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February 17, 2009

The Honorable Arnold Schwarzenegger  
Governor of California  
State Capitol  
Sacramento, California 95814

Dear Governor Schwarzenegger:

Please find enclosed a report on the Basic Skills Accountability Framework required by AB 194 (Chapter 489, Statutes of 2007). AB 194 requires the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office to work with the Department of Finance (Finance) and the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) to develop a framework for statewide accountability measures for basic skills courses (also known as developmental education courses).

The Chancellor's Office is working with Finance and LAO to finalize the performance metrics over the next couple of months and plan to submit a final report in the summer of 2009.

Patrick Perry, Vice Chancellor of Technology, Research, and Information Systems Division may be contacted for questions and comments. He can be reached at (916) 327-5912 or [pperry@cccco.edu](mailto:pperry@cccco.edu).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Jack Scott' in a cursive, flowing script.

Jack Scott  
Chancellor

cc: Members of the California State Legislature  
Mike Genest, Director, Department of Finance  
Mac Taylor, Legislative Analyst

# **Basic Skills Accountability Framework for the California Community College System**

**A Report to the Legislature, pursuant to  
AB 194 (Chapter 489, Statutes of 2007)**

**November 2008**



**California Community Colleges System Office**  
<http://www.cccco.edu>





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## **Basic Skills Accountability Framework for the California Community College System**

### **Background**

AB 194 (Chapter 489, Statutes of 2007) requires the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office (CCCCO) to work with the Department of Finance (Finance) and the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) to develop a framework for statewide accountability measures for basic skills courses (also known as developmental education courses) by November 1, 2008. The authorizing language for this framework reads as follows:

“SEC.9 (C) The Office of the Chancellor shall work jointly with the Department of Finance and the Legislative Analyst to develop annual accountability measures for this program. It is the intent of the Legislature that annual performance accountability measures for this program utilize, to the extent possible, data available as part of the accountability system developed pursuant to Section 84754.5 of the Education Code. By November 1, 2008, the Chancellor shall submit a report to the Governor and Legislature on the annual accountability measures developed pursuant to this process.”

The following report provides recommendations on the design of an accountability framework for the annual evaluation of basic skills courses across California's community college system. The Accountability Reporting for the Community Colleges (ARCC) report already has 5 metrics:

- One systemwide metric:
  - Annual Number of Credit Basic Skills Improvements
- Four college-level metrics:
  - Annual Successful Course Completion Rate for Basic Skills Courses
  - ESL Improvement Rate
  - Basic Skills Improvement Rate
  - Career Development and College Preparation Progress and Achievement Rate

### **Process**

A special technical advisory workgroup already dedicated to the Accountability Reporting for Community Colleges project (the “ARCC TAG”) provided expertise for developing this basic skills accountability framework. The ARCC TAG included representatives of interested parties such as the California Department of Finance, the Legislative Analyst's Office, the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges, researchers from different community colleges, and technical/research/program personnel from the CCCCCO. The ARCC TAG met five times during 2007-2008 to develop the framework. The ARCC TAG used two additional resources to assist with framework development: the Research and Planning Group's Center for Student Success report titled “Basic Skills as a Foundation for Student Success in California Community Colleges,” and a proposal from the Legislative Analyst's Office.

## Reports

This first official report details only a framework for proposed basic skills accountability measures. Therefore, the report does not contain data tables. Subsequent reports will use the framework described below to present system-level basic skills accountability data and analyses for policymakers. The basic skills accountability report developed from this framework will be supplemental to the annual ARCC report.

## Metrics

The framework presented here includes four categories of metrics: descriptive metrics, workload metrics, assessment/placement ladder metrics, and student progress metrics. These metrics represent systemwide counts and percentages rather than measures for individual community colleges or districts. Wherever possible, we will present the metrics across specified time periods to provide historical comparisons.

Examples of the data tables that will accompany each metric are presented in Appendix A.

