



Doc H's Blog

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Using intervention strategies to boost student success

When the General Assembly passed Senate Bill 1 in 2009, a key component was the ACT assessment for college readiness. The General Assembly, through [KRS 158.6459](#), made it clear that any student in grade 8 or grade 11 whose high school- or college-readiness scores reveal that additional work is needed in English, reading, or mathematics SHALL have intervention strategies for accelerated learning incorporated into his or her learning plan.

During my first few months in Kentucky, I worked with the Local Superintendent Advisory Committee and other stakeholder groups to define what was meant by “intervention strategies.” Many legislators and educators wanted to require specific courses in the freshman and senior years (called transition courses). However, a number of groups fought for more flexibility and in the end, intervention strategies, as defined, allowed districts a great deal of flexibility in providing interventions.

Fast forward almost five years, and it is now time to conduct a study to find out what interventions are being provided and what interventions are helping more students reach high school- and college-readiness. The REL Appalachia [study](#) released this week is the first formal study of transition courses in Kentucky. REL Appalachia looked at ACT scores and identified students in three groups.

- Meeting state benchmarks – students scoring 19 or higher on ACT math and 20 or higher on ACT reading
- Approaching state benchmarks – students scoring within three points of the state ACT benchmarks
- Performing below state benchmarks – students scoring 15 or lower on math or 16 or lower on reading.

The key findings from that report are as follows

- Statewide, the percentage of students in the approaching benchmarks category (the category recommended for transition courses) is higher in math (37.5 percent) than in reading (20.5 percent).
- Statewide participation in transition courses for students in the approaching benchmarks category is 28.1 percent in math and 8.0 percent in reading.
- Statewide pass rates for students in the approaching benchmarks category who take transition courses are 94.7 percent for math and 96.1 percent for reading.

Good news – Students who take transition courses have high pass rates (better than 90 percent which indicate these students are capable of college-level work. Research from Eastern Kentucky University shows that large numbers of students who pass transition courses are then able to achieve college-ready scores on ACT, COMPASS and/or KYOTE.

Causes for concern – Only 28.1 percent students who need interventions in math and 8 percent in reading are taking transition courses. More than 60 percent of high schools are not offering transition courses.

Big Questions – What is happening to the 72 percent of students in math and 92 percent in reading who are not taking transition courses? What interventions are they provided? Are the interventions provided working as well or better than transition courses?

KDE will begin to answer these questions in the 2014-15 school year with the addition of an interventions tab in the student information system. Schools will be required to enter the intervention that is being provided for all seniors pursuant to KRS 158.6459. At the end of 2014-15, KDE will analyze state data to answer the big questions listed above and will require local districts to analyze district data and data for each high school to answer the questions.

We do know that a number of interventions are working since we have improved from 34 percent of 2010 graduates achieving college/career-readiness to 54 percent of 2013 graduates achieving college/career-readiness. To reach our goal of 67 percent in 2015, we will need to identify and really emphasize interventions that work.

While we are working on the intervention issue for college readiness, we will also be utilizing the intervention tab to address other statutory requirements for reporting on K-3 interventions and closing the gap interventions.

Given that Senate Bill 1 has reached its fifth anniversary, it is time to take stock of the results and look for ways to push improvement so more students are successful.

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