

**Developmental Education Redesign in Oregon: Changing the  
Way We Place Students at Our Community Colleges**

**A Chronicle of the Work of the Developmental Education Redesign  
Placement Work Group**

April 19, 2016

## Letter from Elizabeth Cox Brand



Our nation's community colleges have a placement problem, and Oregon's community colleges know it. Nearly [98% of participants](#) of a placement work group recently convened by the Oregon Community College Association (OCCA) consisting of 17 campus teams agreed that the way their colleges place students can be improved.

Far too many community colleges use just a single measure – a standardized test – to determine whether students are ready for college-level classes. Though we're seeing campuses begin to move away from a single standardized measure, using a test to place students has been a common practice in Oregon for years.

Research on the connection between our [placement practices](#) and completion suggests that though our intentions are good, we are underestimating our students' capacity and failing far too many of them. The way we place students more often than not guarantees that a student enrolled into developmental education will not get a degree or certificate. We have to change.

Our higher education community has already demonstrated a willingness to tip over sacred cows. It saw the staggering number of community college students who never completed their course of study because they could not get through the **single** developmental education mathematics sequence requiring them to pass college-level algebra—even though their chosen careers do not require its use—and developed policies that permit rigorous multiple mathematics pathways. Now, most of our community college campuses have embraced the change and are either implementing or developing these new pathways.

I suspect the next big play to redesign developmental education will be to change community college placement practices. House Bill 2681 has already set the wheels for change in motion. The [law](#) requires the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) and the State Board of Education (SBE) to establish a committee to recommend to the legislature “effective processes and strategies for placing students in courses at community colleges.” The HECC and the SBE have convened that committee and are in the process of preparing final recommendations to present to the legislature in September.

Those of us who have worked together the past three years—either through the Developmental Education Redesign Work Group or most recently as a member of one of the 17 college teams that constituted our own Developmental Education Redesign Placement Work Group—should take satisfaction in the work of the 2681 Committee. It met jointly with our Placement Work Group and used our recommendations to inform its preliminary recommendations to the legislature.

When they met together, the 2681 Committee and the Placement Work Group learned about and discussed important issues related to student placement: the future role of standardized testing, test preparation practices, cut scores versus decision zones, whether campuses should use ALEKS to support placement of students in mathematics, and whether writing samples students create in high school can be used to help place students in college writing courses. The groups, however, kept coming back to a single issue: the use of multiple measures—rather than a single measure—to place students into the right classes.

This document is less report than chronicle. It is an account of the Placement Work Group's efforts to rethink our reliance on a single measure and operationalize the use of multiple measures to more effectively place students into classes.

I believe it is important to note my sense that the vast majority of work group participants are ready to lead change on their campuses. Some remain skeptical about moving from a single measure to multiple measures—in particular about using high school grade point averages and last grades in high school language arts courses—to place students into community college writing courses. I also heard a little of the old refrain that “it is not our placement practices that are a problem; it is our students.”

I'm not shy about saying that I think we're well on our way to changing that perception and tackling the real problem: placement practices that rely on a single measure and result in the placement of far too many students into development education—out of which the vast majority of them fail to advance. I have no doubt that soon we will do better by our students and far more of them will succeed.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Cox Brand  
Student Success and Assessment Director  
Oregon Community College Association

## Background

To address the placement recommendations of the [Developmental Education Redesign Work Group](#), the Oregon Community College Association (OCCA) convened in late summer 2015 a work group of teams from the state's 17 community colleges. Concurrently, the legislatively-charged 2681 Committee began meeting to discuss the process it would use to develop recommendations to the Oregon State Legislature to improve the process of placing students at community colleges.

To avoid duplicating efforts, the 2681 Committee and the Placement Work Group joined forces and began meeting with each other, following what has become the standard process for developmental education redesign work in Oregon: Learn about the issues, discuss the issues, and only then make decisions about the issues or pursue additional learning opportunities.

Both groups participated in two webinars and three day-long in-person meetings in Salem. They reviewed research presented by Michelle Hodara, a senior researcher from Education Northwest, and John Hetts, former Director of Institutional Research for Long Beach City College and now the Senior Director for Data Science for the Educational Results Partnership. At the first in-person meeting in October, members of each group had an extended opportunity to meet with Hetts. He focused participants on issues attendant to measures used to place students and argued for the use of multiple measures.

For those coming in to the developmental education redesign placement work already hoping to change the placement processes at their schools, Hetts's presentation was affirming. For some who joined the group not ready to make the move to multiple measures, his presentation was transformational. For others still not convinced after listening to him, Hetts provided information for ongoing consideration.