### A. Descriptive Metrics

*These metrics offer a “snapshot” of the systemwide population of basic skills students, both credit and noncredit.*

1. Total annual unduplicated headcount of basic skills students (n and percent)
  - a. Demographics of students taking credit and noncredit basic skills courses (age, gender, ethnicity)
2. Percentage of assessed students who **do not** place into transfer-level math or English. (Done by annual survey of colleges)

### B. Workload Metrics

*These metrics are short-term in nature and represent workload. They demonstrate the system’s responsiveness to students’ basic skills needs. The data reports will show prior years history for comparison.*

1. Number and percentage of basic skills sections offered, sub-categorized by math/English/ESL (total volume and as a percentage of total sections offered systemwide; by credit (CR) and noncredit (NC))
2. Total basic skills FTES (CR & NC) and total basic skills FTES as a percentage of all FTES sub-categorized by math/English (reading/writing)/ESL and then by age, <25, >=25. (Note: FTES stands for Full-time Equivalent Student and serves as the major student workload measure, one of several, used in determining the eligibility for state funding of community colleges.)

### C. Assessment/Placement Metrics

*These metrics are short-term and explanatory and describe assessment and placement in the California Community Colleges.*

1. **Placement Distribution:** Percentage of assessed students recommended for placement into levels of credit basic skills math/English/ESL courses (as defined by CB 21 Course Prior to College Level) in a given year (done by annual survey of colleges)
2. **Exemption Rate:** Percentage of first-time freshman students who are exempted annually from matriculation (CR & NC)
3. **Matriculation Rate:** Percentage of first-time non-exempt freshman students annually receiving (a) assessment, (b) orientation, (c) counseling, and/or (d) follow-up counseling (CR & NC)
4. **Placement Rate:** Percentage of enrolled students assessed in basic skills (math/English/ESL) that *actually enroll* in a basic skills (math/English/ESL) course(s) during their first semester (done by annual survey of colleges)

### D. Student Progress Metric

*The following long-term performance metric represents progress to completion of courses above the basic skills sequence along with eventual degree/transfer attainment. Note that once a student has attempted transfer-level math or English, his/her progress is tracked by the ARCC Student Progress and Achievement Rate (SPAR).*

1. **Basic Skills Progress:** This metric measures the success of students through basic skills and beyond. This metric will be reported in the aggregate and by the lowest level of math/English/ESL attempted by a first-time freshman cohort at any point in their academic history ( $\geq 4$  levels below transferable level; 3, 2, 1 levels below; CR, NC). The cohorts in this analysis will use an 8-year tracking period and will be tracked across the entire system.
  - Percent who completed any degree-applicable or transfer level math/Eng/ESL (in same curricular lineage)
  - Percent that eventually earn a degree/certificate, and/or transfer/transfer prepared



## **Report Timing**

Given the nature of the ARCC timeline, the existing Supplemental Report on Enhanced Noncredit Outcomes, and resource availability, late Summer is suggested as a date for completion of the Basic Skills Supplemental Report. Late Summer would offer up the potential of doing the surveys in Spring and assembling the report over the summer when there is less ARCC related work going on. The report would use data from the prior year (not the current year); a report due in late summer 2009 would be reporting on 07-08 academic year outcomes.

It is anticipated that the ARCC Technical Advisory Group will convene in February 2009 to further refine the metric details and begin looking at survey designs.

## **Resource Considerations**

If the ARCC Report and its two supplemental reports (Basic Skills, Enhanced Noncredit) can be spaced evenly throughout the year (with due dates in Spring, Summer, Fall) with just a single annual college survey, and no subsequent detail applications (such as data marts for all of the metrics disaggregated by college and demographic groups), it should be possible, at current staffing levels, to perform this additional report with no additional resources. Note that the office's capacity to perform the ARCC tasks is already at a fragile state. After the Chancellor's Office implemented ARCC in March 2007, the State added one additional ARCC metric and two supplemental reporting requirements to the original workload without supplementing ARCC staff resources. Any further reduction of Research or MIS workforce related to ARCC reporting will likely cause delays.

