Chapter 6. Putting ACCUPLACER in Its Place: Expanding Evidence in Placement Reform at Jamestown Community College

Jessica M. Kubiak
Jamestown Community College

Abstract: This study of a small (2,500 student) community college in the State University of New York system describes concurrent placement reform and developmental English curriculum reform. Highlighting the affordances of an English department that includes not only literature but developmental composition and reading instructors, the chapter charts the efforts of this unified English faculty as it responded to various demands and desires relative to placement, especially during the 2018–2019 academic year. Of particular note are the impacts of dual-enrollment programs, which both influence the composition of campus-based first-year composition (FYC) classrooms and disrupt attempts at multiple measures placement implementation. Indeed, unique to this study is consideration of how academic programs serving non-matriculated students impact placement reforms. Additionally, the interdependence of the humanities program and FYC, and the college-wide reliance upon English placement for determining content area course requisites, are explored. This study contributes to ongoing conversations about writing placement, especially in the context of access-oriented colleges and universities seeking to update not only placement but writing curricula to better enact equity-oriented pedagogies. It also maps relationships among institutional stakeholders and curricular practices, echoing common concerns regarding equity and illustrating challenges unique to an institution with a large full-time and transfer-oriented student population and a system of tightly woven course requisites.

At Jamestown Community College (JCC), the first locally sponsored community college in the State University of New York (SUNY) system, 25.1 percent of all first-time full-time students placed into developmental coursework in Fall 2018 (Jamestown Community College [JCC], 2018),[1] and nearly every student sat for placement tests in math and English as part of their orientation to the college. A long-standing institutional insistence that learners must demonstrate "basic"

1. Most references affiliated with Jamestown Community College (2019b, 2019a, 2018, 2017, 2014) are unpublished internal reports on student performance in developmental coursework. These are housed on the college's intranet.

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competencies prior to enrolling in college-level courses came from a view of literacy as a singular, objective, linear measure of textual ability. Ascribing to what Shannon Carter (2008) called an autonomous view of literacy, the faculty at large believed reading and writing instruction could and should be done outside of the context of the college's credit-bearing curriculum. As such, JCC's sole placement procedure—administration of computer-based ACCUPLACER placement tests—was seen as supportive of its overarching pedagogical structures.

While internal data on reading and writing placement in the developmental English curriculum seemed to support continued use of both standard single-measure placements and prerequisite developmental literacy course sequences, several factors led to significant changes during the 2018–2019 academic year. These factors compelled English faculty to analyze data in new ways, specifically through the lens of throughput, which challenged us to explore the efficacy of placement procedures and the existing developmental English curriculum. This ultimately led to an expansion of placement measures that coincided with the elimination of all prerequisite developmental reading and writing. After a few semesters of gradually de-emphasizing the ACCUPLACER reading comprehension and writing tests, the college shifted to a placement scheme that now uses high school grade point average (HSGPA) as the sole placement factor for most students and considers various success indicators for others, reserving administration of the ACCUPLACER reading test for students wishing to challenge their multiple measures placement. By using HSGPA for automatic placement out of or into newly developed corequisite support courses, and by using multiple measures to determine placement for students in the middle, the college effectively expanded the range of evidence used for writing placement.

This Study in Context

Like the other case studies in this collection, this chapter contributes to ongoing conversations about writing placement, especially in the context of access-oriented colleges and universities seeking to update writing placement and curricula to better enact equity-oriented pedagogies. Longstanding concern about assessment validity has been reframed in recent decades by movement away from high-stakes testing and toward portfolio assessment (Huot & Williamson, 2009; Reynolds & Rice, 2006; Walvoord, 2014). The extent to which the portfolio movement has shaped assessment for the sake of *placement* is not evident; practice and research suggest early attempts at portfolio-based writing placement (e.g., Elbow & Belanoff, 1986) have not taken hold. At the same time, writing placement reform has focused on increasing student agency and enrollment in college-level coursework (Klausman et al., 2016; Phillips & Giordano, 2016; Toth et al., 2019).

This chapter also maps relationships among stakeholders, curricular practices, and college placement. New York State has not legislated placement in community colleges and state-operated institutions, but such mandates loom large

elsewhere (Fain, 2013; Miller et al., 2017; Minnesota Rev. Code Ann. § 120B.13, 2021). Though legislated mandates do not play a role in this case, they do highlight the influence of underlying institutional structures, both departmental and curricular. For the two-year college in particular, administration of developmental writing and composition sequences often falls to English program directors or chairs (Janangelo & Klausman, 2012; Klausman, 2018; Taylor, 2009), whose expertise may or may not be in composition and rhetoric. Thanks to a core of full-time English faculty and several creative and risk-taking part-time faculty at JCC, various decision-makers quickly coalesced around data-informed research from entities such as Columbia University's Community College Research Center (CCRC) and the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U).

During placement reform, JCC's faculty were moved by two kinds of research about writing assessment broadly and writing placement in particular. First, theory on linguistic justice speaking to the urgency of placement reform struck a chord. Asao B. Inoue's (2015) work on minimizing the damaging effects of feedback alerted us to problems inherent in using a "single standard" (p. 116) for evaluation. Pushing against strategies promoted by Brian Huot in particular, Inoue claims writing assessment scholars have avoided racism's impact on our processes and practices (2015, p. 21). Likewise, Jamila Lyiscott (2017), a literacy educator who led a professional development residency at JCC in 2016, and April Baker-Bell (2020) interrogated the White supremacy of teaching and learning standard written English, advocating for mechanisms that allow students to use their own language(s). Acknowledging these ideas in light of the fact that placement is the college's first engagement with student writing moved us toward a recognition that our use of ACCUPLACER as a single standard for writing assessment and placement was a racist act.