## What we learned from John Hetts<sup>1</sup>

Standardized assessment as a standalone measure has led us to underestimate substantially the ability of students—particularly students of color and low-income and first generation college students—to do college-level work, Hetts began. Research has shown that there is not much of a relationship between college course outcomes and student performance on standardized tests. Further, there is extraordinary

---

<sup>1</sup> Hetts presentation with citations is available [here](#). For information on increases in IQ, 18-24 year-old high school degree attainment and NAEP scores, see [bit.ly/FlynnEffectIQ](#); [bit.ly/2014HS18-24](#); and [bit.ly/NAEPInfo](#). For research questioning the effectiveness of standardized measures to assess student capacity adequately, see [bit.ly/CCRCAssess](#); [bit.ly/NAGB2012](#); and [bit.ly/DefiningPromise](#). For resources on improving placement through the use of multiple measures, see <http://www.lbcc.edu/PromisePathways>; <http://bit.ly/MMAP2015>; <http://bit.ly/RPSTEPS>; <http://bit.ly/RPMultipleMeasures>; and <http://cccassess.org>. For information on reducing error and increasing placement success rates, see <http://bit.ly/CCRCPlacementAccuracy>. For self-reported HSGPA, see, <http://bit.ly/UCSelfReportGPA> and [bit.ly/ACTSelf-ReportedGPA](http://bit.ly/ACTSelf-ReportedGPA). Research showing students have greater capacity than we often think can be found at <http://bit.ly/CAPEval> and <http://bit.ly/2015ALP>.

variability in cut scores across two-year institutions, which often establish higher cut scores for college readiness than four-year colleges.

Hetts suggested that standardized assessments dominate the placement landscape in part because of our belief that “today’s students are simply unprepared for college,” a notion belied by the fact that there has been a substantial long-term increase in IQ and that today’s students are smarter than ever.

Ninety-one percent of 18–24 year-olds have high school diplomas—the highest ever, he told the group—and, he pointed out, the National Assessment of Educational Progress shows American students scoring at or near all-time highs across virtually every demographic. Hetts concluded that responsibility for the high failure rate of students placing into developmental education may not be with our students but the way we have been assessing their capacity.

There is substantial evidence of systematic and severe under placement, he suggested. He cited research from the Community College Research Center demonstrating that 36% of students placed into developmental English and 25% of students placed into developmental math could earn a B or better in a transfer level course.

The goal of assessment should be to accurately assess student capacity—to predict how students will perform at the institutions in which they enroll, Hetts reminded the group. Standardized tests by themselves do not do that. His research at Long Beach City College—where he was previously Director of Institutional Research—demonstrates that standardized tests predict how well students will do on later standardized tests, while measures of classroom performance ultimately predict subsequent classroom performance. He pointed to high school grade point average (HSGPA) as a measure of classroom performance that assesses capacity across content domains, numerous instructors and time, while combining thousands of an incredible variety of assessments of a student’s academic performance. HSGPA also continues to predict student performance in college up to 9–10 years after graduation, continuing to outperform standardized tests given to students at college entry, he explained, citing research from the Multiple Measures Assessment Project in California and by ACT.

Hetts noted that last grade in course—like HSGPA—is a powerful predictor of student success in mathematics and writing and that this information is something institutions should collect. As open access institutions, community colleges frequently may not have access to either transcripts or last grade in course (though arranging access would not necessarily be more expensive than testing); however, Hetts cited research showing that students self-report their grades accurately. For example, he told the group, the University of California system uses self-reported high school grades for admissions and then verifies those self-reports afterwards. In 2008, across 9 campuses enrolling 60,000 students, the system found that no campus had more than five discrepancies

#### **Important Takeaways from Hetts’s Presentation**

- Community college placement processes are substantially underestimating student capacity.
- Actual measures of student performance—high school GPA and last grade in course—more accurately predict college performance than do standardized assessments.
- Since community colleges are open access institutions, it may be difficult to get high school transcripts; however, self-reported GPA may be a better indicator of future success than an actual score on a standardized test.
- The more measures the greater the accuracy of the placement decision.
- A standardized test such as Accuplacer can be one of those measures.

between reported grades and student transcripts. ACT research also uses self-reported GPA and finds that it is highly correlated with students' actual GPA, so much so that it is impossible to tell if differences are a result of student misreporting or differences in when students are asked for their GPAs and their final official calculations. As a result, Hetts said, given the far stronger predictive utility of HSGPA, self-reported HSGPA will be a far better window into students' actual capacity than the more weakly predictive standardized tests.

