

Acceleration and Contextualization Summary and Bibliography

Summary:

The resources below dealing with acceleration and contextualization of basic skills courses contain a number of similarities. First of all, most of them cite the study by Bailey, Jeong, and Cho titled "Referral, Enrollment, and Completion in Developmental Education Sequences in Community Colleges" in order to establish the issues they attempt to address. Many of them also reference the accelerated basic skills project at Chabot College. The basic premises in nearly all of these articles and presentations are consistent: Students who are placed into long development sequences in English and math tend to drop out of the sequence before finishing, even if they pass individual classes.

Few of these articles and presentations discuss curriculum in any significant way. They seem simply to assume that because students often do not complete long sequences, the answer is to shorten the sequences. Instructional methodology receives little attention, although some do make the claim that basic skills students should be asked to complete college-level assignments from the beginning of their education rather than be brought to the college level through a sequence of classes.

Two other significant points appear in nearly all of the more detailed articles:

1. All of these programs involve extra tutoring, greater instructor availability outside of class time, and other additional resources to help the students succeed. None of them make the claim that simply accelerating the sequence will work on its own. Therefore, any attempt at greater acceleration is likely to require additional funding.
2. Nearly all of these programs or pilots acknowledge that in order to achieve the results they claim, they have to lower standards or expectations. Whether it involves leaving out some concepts in math courses or ignoring mistakes in grammar and mechanics in English, none of them ultimately claims that the students meet the same expectations in the accelerated courses.

In addition, several of the studies or pilots involved very small sample sizes or made significant adjustments to their data. For example, one study of an accelerated program noted that it excluded from its data any student who failed to complete the class, and thus its claim of 100% student success is suspect: all students who completed the class passed, but the study ignores the fact that nearly half of the students did not complete the course.

Overall, the programs described in these resources do propose some potentially useful approaches to basic skills instruction, including additional tutoring and other out of class resources and perhaps bringing students to college-level work more quickly. However, few of the suggested approaches can be pursued without additional funding. In addition, while some of the

instructional approaches may be valid, the question remains whether significant numbers of students would benefit more from such instruction in an accelerated environment.

Bibliography:

Alamo Community Colleges of the Alamo Community College District.

“Accelerated Developmental Math and College Algebra Redesign Course Colleagues Committed to Redesign (C2R) Proposal.”

http://www.alamo.edu/district/atd/pdf/accd_proposal.pdf

This is a formal proposal to redesign an accelerated math course that combines developmental math and college algebra for non-STEM, apparently similar to the Statway proposal being piloted at some CCCs and based on Achieving the Dream Initiative. The proposal claims that students spend too much time getting to college algebra even if they are successful and that they need success in early coursework in order to continue toward their goals. The writers openly acknowledge that the accelerated course would reduce the amount of math needed to fulfill GE requirements. The proposal also involves changing teaching techniques. Any explanation of these changes is vague, but they involve expanding the use of technology in math instruction.

Bailey, Thomas, Dong Wook Jeong, and Sung-Woo Cho. “Referral, Enrollment, and Completion in Developmental Education Sequences in Community Colleges.” *Economics of Education Review* 29 (2010): 255–270.

This is the article that most of the others on this bibliography refer to for statistics to justify their positions. The article attempts to be even-handed, more so than many of those that cite it, and acknowledges some of the potential problems with its own data. It focuses on students who complete developmental courses but fall out of the developmental sequence. The writers had a huge sample size, and they offer a huge amount of data looking at issues from various viewpoints. However, their final conclusion is that students need not to be taken backward and given repetition of lower level skills, but rather to develop those skills in the context of college-level work. They reach this conclusion without any discussion of curriculum whatsoever.

Brancard, Ruth, Elaine DeLott Baker, and Laura Jensen. “Accelerated Developmental Education Project: Research Report.” Community College of Denver. June 22, 2006.