Quantitative studies that provided new ways of working with data also gave us faith in our decision-making. SUNY had initiated a CCRC study involving seven system institutions, and initial progress (Barnett et al., 2018) suggested the importance of using multiple measures, which recent updates (Barnett et al., 2020) confirm. Because such gathering of system-specific data was in its relative infancy, JCC relied on research from California's state system to inform local decisions. The California Acceleration Project (CAP) was driven by the Multiple Measures Assessment Project Team's (2018) tightly controlled analysis of state community college students. Their study suggests HSGPA is a more useful and valid predictor of preparedness for college-level English than ACCUPLACER, and it promotes use of additional measures (e.g., SAT) for students with subpar GPAs. At a 2018 conference, CAP researchers posited that HSGPA was a better predictor because it reflected learners' abilities not at a single moment of testing, but over time. This reference to student persistence spoke to JCC's desire to consider "non-cognitive" skills and attitudes in placement, and it issued confidence that removing what we had perceived as the safety net of placement into prerequisite developmental writing was unlikely to result in additional harm to learners.

As I hope is the case for all institutions differentiating learners at entry, JCC sought to craft mechanisms to support learners without disenfranchising them. Despite lack of departmental awareness of two-year writing placement scholarship, a full- and part-time English faculty increasingly well-versed in composition pedagogy allowed progressive movement in service of our placement goal. Faculty exposure to the texts and ideas introduced above led to a series of decisions made between fall of 2015 and June of 2019 that shifted placement systems, as well as the content and structure of developmental and first-year writing, in a way that followed several national and statewide trends. At the same time, given the cross-training of some English faculty in both writing and reading instruction, and given the roles played by the remaining developmental reading course in the curriculum, JCC's updated systems and structures also made space for contextualized reading instruction.

Jamestown Community College

Jamestown Community College was established in 1950 as "the first locally sponsored community college accepted into the State University of New York" (JCC, 2021). An open-access, public two-year community college accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, it boasts almost 400 articulation agreements with transfer programs. The two campuses, one on the outskirts of Jamestown, NY, and the other in Olean, NY, sit on either side of the Seneca Nation of Indians' Allegany Territory.

JCC's learners are largely from western New York State and northwestern Pennsylvania; as such, the student population reflects the region's racial, ethnic, and economic demographics. In Fall 2019, 79 percent of students identified as White, seven percent as Hispanic or Latinx, three percent as Black, and two percent as American Indian or Alaska Native. Ninety-one percent of newly matriculated students in 2018–2019 received financial aid, with 63 percent receiving Pell Grants averaging $4,498 per grant for tuition and fees of $5,850.[2]

Many of JCC's students fit the profile of a "traditional" student. Most (56%) in 2018–2019 attended full-time, enrolled in at least 12 credit hours per 15-week semester. Of first-time, full-time students, 60 percent were retained from year to year. Most (59%) identified as female, and 62.4 percent of matriculated students were under 23 years old.

Of the 4,467 students enrolled in coursework in 2018–2019, only 2,515 were matriculated students. The balance constitutes concurrent enrollment learners from regional high schools who take courses for both high school and college credit from secondary teachers approved and trained to teach JCC's curriculum.

2. Demographic information on all learners comes from the National Center for Education Statistics (2020), while matriculated-student-specific information comes from the college's office of institutional research (JCC, 2019b).

The program provides extensive support for high school teachers, including discipline-specific liaisons employed by the college to offer professional development. Among the most popular courses taught via concurrent enrollment are those in JCC's first-year composition sequence: English Composition I (ENG 1510) and English Composition II (ENG 1530). Because so many concurrent enrollment sections of English courses are taught across partner schools, English-specific professional development responsibilities require a dedicated liaison who is not otherwise employed by the college.

JCC faculty who teach composition and other first-year reading and writing courses to matriculated students are part of the English department, a subset of the humanities (now language, literature, and writing) program. The humanities program, offering an associate of arts degree, included eight full-time faculty in 2018–2019, seven of whom taught primarily "English" and aligned courses including developmental writing and reading. All full-time program faculty at the time identified as White, and the majority identified as male; this demographic breakdown held for part-time faculty as well. They varied in terms of their disciplinary preparation—with degrees in creative writing, literature-focused English, adult education, composition and rhetoric, and language and literacy—yet all full-time English faculty had recently started teaching regularly in the first-year composition sequence, with many also teaching developmental courses, as well as literary and writing studies courses.

Developmental English Placement

In Fall 2018, 25.1 percent of all matriculated, first-time full-time students placed into developmental coursework (JCC, 2018). Up to this point, and for at least the previous two decades, placement into developmental coursework had been determined by student performance on ACCUPLACER's computerized, largely standardized set of placement measures, assessing learner abilities in math, reading, and writing. Significant efforts on the part of the faculty, as well as student development and continuing education staff, were undertaken to ensure test-takers' performance accurately reflected their abilities relative to readiness for college-level courses. Continuing education courses in pre-collegiate English and math prepared students to place out of developmental coursework. English faculty members provided planning and preparation guides on the college website. And reading courses were modified to allow learners to retest after several weeks in the hopes they'd "knocked off the rust."

More than determining which developmental writing course a learner might be placed into, English placement also influenced students' access to content-area courses and thus program progress. Most courses in the curriculum featured either explicit or implied English requisites, such as the common requisite limiting enrollment to students who had scored an 80 or above on the ACCUPLACER reading measure. English placement therefore determined not only whether a

student would enroll in developmental writing (ENG 0430), first-semester composition (ENG 1510), or second-semester composition (ENG 1530) during their first semester, but what content-area coursework they would be eligible to enroll in. In 2018, learners who placed into developmental English courses were restricted from the majority of the college's introductory-level courses.

Since at least January 2013, when I joined JCC's English faculty, we had been told that developmental education needed an overhaul and that placement needed to change (Table 6.1). The message we heard about developmental education was, "The more developmental courses students take, the higher their likelihood of failure." About placement, we were hearing, "High school GPA is the best indicator of success in college."