Although suggesting that HSGPA and last grade in course are more accurate predictors of eventual student performance, Hetts did not argue for the elimination of standardized tests. He did suggest that the more measures the better: "The gold standard of placement would require the triangulation of multiple measures across methods, content domains, evaluators and time."

## **Recommending Multiple Measures and Developing a Menu of Them**

Hetts inspired the Placement Work Group and changed minds. Dr. Verne Underwood from Rogue Community College noted the change in his own perceptions: "Hetts's presentation really changed my thinking. I didn't believe in using some of the potential placement measures he was advocating for, such as use of high school GPA, before. But, he made a strong case that placement tests are good at showing if students are good at tests, not which class they belong in. Now I think there's a broad zone of measures we might use."

Following his presentation, 45 of the work group participants completed a [survey](#) to determine the degree to which participants agreed with the research Hetts presented and the conclusions he drew. The results indicate that Oregon is ready for change:

- 71% agreed or strongly agreed that the use of standardized tests has led us to systematically and substantially underestimate student capacity.
- 60% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that current placement practices are a significant barrier to success and completion and too many students are being placed into developmental education.
- 93% agreed or strongly agreed that multiple measures reduce error and have the potential to increase success rates and sequence completion.
- 91% agreed or strongly agreed that their campuses can use multiple measures.
- 71% agreed or strongly agreed that campuses should default to measures that are most predictive of classroom success: HSGPA and last grade in class.
- 56% agreed or strongly agreed that self-reported GPA is a more powerful predictor of student performance than standardized tests.

## **Using Multiple Measures for Placement in Writing and Mathematics.**

The Placement Work Group decided at its January in-person meeting to recommend to the 2681 Committee that colleges should "move from using only a standardized assessment as the default placement tool for all students and toward a system of multiple measures to increase the accuracy of

placement decisions.” That recommendation appears verbatim in the 2681 Committee’s [interim report](#) to the legislature.

During the December meeting, math faculty and administrators and staff with an interest in how campuses place students in mathematics and writing faculty and administrators and staff with an interest in how campuses place students in writing met in separate groups to discuss multiple measures they might use to place students. The math group decided that campuses should use multiple measures when placing them in their first college course and that a score from a standardized test can be one of the measures. Each school should decide if and at what point during the placement process it should employ a standardized test to place students in a math course, the group decided. Other measures can include high school transcripts or HSGPA; grade in last math class taken; Smarter Balanced, Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate or GED examination scores; non-cognitive measures or military experience. Each school, the group affirmed, must determine what measures to use depending on the student, the school's resources, and the community it serves.

During discussions, the math group weighed the pros and cons of relying on measures generated by high schools. Doug Nelson of Central Oregon Community College captured the spirit of those discussions: “As community colleges continue to improve communication with their partner high schools, helping them better align their curriculum to that of higher education, it makes perfect sense to trust that high school teachers are preparing their students well, and we can use this preparation to directly place students into our courses.”

The writing group had similar discussions over the course of its meeting in December and then again in March. Among members of that group, there was general agreement that it is better to use multiple measures than a single one. However, participants raised questions about specific multiple measures, particularly those generated by high schools: HSGPA, last grade in course and writing samples:

- **What are final acceptable courses in 12<sup>th</sup> grade?** Participants agreed that grades in dual credit, Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate (or any honors English class) courses would be appropriate measures. However, most members of the group were unsure about the range of classes seniors are taking in Oregon schools, particularly students who scored a one or two on the Smarter Balanced exam. One faculty member suggested that he had “more knowledge of the weather on Mars” than he did about what courses students are taking at schools local to his campus.

### Oregon’s High School Writing Samples

To earn a diploma, students must demonstrate proficiency in the Essential Skills of reading, writing, and mathematics. Students can demonstrate proficiency in three ways: the Smarter Balanced assessment, another standardized test, such as the ACT or SAT, or work samples scored against the state scoring guide.

If students demonstrate Essential Skills through work samples, two passing work samples are required: One must be expository or persuasive; the other may be in any of the state-approved modes (expository, persuasive, personal or fictional narrative).

*Examples of student work reflecting various levels of student performance with extended commentary are available at:*

<http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/page/?id=527>

- **What about the use of state-level writing work samples as a multiple measure?** Staff from the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) presented information on writing work samples produced by 25% of all of Oregon’s high school students. Some participants wondered whether the prompt and the standards for assessing them are consistent with the requirements of college-level writing. Some participants suggested they were not. State Department of Education staff explained that the state is revising the prompts and rubrics to be more consistent with the instructional shifts required by new state standards, though the State Board of Education will ultimately have to act on them on a date yet to be determined. Group members offered to provide feedback during the revision process and most agreed that individual campuses should decide whether to use the writing samples as a multiple measure.