The system greatly desires data mart applications that allow the local campuses access to all of the underlying report data for local disaggregation (by college and by demographic group). This allows maximum usage of the data for local analysis, which is one of the goals of the accountability project. Additionally, some stakeholders have expressed a desire to produce results on a college basis. The final report will attempt to capture this in a minimalist presentation format (spreadsheet or otherwise) versus a full-blown presentation (like the ARCC Report). Cutting the report in this dimension assumes report timing parameters are spaced evenly and no detrimental staffing cuts or layoffs occur that are not in control of the agency.

## Appendix A

### Examples of Data Tables for Basic Skills Accountability Metrics

#### A. Descriptive Metrics

1. Total annual unduplicated headcount of basic skills students (n and percent)
  - a. Demographics of students taking credit and noncredit basic skills courses (age, gender, ethnicity,) (*Tables A1 to A3*)

**Table A1—Annual Unduplicated Headcount of Basic Skills Students by Gender**

	Year 1			Year 2			Year 3	
	n	%		n	%		n	%
Female								
Male								
Unknown								

**Table A2—Annual Unduplicated Headcount of Basic Skills Students by Age**

	Year 1			Year 2			Year 3	
	n	%		n	%		n	%
Under 18								
18 to 24								
25 to 49								
Over 49								
Unknown								

**Table A3—Annual Unduplicated Headcount of Basic Skills Students by Ethnicity**

	Year 1			Year 2			Year 3	
	n	%		n	%		n	%
Asian								
Black/Afr. Amer.								
Filipino								
Hispanic								
Native Amer.								
Other Non-White								
Pacific Islander								
White								
Unknown/Decline to State								

2. Percentage of assessed students who **do not** place into transfer-level math or English. (Done by annual survey of colleges) (*Table A4*)

**Table A4—Percentage of Assessed Students Who Do Not Place Into Transfer-level Math or English**

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Math			
English			

## B. Workload Metrics

1. Number and percentage of basic skills sections offered, sub-categorized by math/English/ESL (total volume and as a percentage of total sections offered systemwide; by credit (CR) and noncredit (NC)) (*Table B1*)

**Table B1: Credit and Noncredit Basic Skills Sections by Volume and As a Percentage of All Sections Offered**

	Math				English				ESL		
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Total Number of Credit Basic Skills Sections											
Percentage of All Credit Sections That Are Basic Skills											
Total Number of Noncredit Basic Skills Sections											
Percentage of All Noncredit Sections That Are Basic Skills											

2. Total basic skills FTES (CR & NC) and total basic skills FTES as a percentage of all FTES sub- categorized by math/English (reading/writing)/ESL and then by age, <25, >=25 (Tables B2 to B5)

**Table B2: Math Basic Skills FTES by Age Categories (Credit and Noncredit)**

<b>Math</b>		
	<b>Under 25</b>	<b>25 or older</b>
Total Credit Basic Skills FTES		
Percentage of All Credit FTES that are Basic Skills		
Total Noncredit Basic Skills FTES		
Percentage of All Noncredit FTES that are Basic Skills		

**Table B3: English (Reading) Basic Skills FTES by Age Categories (Credit and Noncredit)**

<b>English (Reading)</b>		
	<b>Under 25</b>	<b>25 or older</b>
Total Credit Basic Skills FTES		
Percentage of All Credit FTES that are Basic Skills		
Total Noncredit Basic Skills FTES		
Percentage of All Noncredit FTES that are Basic Skills		

**Table B4: English (Writing) Basic Skills FTES by Age Categories (Credit and Noncredit)**

<b>English (Writing)</b>		
	<b>Under 25</b>	<b>25 or older</b>
Total Credit Basic Skills FTES		
Percentage of All Credit FTES that are Basic Skills		
Total Noncredit Basic Skills FTES		
Percentage of All Noncredit FTES that are Basic Skills		