Table 6.1. Timeline of JCC Revisions and Reforms: Placement and Developmental English

Fall 2015	JCC English faculty pilot of contextualized developmental reading courses
January 2016	Jamila Lyiscott residency on language and race at JCC
Spring 2016	JCC curriculum committee redefinition of terms related to course requisites; redefined terms would be approved in Spring 2017
June 2017	Rockland CC hosted workshop on the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP); deemed SUNY's first meeting on developmental English
Spring 2018	JCC receives planning grant from SUNY Developmental English Community
January–February 2018	Approval of JCC's corequisite writing support course, ENG 0500
May 2018	JCC full faculty approval of motion to eliminate required writing placement, defaulting to reading placement performance as primary measure of preparedness for college-level reading and writing
June 2018	Conference on Acceleration in Developmental Education (CADE) in Washington, DC, with keynote speakers Hearn and Inoue
July 2018	JCC humanities program external review team visit
August 2018	JCC placement committee approval of additional placement revisions
September 2018	Presentation to full JCC faculty on pending English placement and corequisite plans
October 2018	JCC full faculty approval of motion to implement English placement revisions and to remove ENG 0190, Essential Reading Skills, and ENG 0430, Essential Writing Skills, from curriculum
Spring 2019	JCC receipt of two-year implementation grant from SUNY Developmental English Learning Community to scale corequisite efforts
January–May 2019	Updates to JCC course requisites: approximately 300 course requisites are revised and refined
June 2019	SUNY-wide discussion on multiple measures in Albany, NY, includes updates from seven system institutions taking part in Center for the Analysis of Postsecondary Readiness (CAPR) (Barnett et al., 2018 & 2020) studies

Because of how these messages were framed by media reports on state legislation across the country, we reacted defensively: *Of course* HSGPA predicts how the same privileged students who do well in high school will perform in college, but we were interested in breaking such cycles and sought to level the placement playing field. And *of course* students who place into developmental coursework are less likely to be successful, but it's not *because* of the courses themselves (which was the national narrative we were hearing). In fact, examining our own data, we confirmed that students who completed developmental writing often had better success in ENG 1510 than those who didn't "need" ENG 0430, which we were proud of: Pass rates in ENG 1510 after successful completion of developmental writing (ENG 0430) ranged from 55 percent to 74 percent between 2014 and 2017. In some semesters, these results even outpaced those of students who had not been placed into developmental writing coursework. For example, of the students who placed directly into first-semester composition (ENG 1510) in Fall 2013, only 65 percent passed the course. Conversely, of the students who first placed into and completed ENG 0430 and then went on to take ENG 1510 in Fall 2013, 83 percent passed ENG 1510 (JCC, 2014, p. 8). Such reading of data, however, ignored a bigger picture that required us to look beyond the students who completed developmental coursework.

Indeed, in spite of such perceived successes, JCC wasn't entirely ignoring calls for reform. English faculty knew anecdotally that ACCUPLACER wasn't providing accurate information about learners' skills, and discontent with the placement mechanism grew as faculty with updated training in literacy and composition were hired. I had been hired to teach three developmental reading and writing courses (ENG 0190, 0410, and 0430), and I learned quickly that students' placement in these courses also excluded them from enrolling in classes they wished to take, including introductory courses in their majors. Those of us who regularly taught developmental coursework surmised the one-two punch of placing into "reading" courses and being ineligible to progress toward intended degrees negatively impacted affect and the positive identity required for success. To rectify this, a pilot corequisite writing support course for ENG 1510 was developed in 2015 by full-time faculty who had taught developmental writing. Concurrently, thanks to faculty involvement with the College Reading and Learning Association, efforts were made to contextualize developmental reading instruction: English faculty worked with content-area faculty who taught introductory courses in sociology, human services, psychology, and anthropology to waive registration restrictions for those placing into Develop Reading Versatility (ENG 0410), provided students also enrolled in specified "co-req" 0410 sections. The pilot immediately suggested success.[3] A new English faculty hire with expertise in composition and rhetoric in 2016 moved the

3. In Fall 2015, 52 percent of those co-enrolled in ENG 0410 and a content-area course passed their content course with a C or better, whereas 50 percent of those who passed ENG 0410 in a previous semester passed their content course with a C or better.

faculty and curriculum toward process-oriented writing pedagogies in composition courses, and portfolio assessment was finally underway. JCC was moving in directions touted by the CCRC but in ways that worked for our local contexts.

In June 2017, what was deemed the first ever SUNY-wide meeting on developmental English took place at Rockland Community College (SUNY). There, a JCC administrator and I learned more about the movement we were already engaging in. Peter Adams' pleas to not only pilot an accelerated learning program (ALP) but scale it quickly were convincing and reflective of the work initiated by JCC's English department. Beyond pilots of integrated reading and writing (IRW) courses, corequisite support courses, and contextualized reading, placement at JCC was also being scrutinized. Initial placement reform plans had included not eliminating placement tests, but rather layering additional measures on top of ACCUPLACER for some students. Specifically, we'd planned to assess the non-cognitive skills of those placed into developmental coursework to determine learner persistence, time management abilities, and even affective stances toward learning (Adams, 2020). This vision for placement was abandoned: because of unwieldiness, because of budgets, and because JCC had engaged with SUNY's learning community on developmental English reform and aligned concerns. So instead of adding layers to placement, we began stripping them away, streamlining students into ENG 1510 by eliminating the writing placement test and instead using the reading test as the indicator of readiness for college-level writing.

Initial Placement Revisions

Movement away from ACCUPLACER-dependent placement initially resulted from several realizations about learner experience, and revisions were undertaken to align the developmental curriculum. Members of the cross-disciplinary, cross-divisional developmental studies (DS) committee—with representation from English, math, the counseling and advisement center, academic administration, and placement staff—sought to determine where learners encountered various challenges during their first year so appropriate supports might be better built into the program. However, the design of the college's placement scheme (Table 6.2) allowed for too many variables in terms of course placement, thus making it difficult for the DS committee to make any assumptions about developmental learners' instructional experiences.