At a follow-up meeting on March 4, the writing group met to continue discussions on the use of writing samples. This time, the group took for granted that for the time being the writing sample would not reflect Oregon’s new K-12 standards for writing. Most hands were raised when the facilitator asked whether participants would as a result still consider using the samples as a potential measure for placement. Participants then debated what could be done to increase their confidence in the scores attached to samples. At issue, for many, is the fact that the state does not mandate a scoring process and therefore at many schools language arts teachers score their own students’ work, though other schools might use a more rigorous process requiring multiple reviewers and/or excluding the authors’ teachers. Writing group members also noted that although the state requires raters to be trained to use the scoring guide to a high degree of proficiency, there is local variability on the content and frequency of training.

Nevertheless, the group arrived at consensus that the samples show promise as one of the multiple measures campuses can use for placement. There was variation in the amount of evidence community colleges thought they should receive, however. Some faculty stated they would not only like to see students’ scores but also the actual writing samples—with the hope being that college faculty would grow to trust the scores over time. In the end, representatives from Blue Mountain, Central Oregon, Clackamas, Oregon Coast, Portland, Rogue and Southwestern agreed that in the next year or two they would like to pilot the use of writing samples as a measure for placement.

## **Proposed Steps to Remedy Faculty Concerns about the Accuracy of Scoring**

The Writing Group proposed to ODE representatives several actions that would facilitate the use of writing samples as a measure for placement:

- Writing faculty often do not know what college preparatory classes students are taking, a fact that could be remedied by a study that provides an overview of what English language arts college-preparatory classes students are taking.
- To create greater trust, establish common expectations for college-ready writing and greater understanding of the content of high school curriculum, community college and high school faculties in the same communities might engage in facilitated conversations.

- To increase confidence in scoring, community colleges can engage in scoring guide trainings with their high school colleagues.
- High school staff, community colleges, and ODE should identify policies that will increase confidence in scores generated by high schools.

## Combining Multiple Measures

The Placement Work Group and the 2681 Committee learned that identifying multiple measures is one thing; combining them to effectively place students is another. What’s more, placing recent high school graduates may require a different process than placing those who graduated many years—perhaps decades—ago. The two groups spent a large portion of their final joint meeting discussing these differences and thinking about how to combine measures for distinct groups. The groups reviewed national examples of placement matrices, flowcharts and grids and emerging practices in Oregon. Finally, taking what they learned, participants broke up into teams to practice creating placement systems that use multiple measures.

The groups began by examining two examples from Washington State: placement grids from Highline College and Bellevue College. As Figure 1 suggests, Highline College does not employ a one-size fits all placement system. The school uses high school transcripts and Smarter Balanced scores to place some students. It uses GED transcripts for recent takers of the GED examination to place others. For those who have taken courses at another college, it uses college transcripts. And it employs standardized assessments for non-recent graduates of high school who have never taken a college course.

Figure 1: Highline College<sup>2</sup>

The screenshot shows a webpage titled "Placement into Highline Courses" with a navigation bar containing "Campus Links" and a search icon. The main content area includes a "What is Placement?" section explaining the goal of placement and listing assessment methods like COMPASS, MyMathTest, and Smarter Balanced. Below this is a "What assessment path is the best for you?" section with six columns representing different student backgrounds and their corresponding assessment requirements:

Running Start	Graduated high school in the last 3 years	No prior college	Obtained a GED since 2014	Taken Placement test at another school in the last 2 years	Taken courses at another college
COMPASS Reading MyMathTest or high school transcripts Smarter Balanced score	High school transcripts Smarter Balanced score	COMPASS Reading ESL COMPASS MyMathTest	GED transcripts	Placement reciprocity Transfer of scores	Transcript evaluation

A note at the bottom of the "No prior college" column states: "You are strongly encouraged to prepare before taking these tests."

<sup>2</sup> Highline College, "Placement into Highline Courses," accessed March 24, 2016, <https://placement.highline.edu/>.

Figure 2: Bellevue College English Composition Placement Grid for BSD Students<sup>3</sup>




## ENGLISH COMPOSITION PLACEMENT GRID FOR BSD STUDENTS

**Bellevue School District and Bellevue College agree that realistic placement is critical for student success.**

As an alternative or in addition to placement via a standardized placement test, students entering Bellevue College from the Bellevue School District may be placed in English according to the following chart. In order to place by transcript, students must have earned a C or better in their most recent English course.