**Table B5: ESL Basic Skills FTES by Age Categories (Credit and Noncredit)**

ESL		
	Under 25	25 or older
Total Credit Basic Skills FTES		
Percentage of All Credit FTES that are Basic Skills		
Total Noncredit Basic Skills FTES		
Percentage of All Noncredit FTES that are Basic Skills		

### C. Assessment/Placement Ladder Metrics

1. **Placement Distribution:** Percentage of assessed students recommended for placement into various levels of credit basic skills math/English/ESL courses in a given year (*Table C1*)

**Table C1: Percentage of Assessed Students Recommended for Placement by Level**

	Math				English				ESL		
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
1 Level Below											
2 Levels Below											
3 Levels Below											
4 or more Levels Below											

2. **Exemption Rate:** Percentage of first-time freshman students annually who are exempted from matriculation (CR & NC) (*Table C2*)

**Table C2: Percentage of First-Time Freshmen Who Are Exempted From Matriculation (by Credit/Noncredit)**

	Percent Exempt		
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Credit			
Noncredit			

3. **Matriculation Rate:** Percentage of first-time non-exempt freshman students annually receiving (a) assessment, (b) orientation, (c) counseling, and/or (d) follow-up counseling (CR & NC) (*Table C3*)

**Table C3: Percentage of First-Time Freshmen Receiving Matriculation Services (by Credit/Noncredit)**

		Percent Receiving		
	Service	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Credit	Assessment			
	Orientation			
	Counseling			
	Follow-up Counseling			
Noncredit	Assessment			
	Orientation			
	Counseling			
	Follow-up Counseling			

4. **Placement Rate:** Percentage of enrolled students assessed in basic skills (math/English/ESL) that *actually enroll* in a basic skills or degree-applicable/transferrable (math/English/ESL) course(s) during their first semester (done by annual survey of colleges) (*Table C4*)

**Table C4: Percentage Assessed in Basic Skills That Enroll in Basic Skills Courses During First Semester (by Discipline and Credit/Noncredit)**

	Math				English				ESL		
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Number of Students Assessed That Enroll											
Percent of Students Assessed That Enroll											

## D. Student Progress Metric

1. **Basic Skills Progress:** This metric measures the success of students through basic skills and beyond. Metric will be reported by the lowest level of Math/English/ESL attempted ( $\geq 4$  levels below transferable level; 3, 2, 1 levels below; CR, NC). The cohorts in this analysis will use an 8-year tracking period.
- Percent who completed any degree-applicable or transfer level Math/Eng/ESL (in same curricular lineage)
  - Percent (of degree seekers?) that eventually earn a degree/certificate, and/or transfer/transfer prepared (*Tables D1 to D3*)

**Table D1: Basic Skills Progress for Math (Credit and Noncredit)**

		Percent Completed Degree-Applicable/Transfer				Percent Completed a Degree/Certificate and/or Transfer/Transfer-Prepared		
	Basic Skills Level(s)	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Credit	1 Level Below							
	2 Levels Below							
	3 Levels Below							
	4 or more Levels Below							
Noncredit	1 Level Below							
	2 Levels Below							
	3 Levels Below							
	4 or more Levels Below							

**Table D2: Basic Skills Progress for English (Credit and Noncredit)**

		Percent Completed Degree-Applicable/Transfer				Percent Completed a Degree/Certificate and/or Transfer/Transfer-Prepared		
	Basic Skills Level(s)	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Credit	1 Level Below							
	2 Levels Below							
	3 Levels Below							
	4 or more Levels Below							
Noncredit	1 Level Below							
	2 Levels Below							
	3 Levels Below							
	4 or more Levels Below							

**Table D3: Basic Skills Progress for ESL (Credit and Noncredit)**

		Percent Completed Degree-Applicable/Transfer				Percent Completed a Degree/Certificate and/or Transfer/Transfer-Prepared		
	Basic Skills Level(s)	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Credit	1 Level Below							
	2 Levels Below							
	3 Levels Below							
	4 or more Levels Below							
Noncredit	1 Level Below							
	2 Levels Below							
	3 Levels Below							
	4 or more Levels Below							