In mapping out learners' various potential developmental pathways, as illustrated in Figure 6.1, major placement-related gaps emerged. Specifically, while many learners who placed into developmental reading coursework also placed into writing coursework, this was not the case for all. For example, learners scoring in the lowest range on the reading test (0–56), regardless of their placement out of developmental writing (ENG 0430), were required to complete first-level developmental reading (ENG 0190) their first semester before enrolling in Comp I (ENG 1510) and second-level reading (ENG 0410) their second semester (Figure 6.1).

Table 6.2. ACCUPLACER-Dependent Placement

Reading Score	Writing Score	First Semester Course Placement
80+	7+	ENG 1530 (second-semester composition, no dev. reading)
80+	4–6	ENG 1510 (first-semester composition, no dev. reading)
70–79	4+	ENG 0410 and ENG 1510 (second-level reading, first-semester composition)
57–69	4	ENG 0410 (second-level reading, no composition) Scenario A in Figure 6.1)
0–56	4+	ENG 0190 (first-level reading, no composition) Scenario B in Figure 6.1
0–56	1–3	ENG 0190 and ENG 0430 (first-level reading, dev. composition) Scenario C in Figure 6.1
57+	1–3	ENG 0430, ENG 0410 (second-level reading, dev. composition) Scenario D in Figure 6.1

Note. *Placement into two or more developmental courses (including math) also requires enrollment in Human Development 1310.*

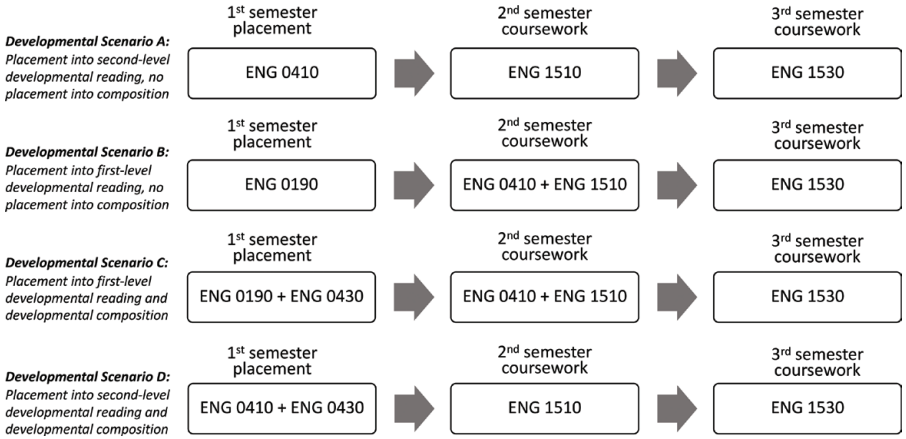

Figure 6.1. Developmental English course sequence scenarios.

Similarly, learners scoring in the mid-range on reading (57–69) and writing (4) were deemed ready in terms of writing skills for Comp I (ENG 1510) but in need of reading instruction. Students in this placement category were required to enroll in second-level developmental reading (ENG 0410) during their first semester but were restricted from enrolling in Comp I until after successful completion of ENG 0410 (Figure 6.1). In both cases, learners were not being placed into a writing course during their first semester. In fact, in 2015, 45 percent of students who placed into a developmental reading course were not also placed into a writing course (JCC OIR, 2017). By engaging in this mapping pro-

cess, the DS committee recognized that no first-semester writing instruction was required *or even recommended* for roughly half of the students deemed by placement tests as most in need of literacy instruction, not only likely impeding learner progress toward credit-bearing coursework but divorcing reading and writing learning experiences, making it impossible to develop a mutually informed developmental curriculum. Faculty were eager to streamline the developmental English curriculum and placement into associated courses. And while ACCUPLACER itself was less the culprit than the college's overarching placement design, the move toward revision afforded us an occasion to review its usefulness.

Varied reading and writing placement options led to uneven experiences of literacy instruction not only during the first semester, but also as students progressed through their next semesters. Note that students enrolled in any developmental English coursework (course numbers beginning with "0," such as 0410) were typically excluded from enrolling in most introductory-level content-area courses.

Recognition of these unintended consequences of existing placement mechanisms prompted immediate placement revisions. Data were reviewed to determine the extent to which both reading and writing ACCUPLACER tests were, in fact, useful for placement. We found that, historically, over 70 percent of students taking the writing test scored a 4 or higher, placing them into college-level writing for their first composition course. Review of Fall 2016 placement data in particular suggested some correlation between student performance on reading and writing tests (Figure 6.2). Reading scores correlated positively with writing scores for the students tested, suggesting college-level reading scores indicate comparable learner preparedness for college-level writing coursework. Though we continued to ascribe some validity to the tests, we began to view ACCUPLACER writing testing as redundant and unnecessary for the majority of our matriculated students.

Therefore, in spite of limited data on those few learners who scored both 80+ on the reading test and 1–3 on writing, the English faculty proposed any student with a reading score of 80+ should be placed into first-semester credit-bearing composition (ENG 1510). A sample of student grades and reading scores were then compared to determine the lowest possible reading score (45) that might be predictive of success in ENG 1510. For those earning writing scores of 4–6, learners who also scored under 45 on reading (who were therefore among those not enrolling in any writing their first semester anyway) would be automatically placed in the DS suite of courses: ENG 0190, ENG 0430, and HUM 1310. This initial revision to reading and writing placement was still ACCUPLACER-dependent (Table 6.3), but it shifted that dependency, eliminating writing-specific measures from the placement equation while also streamlining placement options and ensuring all learners would enroll in a writing course their first semester.