Placement by this method expires two academic years after the student graduates from high school.

COURSE PLACEMENT TABLE		
HIGH SCHOOL COURSE	HIGH SCHOOL GRADE	PLACEMENT AT BC
AP LIT/COMP OR IB ENGL II	B OR BETTER	ENGL&101
	C OR BETTER	CUMULATIVE GPA, SMARTER BALANCED EXAM OR PLACEMENT TEST
AP LANG/COMP OR IB ENGL I OR AP US HIST & AP LANG/COMP	B OR BETTER	ENGL&101
	C OR BETTER	CUMULATIVE GPA, SMARTER BALANCED EXAM OR PLACEMENT TEST
SENIOR ENG	B OR BETTER	ENGL&101
	C OR BETTER	CUMULATIVE GPA, SMARTER BALANCED EXAM OR PLACEMENT TEST
AMER LIT/COMP	B OR BETTER	ENGL&101
	C OR BETTER	CUMULATIVE GPA, SMARTER BALANCED EXAM OR PLACEMENT TEST
HON SOPH COMP OR HON HUM WORLD 1 & 2	C OR BETTER	PLACEMENT TEST
AP AND IB TEST PLACEMENT TABLE (MINIMUM SCORE OF 3)		
TEST	SCORE	PLACEMENT AT BC
AP ENG LANG/COMP	3	ENGL&101
	4 OR 5	ENGL&101 CREDIT/201 PLACEMENT
AP ENG LIT/COMP	3	ENGL&101
	4 OR 5	ENGL&101 AND ENGL&111 CREDIT/201 PLACEMENT
IB ENGLISH A	4	ENGL&101
	5 OR HIGHER	ENGL&101 CREDIT/201 PLACEMENT

Bellevue College uses a matrix to place students in English and math courses (it has gone through the additional process of developing matrices for each of the school districts whose graduates enroll in the college). The college uses last grade in course, cumulative GPA, Smarter Balanced or standardized examinations to place students in English. To be placed by transcript, students must have earned a C or better in their most recent high school English class. Students with Bs or better in college-preparatory classes are placed automatically into a credit-bearing college-level class. The college uses additional measures for students with Cs in those same classes: potentially HSGPA, Smarter Balanced or placement test examination scores.

<sup>3</sup> Bellevue College, *English Composition Placement Grid for BSD Students*, accessed March 24, 2016, <https://s.bellevuecollege.edu/wp/sites/143/2016/01/BSD-grid-for-website.pdf>.

## Clackamas: A Case Study for the Use of Multiple Measures

The Placement Work Group and the 2681 Committee learned that new placement practices that rely on multiple measures are emerging in Oregon’s community colleges. Clackamas is leading the way. It has developed a variety of tools to place students, minimizing the importance of a standardized assessment.

Those newly enrolling at Clackamas complete an intake tool (see Figure 3) that not only allows for self-reported HSGPA and last grades in math and English courses, it relies on perceptual measures: how students “feel” about math, reading and writing. The intake tool also asks students to consider what

courses seem to be the best fit for them. Additional tools support this self-directed placement process: flow charts that guide students and teachers through placement in math and writing (see Figure 4) and a draft self-directed placement advising statement. The math and writing placement guides rely on specific course grades, HSGPA, commitments outside of school and previous academic experience (whether students have written a three-page essay or a research paper).

Figure 3: Clackamas Math & Writing Course Placement Intake Tool



Math & Writing Course Placement

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ CCC ID#: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Last First MI (or Date of Birth)

H.S. Graduation Year \_\_\_\_\_ H.S. GPA \_\_\_\_\_ Did you complete the Compass test? *yes no*

*Please answer the questions to the best of your ability. Circle the most accurate answer.*

Where are you going?

