. The Board of Regents should work to ensure that all pilot programs track demographic information and performance measures of all students.

In order to evaluate the program, the Board of Regents needs to work in tandem with the outside evaluator to analyze the results of the first set of pilots to understand their outcomes. The evaluation should focus on measuring how the reform serves each population group to fully understand the implications of the three tier model and how each community college implements it. The reported outcomes should be put in perspective comparing the pilots to best practices across the country and their success giving various populations a chance to complete their education.

B. MORE RESOURCES ARE REQUIRED TO EFFECTIVELY SERVE TRANSITIONAL STUDENTS

The initial plan to serve students who are too far from college readiness to rely on a single semester of intensive remediation was to have community colleges partner with the adult education system. For a variety of reasons (mostly, but not exclusively, due to lack of resources on the adult education side), these partnerships have not materialized and community colleges will deliver these courses, bearing the brunt of the cost.

The General Assembly already responded to these concerns by adding \$2 million to implement the pilots during the 2013 academic year, based on a request from the Board of Regents. The full roll out of the legislation will require additional funds, either to directly pay for the additional costs incurred by community colleges, and/or to provide sufficient resources to adult education to participate effectively in the process.

C. ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS

Although the tiered system could potentially be more effective, it is also considerably harder to navigate for students. Community colleges and universities need to make sure that counselors are on hand to assist students to select the correct path through the system, making sure that they do not hit a dead end when moving between tiers. Although the legislature dedicated additional money for counselors, the transitions between levels are likely to be a challenge and additional support might be needed. Even if all pieces of

the law are working as intended, eliminating friction within the system should be a priority.

These additional supports should extend beyond navigating the system between transitional level classes and the other tiers. In order for students to succeed (especially the low income students who have been ill served by the remedial education system), colleges need to provide wrap around services and counseling. This includes enhanced academic counseling, effective tutoring and help connecting to services and benefits when required, including childcare. Successful remedial education models in other states have been built around the idea of offering great classes with effective assistance. Many of the pilots launched this year in Connecticut include these supports for all students. Connecticut reformers should recognize their importance.

D. ADOPTING BEST PRACTICES: I-BEST / BRIDGES MODELS

The first wave of pilot embedded courses often rely on offering more support and instruction to students who need them. Community colleges should consider going beyond mere additional teaching time, and

offering courses that pair practical skills and training with remediation. The best known model in this field is I-BEST, pioneered in Washington State with great results (see box).

As it stands now, the unrestricted implementation of PA 12-40 has opened the door to many potentially successful experiments, but the lack of guidance and focus has left out some successful strategies and best practices. Community colleges should pursue models with a proven track record in other states, adapted to the specific needs. Legislators should consider as well providing additional funding and incentives to encourage community colleges to partner with the adult education system, following these successful Bridges models.¹⁶

E. CONSISTENT STANDARDS AND EVALUATION

Although PA 12-40 has the potential to improve student success, the decentralized, ad hoc implementation of the law means that these improvements could not be fully realized across the system. A successful roll out of the legislation will require strong leadership and guidance from the Board of Regents, ensuring that best practices are widely adopted. This requires both a concentrated effort on data

gathering and a strong focus on consistent, reliable evaluation on the information collected. The Board of Regents should consider working with external experts to track pilot results and assess their success, making the data available to stakeholders to ensure accountability. Once the pilots are complete and data starts pouring in, the Board of Regents should consider standardizing enrollment and placement procedures to make the system more transparent and fair.





Endnotes

- ¹ Carroll, Jude (2011) “Developmental Education at Connecticut Community Colleges: a Key to Economic Recovery”, Hartford, CT: CAHS. Available at www.cahs.org
- ² Connecticut Department of Higher Education (2008) “Higher Education Counts: Achieving Results” Hartford, CT: Author.
- ³ Hilliard, T. (2012) *Graduating to College: Three States Helping Adult Education*. Students Get a College Education. Working Poor Families Project.
- ⁴ According to Senator Beth Bye, the leading sponsor of PA 12-40.
- ⁵ This flexibility extends to the other remedial tier strategies, not just transitional.
- ⁶ The General Assembly enacted legislation in 2011 to establish three pilot bridge programs between adult ed and community colleges in New Haven (Gateway CC), Manchester (Manchester CC) and Meriden (Middlesex CC) to evaluate these partnerships, with good results⁶. The pilots, however, were focused on current adult education students, not community college applicants, and had a limited scale.
- ⁷ Application for approval of Program, Maine College Transition grants, State of Maine, department of education, adult education, 2008.
- ⁸ Educate Maine (2013), Maine College Transitions: College Enrollment Outcomes, April 2013. http://mae.siteturbine.com/uploaded_files/maineadulted.org/files/_MCT_CollegeOutcomesReport2012.pdf
- ⁹ *Evaluation report: Maine’s adult education to college Transition Project*, fiscal year 2008.
- ¹⁰ Wachen, J., Jenkins, D. and Van Noy, M. (2010) *How I-BEST Works: Findings from a Field Study of Washington State’s Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training Program*. Community College Research Center, Columbia.
- ¹¹ Jenkins, D., Zeidenberg, M. and Kienzl, G. (2009) *Educational Outcomes of I-BEST Washington State Community and Technical College System’s Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training Program: Findings from a Multivariate Analysis*. Community College Research Center, Columbia.
- ¹² *A Review of Contextualized Learning and Its Importance to Career Advancement for Adults in Connecticut*. CETC Career Advancement Committee December 12, 2013
- ¹³ http://www.asa.mnscu.edu/asa_admin/Joint_Meeting_-_CSAO/2011%20Fall%20Meeting/Presentations_-_Fall/MN_FastTRAC.pdf
- ¹⁴ http://www.mnfasttrac.org/making_the_case.html.
- ¹⁵ “*Remedial College Courses Face a New Test*”, Wall Street Journal, February 17, 2014.
- ¹⁶ A detailed overview on several Bridges models can be found here: <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/cclo/brief-1-bridge-programs.pdf>