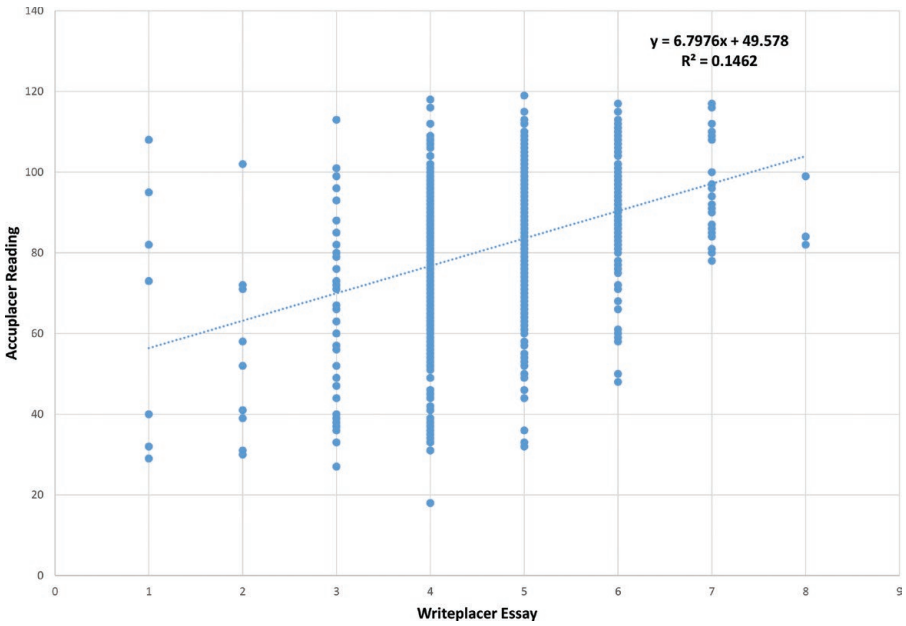

Figure 6.2. Reading and writing correlation.[4]

Table 6.3. Initial Revisions to ACCUPLACER-Dependent Placement (Removal of Writing Measure)

Reading Score	First Semester Course Placement
80+	ENG 1510 (first-semester composition, no dev. reading); with option to take writing placement test for placement into ENG 1530
46–79	ENG 0410 and ENG 1510 (second-level reading, first-semester composition)
0–45	ENG 0190, ENG 0430, and HUM 1310 (first-level reading, dev. composition, and dev. human development course)

Recognition of the mismatch between our writing pedagogy and our writing assessment provided the last element of our rationale for eliminating the writing placement test. At-entry writing testing such as that required by ACCUPLACER involved timed, inauthentic, auto-scored, decontextualized essays. As indicated in the English faculty's proposal to the full faculty in May 2018, this process did not reflect the construct of writing that JCC wished to assess. In the two years previous, blue book final exit exams had been eliminated in composition courses, and portfolio assessment had been instituted in alignment with revised course

4. ACCUPLACER reading test scores correlated with writing placement test scores (for 765 first-time students in Fall 2016). Data and graph provided by JCC's Office of Institutional Research (B. Russell, personal communication, 13 Dec. 2016).

learning outcomes focusing on rhetorical awareness and collaborative writing process. Furthermore, while ACCUPLACER had pushed back their rollout for new writing test implementation, we worried the new test, consistent with SAT's move to multiple-choice testing emphasizing copyediting skills, was imminent. While the faculty found the "Classic" ACCUPLACER test in writing problematic to begin with, it at least invited test-takers to compose. A shift to the multiple-choice writing test would mean an increased emphasis on single standards for grammatical "correctness." We feared the consequences for adopting the new writing placement test not only for our incoming college students, but for the high school students in our service region. As Christie Toth et al. (2019) pointed out, high school curricula are likely to focus on preparation for success in local placement measures, and JCC's faculty did not want to provide any additional incentive for our regional high school teachers to "de-emphasize the difficult and often messy practice of teaching writing within purposeful rhetorical contexts."

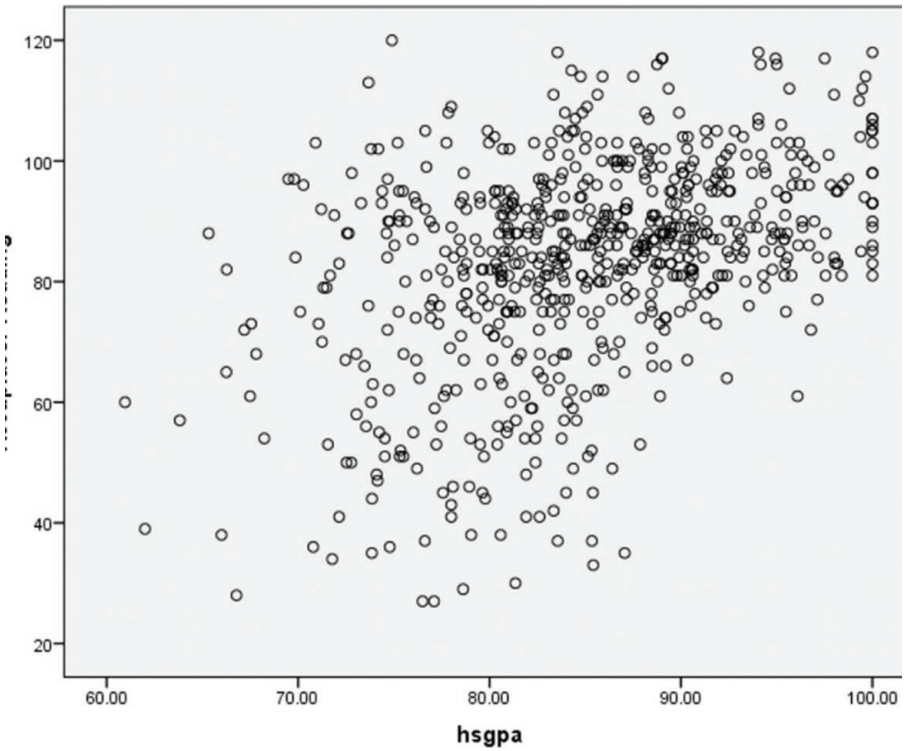

Figure 6.3. ACCUPLACER reading test scores correlated with HSGPA (for 831 first-time students in Fall 2017).[5]

5. Though analysis shows statistical significance, it is a weak correlation. Data and graph provided by JCC's Office of Institutional Research (B. Russell, personal communication, Aug. 15, 2018).