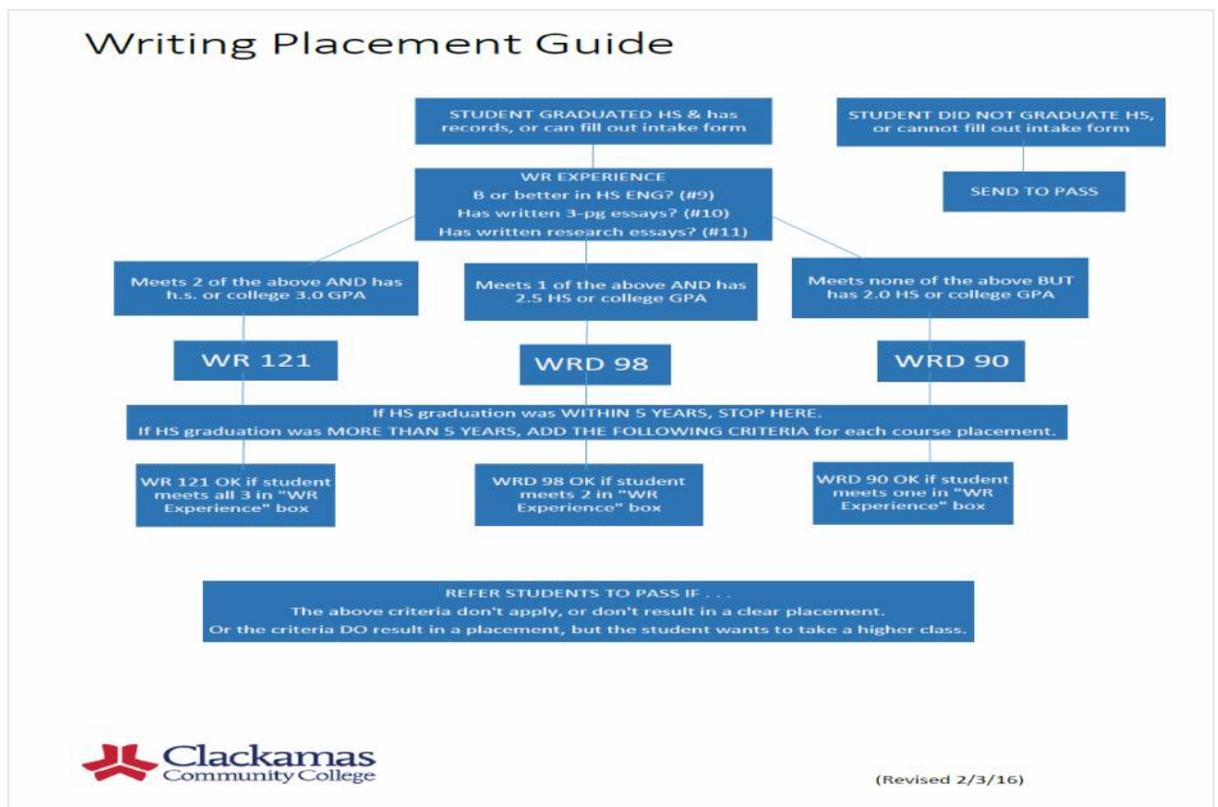
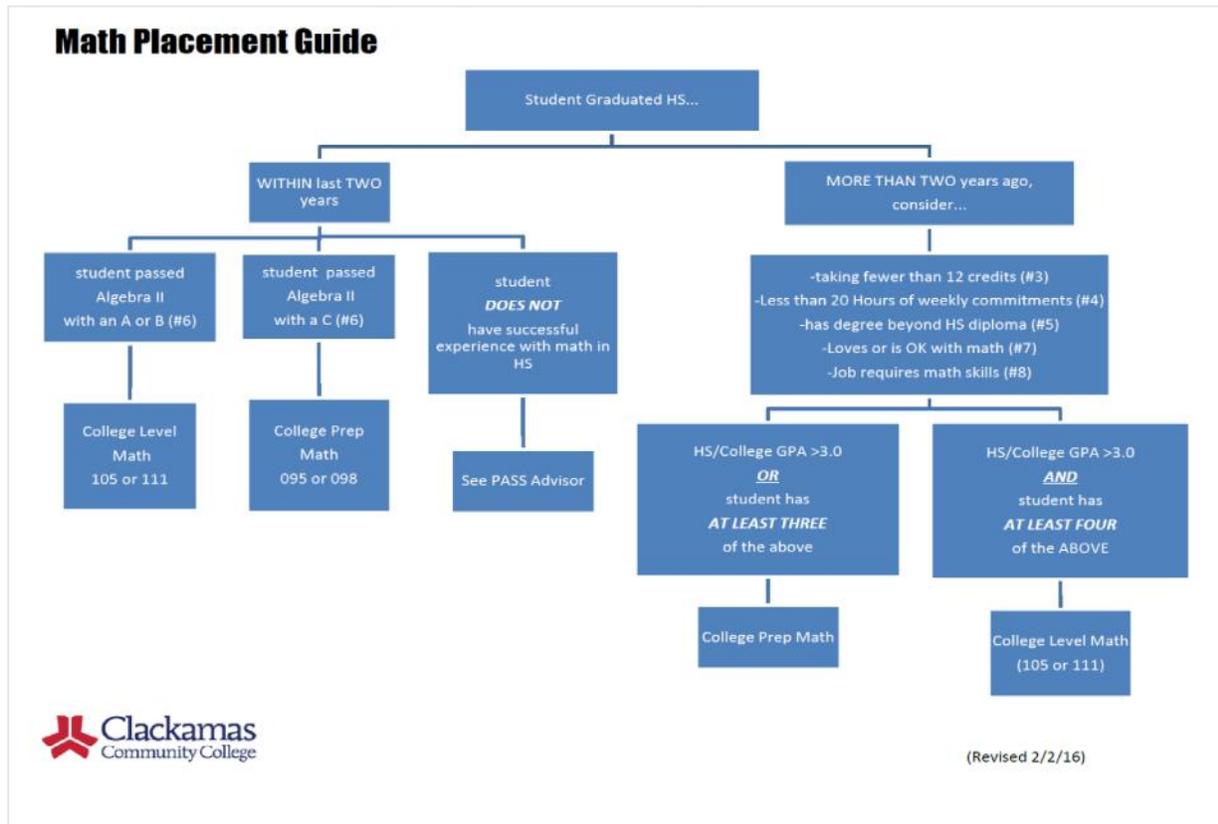
1. Do you plan to transfer to a four-year university? *Yes No Not sure*
2. When do you anticipate starting classes at CCC? *Fall Winter Spring Summer*
3. How many credit hours will you take in your first term? *0-11 credits 12 credits (or more)*
4. What is the total of your weekly commitments outside of school?  
Less than 20 hrs per wk More than 20 hrs per wk
5. Do you already have a degree or certificate (beyond high school)? *Yes No*

