

COLLEGE READINESS/TRANSITION COURSES

ISSUE BRIEF

Community and technical college system agrees to use Smarter Balanced Assessment as a college-placement tool

In May 2014, the Washington community and technical college system adopted a statewide agreement offering high school students the opportunity to be placed into college-level coursework based on their scores on the 11th grade Smarter Balanced Assessment.¹ This agreement represents the system's commitment to improving student college readiness by encouraging high school students to achieve Washington's new K-12 State Learning Standards for English language arts and mathematics (Common Core State Standards, 2011).

As part of this agreement, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC), in partnership with the Office of the Superintendent for Public Instruction (OSPI), is developing *Bridge to College* courses in math and English for students who do not score at a college-ready level (levels 3 or 4) on the assessments.

Collaboratively designed and developed by higher education faculty, high school teachers, and curriculum specialists from multiple colleges and school districts, *Bridge to College* courses teach to the state learning standards and are grounded in career and college readiness expectations. The project is funded by a College Spark Washington grant.

Together, the placement agreement and transition courses will:

- Allow more high school students to avoid remediation and placement testing when they enter college.
- Improve curricular alignment between K-12 and entry-level college courses in math and English.
- Develop and sustain local college/school district partnerships and faculty/teacher collaboration.

Bridge to College Mathematics

The *Bridge to College Mathematics* course is a math course for seniors who score a 2 on the Smarter Balanced 11th grade assessment. The course curriculum emphasizes modeling with mathematics and the "Standards for Mathematical Practice" integrated throughout the new state learning standards. Topics include building and interpreting functions (linear, quadratic and exponential), writing, solving and reasoning with equations and inequalities, and summarizing, representing, and interpreting data. This course must be taught using the *Bridge to College Mathematics* course materials.

Bridge to College English

This course will develop students' college and career readiness by building skills in critical reading, academic writing, speaking and listening, research and inquiry, and language use as defined by the new state English language arts learning standards for high school. Students will read complex nonfiction and fiction texts focusing on issues of both current and enduring importance. Students will learn to evaluate the credibility of information, critique others' opinions, and construct their own opinions based on evidence.

By the end of the course, students will be able to use strategies for critical reading, argumentative writing, and independent thinking while reading unfamiliar texts and responding to them in discussion and writing. The course will also develop essential habits of mind necessary for student success in college, including independence, productive persistence, and metacognition.

Staff contact

For more details or to get involved in the coursework, contact Bill Moore SBCTC director of K-12 partnerships, at (360) 704-4346 or bmoore@sbctc.edu.



Timeline

2014-2015 school year - 11th-graders

Fall 2014:

Math: Pilot transition math courses begin in 11 school districts, based on new learning standards. Other schools participate by incorporating some of the Bridge course materials into existing courses.

English: High school teachers and higher education faculty partners work to define a course framework and review course resources from multiple national course models, then test them during the spring 2015 school term.

Spring 2015:

11th-graders take Smarter Balanced Assessments in math and English. Those who score at level 4 or level 3 automatically place into college-level courses if they enter college immediately after high school graduation.

- Math pilot programs continue.
- English pilot programs begin.

Spring-Summer 2015:

High schools and colleges evaluate the pilot math and English transition courses. Decision is made on adopting the courses as part of the Smarter Balanced placement agreement for the next school year. School districts recruit teachers to participate in training over the spring and summer in preparation for official launch.

2015-2016 school year - 12th-graders

Fall 2015:

Once adopted as part of the placement agreement, transition courses are fully established and in effect. High school seniors who score a 2 on the Smarter Balanced Assessment in math or English the previous year can enroll in a course. If they earn a B or above, students will be placed into a college-level math (not on a calculus or STEM pathway) or English composition course. They will be placed at the same level as students who scored at level 3 on the Smarter Balanced Assessment.

Spring 2016:

High school seniors graduate and start college. Those who pass the transition courses with a B do not require additional placement testing at Washington community and technical colleges and any baccalaureate institution that has endorsed the courses.

Community and technical colleges are dedicated to giving students many ways to demonstrate they are college ready. In addition to Smarter Balanced Assessments and transition courses, students may also place into college courses through standard placement tests, high school transcripts, or other local measures.

1. *Washington public baccalaureate institutions approved a similar Smarter Balanced agreement in September 2014 but did not include the transition courses as part of their overall agreement. Baccalaureate faculty are involved in reviewing the courses in the 2014-15 school year and will consider adding the courses to their agreement.*