With one major placement-related hurdle cleared after initial revision, English faculty and the DS committee sought to explore HSGPA as a potential alternative to the remaining high-stakes ACCUPLACER reading test. Because we found an insufficient correlation between ACCUPLACER reading test results and HSGPA (Figure 6.3), we did not initially pursue HSGPA as a placement option. Of course, the assumption that we might find a correlation revealed our rather baseless reliance on ACCUPLACER scores as indicative of learner aptitude or readiness. The lack of clear relationship or correlation between ACCUPLACER reading score and HSGPA suggests a disconnect that we ultimately recognized. That is, to the extent that HSGPA actually does function as a better indicator of learner readiness to engage with college-level texts, and to the extent that the ACCUPLACER reading measure does not, we should not expect to see a strong correlation between the data compared.

Summer of Growth

The summer of 2018 saw concerted efforts by faculty to further challenge assumptions about reading and writing curriculum and placement. In June, all full-time English faculty and a college administrator attended the Conference on Acceleration in Developmental Education (CADE) in Washington, D.C. There, we heard keynote speeches by Katie Hern and Asao Inoue, and attended sessions by researchers from California who shared compelling evidence for using HSGPA as the primary placement measure in a multiple measures framework. Thanks to the initial placement revisions and curriculum realignment of the previous few months, faculty were primed to have our perspectives shifted, and CADE's focus on equity-driven, data-supported reforms in placement spoke to our current mindset.

Later that summer, the group reviewed what we'd learned in light of institutional and departmental policy, practice, and intention. Reviewing CADE materials, we reflected: *Which materials, information, and ideas stood out to us and influenced our thinking about acceleration in developmental education? What else informs our thoughts and beliefs about developmental English and related issues?* As for the latter, one major consideration in adopting a model such as the accelerated learning program (ALP) model, in which prerequisite supports in reading and writing are compressed and packaged as a single corequisite support course, was our approach to reading support. Our philosophical orientation to reading instruction as something done in the service of students' entire college learning experience prevented us from seeing promise in a single course providing reading and writing instruction in support of ENG 1510 only. While ENG 1510 *could* function as a reading-intensive course supported by reading instruction, we recognized the increased efficacy of contextualization via content-area coursework, ideally in the student's chosen area of study, to increase learner motivation and persistence. This stance influenced the ultimate shape and focus of reforms.

We drew these conclusions:

- Developmental instruction should be contextualized.
- Single, high-stakes tests are less useful for placement than cumulative HSGPA.
- Multiple measures for placement should be used to increase access to coursework (not restrict it).
- Support coursework needs to increase student confidence, willingness to collaborate, and likelihood of success.
- What we know as the "contextualized version" of ENG 0410 will be expanded to scale, with all ENG 0410 students taking content-area course(s).

We then established a process for refining and achieving our goals by responding to the following questions:

- Which documents should we focus on to guide our decision-making?
- What data do we need to obtain?
- Which data will best help us explain our plans to other stakeholders? Who are they?
- What processes/entities need to be changed or created?
- What's our timetable?

Of these, the most impactful for decision-making and communicating was the data obtained. Hern's plenary had highlighted the concept of "throughput" in a way that shook us from our satisfaction with ENG 0430 learner performance in ENG 1510. Revisiting our historical retention data through the lens of throughput (Bahr et al., 2019; see Nastal, 2019, for "survival analysis") in particular suggested the reality of developmental outcomes. Whereas we had focused on the strong *pass rates* of learners who had passed ENG 0430 and then gone on to pass ENG 1510 in the subsequent semester during the 2014–2017 academic years, the same data showed only 20 to 37 percent of learners during that same timeframe who had *initially enrolled* in prerequisite developmental writing ever passed first-semester composition (JCC, 2018). By stepping back, we were able to see that while students who *completed* the prerequisite course were likely to also complete college-level composition, a meaningful percentage of learners who *initially enrolled* in the prerequisite course were not. Analyzing completion data from the perspective of throughput confirmed we would benefit from implementing retention strategies relative to writing placement and corequisite support design proposed by CAP, the SUNY Developmental English Learning Community, and others.

Final Push Toward Multiple Measures Placement

Initial reforms had involved shifts in both English placement and curricula. The next iteration required even more parts of the college to shift as well. Having already shepherded initial revisions, and having been integral to ongoing plan-

ning, the placement committee ensured preparations for continued placement revisions were tentatively underway prior to initiating system changes. Committee members shared draft plans with IT and information systems staff, and they worked with admissions staff to ensure the college would have mechanisms for collecting various kinds of information from high school transcripts. Like the DS committee, the placement committee included placement and advising staff and faculty from student development, English, math, and the social sciences. This broad committee makeup helped ensure key faculty and staff stakeholder approval of reform proposals. For instance, as the group worked to identify viable success indicators from incoming students' transcripts, history faculty on the committee helped us arrive at the decision to use scores from standardized state exams in American history instead of the English state exam, which was perceived as less rigorous. This choice allayed content-area faculty concerns that placement revisions would increase the number of underprepared learners in their classes. The group was therefore able to effectively ensure multiple measures efforts would be viewed as legitimate by various facets of the college.

In addition to updating placement procedures so that HSGPA was the initial factor considered along with additional success indicators, the English faculty sought at the same time to shift from a prerequisite to a corequisite developmental English curriculum. In previous years, the message heard by JCC's faculty from their colleagues in English had been: If a course requires *any* high-stakes or formal writing, students should take composition first so they could "learn to write." Likewise for reading. Our job, then, was to convince colleagues of the exact opposite and encourage them to open their courses to more first-semester students, especially those in developmental coursework. English faculty therefore undertook an informal educational campaign, sharing information at faculty development workshops and other disciplines' department meetings about language acquisition, constantly highlighting the value of contextualized literacy instruction. This informational campaign regarding literacy, along with more explicit efforts at repositioning ENG 0410 as a reading across the disciplines course, helped garner faculty enthusiasm for reforms generally. One change that ensured this enthusiasm was revision of ENG 0410, which had in the past focused on increasing learner enjoyment of fiction in preparation for later coursework in literature, but had been revised to focus on nonfiction texts, better ensuring support for all introductory courses.