Where have you been?

MATH	WRITING
6. List the last two math courses you completed: Course _____ year _____ letter grade _____ Course _____ year _____ letter grade _____	9. Did you get a B or better in your most recent English class? <i>Yes No</i> 10. Have you ever written an essay longer than 3 pages? <i>Yes No</i>
7. How do you feel about math? <i>Love it. It's OK. I don't like it. It scares me.</i>	11. Have you ever written an essay that used research, quotes, and references? <i>Yes No</i>
8. Does your current job require math skills? <i>Yes No</i>	12. How do you feel about reading? <i>Love it. It's OK. I don't like it.</i>
14. Which CCC courses seem like the best fit for you? Math _____ Writing _____	13. How do you feel about writing? <i>Love it. It's OK. I don't like it.</i>

For staff use only: Math \_\_\_\_\_ or PASS / Writing \_\_\_\_\_ or PASS / Init \_\_\_\_\_ (Revised 2/2/16)

Figure 4: Clackamas Community College Math and Writing Placement Guides



PASS advisors and college support staff, which includes testing center employees, the advising team and the high school partnership office currently use the intake form and flow charts. If placement is still uncertain after the college support staff considers students' intake information, they refer students to Placement Advising for Student Success, or the PASS Program. Here, students meet one-on-one with a mathematics and/or writing faculty member for further advising. If necessary, students go on to take the standardized test(s) to secure final, solid placement recommendations.

To support its new way of placing students, the campus has drafted a groundbreaking [self-directed placement advising statement](#) that is under review by Clackamas staff and has yet to be finalized:

*There is a wide range of acceptable practice for determining which entry-level math and writing courses are right for you. At Clackamas Community College we want you to choose the course that can give you the best chance at success so we prefer to use multiple measures as part of the placement recommendations. Using the PASS tools that have been developed as a guide, your placement may be straight-forward; however, knowing the options that work best for your academic path often requires a conversation with an adviser. The recommendations made are based on the best information available, this may come from your high school experiences, standardized test scores, and even your academic confidence and/or work or military experience. After you have taken time to learn the detailed expectations of your course options, identify the courses that fit best with your academic goals and consider the multiple measures that can lead to success, the choice is ultimately yours.*

Associate Dean Darlene Geiger describes the Clackamas' statement as an attempt to provide faculty, staff and students the opportunity to discuss the cultural shift required to view placement in a different way. In other words, she notes, "The degree of perceived certainty with a test score conversion is more effective if we engage the individual student in a more subjective conversation that includes multiple measures. The conversation is shifting from 'prove to us' what you can do, student, to tell us what 'you're capable' of doing."