<http://www.communitycollegecentral.org/Resources/research/Materials/CCDLuminaAcceleratedResearchReport62106.pdf>

Analysis of an accelerated developmental program called Faststart initiated at Community College of Denver in 2005. The project was supported by Lumina, and two of the three writers of the report were Lumina facilitators. The project included English, Math, and Reading courses. The curriculum of the courses was not changed, each as taught at an accelerated pace in ½ of a semester in order to allow students to take

two math or English courses in one semester. The program also included a one-unit study skills class, tutoring, small group meetings, and online supplements in addition to coursework. The study claims improvements in performance, persistence and completion as compared to students who took the classes in standard time frames. However, the sample size for the accelerated group was very small—eight students. Worse yet, fifteen students began the accelerated sequence but seven did not continue to the second course, and those seven were excluded from the analysis. The data from this study therefore seems very suspect.

Burris, Carol Corbett, Jay P. Heubert, and Henry M. Levi. "Math Acceleration for All." *Improving Achievement in Math and Science* 61.5 (February 2004): 68-71. http://www.schoolwisepress.com/seminar/2008_12/FastMath.pdf

This article begins with a discussion of an accelerated math program which was established in 1885 at a New York Middle School. The point of the project was to get more students to take higher level math. The article notes that tracking in schools encourages low-achieving students not to continue to higher math. The middle school project involved no tracking: students took accelerated math in middle school. The program included additional tutoring support and after-school work by teachers and supplementary materials. Analysis of the results of the program showed that all achievement gaps (economic, ethnic, etc) closed for those who took accelerated course. However, the article also notes that some studies suggest a possible downward trend in success for high-achievers included in such classes.

Collins, Linda. "Access and Equity in the CA Community Colleges. What Research Tells Us: Current Status & Possibilities." Fullerton College. Career Ladders Project. 24 June 2010.

<http://www.careerladdersproject.org/docs/prerequisiteshearing.pdf>
This powerpoint was apparently developed in connection with the Career Ladders Project. It begins by noting the high numbers of students who place into remediation and do not make it to transfer level work, citing both California-based and national studies. It further states that students who are referred to remediation but choose to enroll directly into transfer coursework do nearly as well as those who make remedial courses or who are assessed as ready for transfer coursework, but it does not explore the reasons for this situation. On the whole, this presentation is pushing for more acceleration, less remediation, fewer pre-reqs, more contextualized learning, and more learning communities.

Hern, Katie. "Exponential Attrition and the Promise of Acceleration In Developmental English and Math." June 2010.

<http://facultyinquiry.net/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/Hern-Exponential-Attrition.pdf>

This article analyzes data from several colleges, primarily Chabot College, to question whether long developmental sequences inhibit student advancement to college-level coursework. Much of the article discusses

the Chabot experiment in which student who placed below college-level English were allowed to self-select into a two-semester sequence or a one-semester accelerated course, and implies that those who entered the accelerated course performed just as well or better. The article also discusses accelerated match sequences, including Statway and similar efforts, and end by suggesting several possible methods of acceleration basic skills curriculum.

Hern, Katie, and Tom DeWitt. "Accelerating Students' Progress through College-Level English and Math: Restructuring Curricula and Reducing the Length of Developmental Sequences." Powerpoint. Achieving the Dream Strategy Institute. February 3, 2010. <http://fincommons.net/wp-content/uploads/2010/02/Acceleration-AtD.pdf>

This document is a powerpoint that begins by outlining a suggested issue: The more levels of developmental courses students must go through, the less likely they are to complete the sequence. It begins by using statistics at a national level to define the problem. The, as a proposed solution to the issue, it presents as examples the Statpath course from Los Medanos College and the accelerated English course from Chabot, claiming high rates of success for both. The powerpoint makes the interesting statement that more student exit by not entering the first or subsequent classes than by failing the courses, raising the possibility that the problem lies more with student perception than with instruction. It also implies in the accelerated English course that expectations may be lowered: "Readiness for college-level work is not the same as mechanically perfect sentences, or absolute mastery of academic essay structure; students will continue to refine and develop their reading, reasoning, and writing in transfer courses."

Stewart, Wendy. "Fall 2010 and/or Spring 2011 Basic Skills Project Proposal." April 29, 2010.

<http://www.sdmiramar.edu/BasicSkills/STEP%20Program.pdf>

This document is a proposal to establish four week Fast Track math review courses at San Diego Miramar College in summer 2010 and spring 2011. The intent of the courses is to help students prepare to repeat a math course they have failed or pass an exam that would allow them to move forward in the math sequence without re-taking the course. The program includes supplemental instruction and additional tutoring as aspects of the course.