At the same time, JCC was revising its general education curriculum, and decisions about which English composition courses all students should complete were a major component of the redesign. To increase consistency with four-year transfer institutions, the general education committee—which also included full-time English faculty—recommended that all students take ENG 1510 and ENG 1530, the courses revised in recent years to become a true two-semester composition sequence. That the English faculty, DS committee, and placement committee were already proposing to position all learners to take ENG 1510 during their first semester was therefore quite attractive given desired general education revisions:

For the first time, all students would be able to make immediate progress toward meeting not only general education requirements, but program requirements. With general education support and advocacy, the English faculty, DS committee, and placement committee felt less burden to make their case in isolation.

These entities spent Fall 2018 presenting at full faculty, curriculum committee, division, and discipline meetings to ensure our vision was communicated consistently yet from various institutional perspectives. To help make a case for multiple measures placement, English faculty relied on Craig Hayward (2017).[6] And regarding elimination of prerequisite developmental English, we relied on California's Multiple Measures Assessment Project Team (2018).[7] Additionally, the humanities program had just completed its five-year program review, including recommendations from an external team including faculty from one peer institution and three transfer institutions. Their suggestions for focusing both the overall program and composition efforts were reflected in our decisions, and we were sure to share their insights.

In August 2018, the placement committee approved multiple measure placement revisions for English, also reviewing concordance data and approving new cut

6. Craig Hayward (2017) observed, "The placement of incoming college students into an initial English or math course (developmental vs. college level) has important implications for students' likelihood of enrollment, persistence, and completion (Bailey, Jeong, & Cho, 2010; Fong, 2016; Fong & Melguizo, 2016; Hayward & Willett, 2014; Melguizo, Kosiewicz, Prather, & Bos, 2014). There is a growing consensus that including additional sources of information beyond placement test scores reduces error in placement decisions. For example, accuracy of placement can be improved by incorporating high school performance information, such as GPA and course grades earned in high school (Belfield & Crosta, 2012; Geiser & Santlices, 2007; Fuenmayor, Hetts, & Rothstein, 2012; Ngo & Kwon, 2015; Scott-Clayton, 2012; Scott-Clayton, Crosta, & Belfield, 2014; Willett, Hayward, & Dahlstrom, 2008; Willett, 2013)" (p.3).

7. The Multiple Measures Assessment Project Team (2018) reported, "A series of regressions using high school grade point average (HSGPA) and ACCUPLACER scores were used to adjust direct transfer-level placement success rates for . . . transfer-level English. These estimated success rates were then compared to estimated 'throughput' rates (the percentage of students completing transfer-level English . . . in a given time frame) of students placed one level below to determine if such remediation would result in higher transfer-level completion or throughput than direct placement into transfer-level coursework. The regression-adjusted success rates were indeed lower than the original success rates of students who had been placed directly into a transfer-level course in the MMAP decision rules data. However, for all HSGPA performance levels in all three gatekeeper courses, the adjusted success rates for students placed directly into transfer-level courses exceeded adjusted throughput rates for students placed one level below transfer. This result suggests that even without any additional supports or course redesigns, the lowest performing high school students would have been more likely to complete transfer-level English . . . if placed directly into these courses as compared to taking below transfer-level remediation" (p. 2).

scores for the updated ACCUPLACER, due for implementation in January 2019. In September 2018, English faculty presented the full faculty with information about pending English placement and corequisite plans in anticipation of divisional and curriculum meetings. In October 2018, the full faculty approved a motion to implement English placement revisions (Table 6.4) and to remove ENG 0190, Essential Reading Skills, and ENG 0430, Essential Writing Skills, from the curriculum.

Table 6.4. HSGPA-Based Placement with Multiple Measures Supplement

Multiple Measures Data Points	First-Semester Placement
2.6+ HSGPA through 11th grade	ENG 1510 (first-semester composition) without support
2.0<2.6 HSGPA with one of the following success indicators: • 85+ American History & Government or Global Studies NYS Regents Exam • 500+ SAT Writing • 21+ ACT • 3+ on any AP exam • 85+ in 11th grade ENG course	ENG 1510 (first-semester composition) without support
2.0<2.6 with none of the above success indicators	ENG 1510, ENG 0500, and ENG 0410 (first-semester composition with reading and writing support courses)
<2.0 HSGPA	ENG 1510, ENG 0500, ENG 0410, and Human Development 1300 (first-semester composition with reading, writing, and student skills support courses)

Note. *Placement into ENG 0410 may be overturned via ACCUPLACER reading test. Placement into ENG 0500 may be overturned via guided placement (in-house, untimed placement essay, arranged through ENG department).*

The final, most painful and protracted step in the process of reforming placement involved course requisites. Disciplines across the curriculum had historically used reading and writing placement scores when articulating who may enroll in their courses. Most famously, kickboxing indicated a Composition II prerequisite. Most commonly, introductory courses required "college-level reading" scores to restrict enrollment. Course requisites were strictly enforced by faculty, advisors, and the college's registration system, with requisite codes kept meticulously updated and effective at prompting registration errors. Prior to reform, the number of courses available to students in developmental English was 146, roughly one quarter of the courses in the course catalogue. Changes to placement and developmental

English curriculum meant disciplines would need to review their course requisites, reckoning with how these functioned for both matriculated and non-matriculated learners. From January through May of 2019, the implications of revisions to English placement on course requisites across the college's curriculum were recognized, and updates were made. Approximately 300 course requisites were revised and refined, ultimately allowing access to 239 introductory content-area courses, many of which now included those required for various programs.