Other campuses are also experimenting with multiple measures. Staff from Klamath presented to the Work Group and 2681 Committee a [draft guide for placement in mathematics](#) that relies on grades in the highest math classes taken gauged against time that has elapsed since students earned those grades. Students receive points based on responses to questions. For instance, if a student's grade in his or her last math class was an A, he or she receives one point. A grade of C earns three points. Classes taken within the last year produce an additional score of one; classes taken within the past two years, produce scores of two and so on. The points are added up and final scores used to determine what course the students should take. If a student scores two points, for example, and his or her last course was calculus, he or she enrolls in math 251. If that same student scored three points, he or she would take a class one step below math 251, in this case math 112. Finally, students who place into Math 20 or 70 must solve two math problems. If they struggle, the college may decide to give them a lower placement.

The March 4 meeting concluded with two hours of practice—based on what participants had learned from both national and local examples. Teams of participants generated and presented their own placement systems using multiple measures. Some, as Figure 5 suggests, didn't shy away from using a standardized assessment as a prominent measure.

**Figure 5: Placement grid created by small cross-college group at March 4 Placement Work Group/2681 Committee joint meeting**

For those graduating in last five years	Placement	For students with GED Score 2014 or earlier*	Placement
<b>Smarter Balance score of 3 or 4</b>	WR 121	Score of 170 or higher	WR 121
<b>HSGPA of 3.0 or better</b>	WR 121	Score of 145-169 + meeting with advisor, which might include Accuplacer,	Placement TBD
<b>HSGPA of 2.5-2.9 + B or better in senior English</b>	WR 121		
<b>HSGPA below 2.5</b>	Take Accuplacer for additional placement information		

\*Students who took GED examination before 2014 must take the Accuplacer.

## Conclusion

The Developmental Education Work Group and the 2681 Committee covered a lot of ground the past few months. Together they learned how Oregon can increase student success by eliminating placement practices that rely on a single measure: a standardized test. Both groups proposed that community colleges begin relying on multiple measures to place students in math and writing. Soon Oregon’s legislature will debate this recommendation and decide what it might do to encourage proliferation of this practice.

The groups also developed a menu of potential measures from which campuses can choose and then learned how campuses might combine the measures in a system that consigns far fewer students to the developmental education classes that Complete College America calls the [Bermuda Triangle of higher education](#). Many students go in, but few ever come out.

So what’s next?

Follow-through. Neither this chronicle nor the new ideas the Work Group and the 2681 Committee generated should gather dust. Campus representatives from the two groups and developmental education redesign campus team leads must lead change on their campuses and rely on each other for support and ongoing learning. Taking a few steps will go a long way toward ensuring that more of our students succeed:

- **Writing.** Seven campus representatives raised their hands to volunteer to participate in a pilot that will test the use of high school writing samples as a placement measure. ODE will lead the pilot, which will include efforts to build confidence in how high school teachers rate the samples. This can include ODE working with appropriate parties to bring greater rigor to scoring

practices, such as requiring multiple raters and training all those who score samples. Further, community college writing faculty were clear that campuses need to meet with local high school faculties to reach consensus on what constitutes college-level writing and what high school courses are college-preparatory—so that if a campus uses last grade in course as a measure, it knows which courses are college-preparatory and which are not. Finally, building trust between the two faculties will go a long way toward increasing confidence in the decisions high schools make about the quality and college-readiness of student writing. College writing teams should start meeting with high school language arts teachers as soon as possible.

- **Mathematics.** Cross-campus math faculty must back up its strong commitment to multiple measures and confidence in high school faculties with strong campus guidelines for placement. Math faculty have led the way in developmental education redesign, and we expect the same as campuses redesign their placement practices.
- **Ongoing research and development on the use of multiple measures.** Campuses cannot go it alone. OCCA, individual colleges, ODE and the HECC must support ongoing learning and development through professional learning communities for placement and admissions personnel as well as faculty so as campuses experiment with new placement processes that rely on multiple measures, they will learn from each other what works and what does not. These professional learning communities will require a commitment to data collection and analysis, much like the analysis Hettis conducted at Long Beach City College and shared with the 2681 Committee and Placement Work Group. Without data we will never know if students whom we might otherwise have placed in developmental education are succeeding in college-level courses.

While the Developmental Education Redesign Placement Work Group is at the end of its journey and the 2681 Committee is nearing the end of its own, the work of redesigning our placement practices will not end for many years. As redesign heads toward 2020, more and more campuses will more accurately assess the capacity of women, minorities, first generation college students and others so that our placement processes no longer dash Oregon's students' dreams. They will set students on a course toward achieving them.