At the same time, developmental placements reduced drastically. Whereas 25.1 percent of all first-time full-time JCC students had placed into developmental coursework in Fall 2018, reforms resulted in a reduction of learners placed in developmental coursework the following year, to 12 percent of all first-time full-time students. In addition to halving developmental placements, gains were seen in student completion of college-level writing, even when looking at throughput data. Between Fall 2016 and 2018, the percentage of students who had attempted developmental writing and then went on to pass first-semester composition ranged from 32 to 40 percent. In the most recent semesters tracked, that throughput rate has, for the first time, reached 45 percent. Given the number and nature of 2018–2019 adjustments to the factors that play into learner placement and success, it is nearly impossible to control for any one of the interventions described above. However, the college will need to work toward disaggregating data, for in spite of generally positive results, racial disparities appear to be increasing: While students of color have historically made up 25–40 percent of the developmental learner population, that percentage has increased to 49.5 percent in Fall 2018 and to 57.6 percent in Fall 2019 (JCC, 2019a).

The Problem of 11th Grade GPA and Other Next Steps

One group we did not engage as strategically as we might have was the college's concurrent enrollment program. Though proposed success indicators listed in Table 6.4 reference several data points from students' high school years, those selected by the placement committee and English faculty were not useful for high schools' placement purposes. More broadly an issue for *any* student without an HSGPA through the junior year (e.g., students who left prior to junior year completion, current high school sophomores and juniors, some international students), it proved difficult to obtain information for current high school sophomores in particular. English faculty, academic administrators, and counseling center staff met prior to implementation of placement reforms to discuss alternative placement metrics for concurrent enrollment students seeking to place prior to the end of their junior year. Given California research, we considered the possibility of ACT, SAT, AP, and New York State Regents scores, but it was determined none of these scores would be known in time for schedule planning in the high schools, and the process of tracking down scores over the summer would be unwieldy. The decision was therefore made to administer the placement test to all

interested high school students, as done in the past. Especially for concurrent enrollment sophomores, research-supported data points would not be available until after schools needed to make decisions about schedules for the following year.

Placement for concurrent enrollment and others without an HSGPA through 11th grade will be a point of ongoing inquiry, especially given concerns that ACCUPLACER reinforces racist educational structures and therefore produces disparate access. In June 2019, English, math, and learning support faculty attended a SUNY-wide discussion on multiple measures in Albany, NY that included progress reports and initial conclusions from seven system institutions taking part in a CAPR study, since updated (Barnett et al., 2020). Subsequent support and advice from state and national research on placement is ongoing, and SUNY itself recently issued its own guidance on placement. While these reports and documents do not address issues relative to concurrent enrollment placement, such a focus is almost certainly forthcoming, as a recent Aspen Institute and CCRC report (Mehl et al., 2020) called for alternatives to placement testing for concurrently enrolled learners.

The Shape of Things

Through placement reform, faculty sought to ensure students would receive instructional support to increase their chances of successful engagement with and completion of college-level coursework during their first semester. The relative ease with which these transitions happened may be due in part to two existing institutional structures. A relatively large full-time English department focused on composition instruction, historically comprising faculty specializing in reading, writing, and literature—and developmental instruction of these—ensured concerted disciplinary effort. Additionally, a college-wide, cross-divisional placement committee was pivotal, inviting ongoing sharing and shaping of ideas and information.

Such existing formations within the institutional network afforded coordinated movement. Specifically, it was the ability of the English department to function both as a unified and distributed force that ensured shared experiences and new insights. While it is not uncommon for community college instructors of reading to work within departments dedicated to transitional studies or developmental studies, with instructors of writing housed separately within English departments, JCC's reading and writing faculty are located in its English department. The largely identical institutional location of such faculty, and the group's ongoing willingness to work and learn together, made for an effective cohort. Further, the placement committee's ability to bring together faculty and staff who are typically dispersed and rarely interact allowed it to function as a hub, both gathering and distributing vital information and data.

Also impactful on placement and curriculum reform is the role of a wide-reaching concurrent enrollment program. That so many learners within JCC's service area complete college composition before arriving as matriculated students leads

full-time faculty to maintain certain beliefs about the "typical" Composition I learner. For in a given Composition I classroom, we rarely see students identified by high school teachers or counselors as "good writers." To the contrary, with a concurrent enrollment program reaching most high schools in our service region, we can be assured that learners in our first-semester courses 1) did not excel in high school and therefore were not invited to enroll in college-credit composition courses and/or 2) come to us as adult learners with many years since their last formal education experience. Recognizing this element of the context within which we assign and assess writing, especially given that we as English faculty develop the placement and curricula that reach those "good writers" in their high school years, should force us to constantly reframe our approaches to first-year writing assessment.

Shifts in placement and developmental education began incrementally, yet were swiftly scaled. Due to a tightly networked constellation of policies, it would have been difficult to reform placement in isolation. An institutional shift made space for revision to other systems concurrently, requiring intensive cross-divisional cooperation. After scaling of reforms, prerequisite developmental reading and writing courses have been replaced with contextualized support courses; all learners are placed directly into transferrable, credit-bearing composition coursework, with some placed into support courses largely by virtue of their HSGPA; the number of courses available to DS students has increased substantially; and in Fall 2019, 12 percent all first-time full-time students placed into developmental coursework (JCC, 2019a), essentially cutting developmental placements in half.

Unique to this study was consideration of how academic programs serving non-matriculated students impact placement reforms. It also illustrated how placement reform can coincide with developmental English curriculum reform, even when the latter diverges from more typical IRW and ALP approaches. And it highlighted the affordances of an English department with both developmental writing and reading faculty, as well as the importance of cross-divisional placement committees. As a case study, it necessarily represented largely limited perspectives and would be enriched by additional insights from staff, faculty from other disciplines, and, of course, students.

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