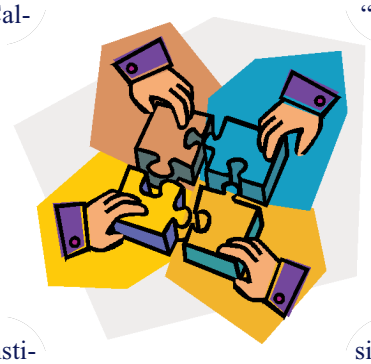
Cal-PASS Transitions
Identifying and Removing Barriers to Student Success

From the Executive Director: Collaboration Is the Key

From time to time, our members ask, "How can we get the most out of Cal-PASS?" While participation in Cal-PASS is voluntary, to get the most out of this unique system, there are activities that institutions must engage in. Joining Cal-PASS is relatively easy: it includes signing an MOU and designating sharing partners. When the procedural pieces are in place, the real work of Cal-PASS begins. For K–12 schools, data must be uploaded to the Cal-PASS system. We have staff to assist with the process and have worked with K–12 vendors to develop Cal-PASS extracts to greatly reduce the burden on districts' IT time. Universities also must upload the data from their institutions. For community colleges, the data are held at the California Community College Chancellor's Office and Cal-PASS staff extracts that information.

Once data are uploaded, they are available for an institution to merge with the data of their sharing partners. Cal-PASS works best when a region is fully subscribed: that is, all regional institutions, K–16, are members and have uploaded their data. Institutions can play a role in extracting the full benefits of the system by encouraging their regional colleagues to join.

Next, research questions need to be formulated and answered using the Cal-PASS data set for the region. While we encourage member institutions to conduct their own research, with the permission of the partners, we are happy to assist in doing the research. Research staff at Cal-PASS produced 80 studies last year at the request of member schools, colleges, and universities. For a list of last year's studies, view "Sample Reports" through the "Reports" link on the Cal-PASS Web site.



The greatest benefit of Cal-PASS comes when member institutions participate in Professional Learning Councils (PLCs). These are work groups consisting of a cross section of faculty from K–16 schools in a geographic area who meet monthly to examine data in their common discipline. Individual PLCs work with regional coordinators to request research on student transition and success that they use to identify alignment discrepancies, differing expectations from the various educational sectors, and other barriers to successful student transition. Once barriers are identified, Cal-PASS works to fund PLC-proposed innovations that aim to overcome these barriers. Each innovation undergoes rigorous evaluation, and

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In This Issue...

Career Advancement Academies

In an exciting new partnership, Cal-PASS is working with the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office to support the evaluation needs of three consortia funded to develop and implement Career Advancement Academies (CAAs). The three consortia, located in Los Angeles, Fresno, and the Bay Area, are establishing pipelines for undereducated, underemployed youth and young adults who will have the opportunity to increase their performance levels in reading, writing, and mathematics, and obtain career technical training skills that will lead to careers and additional higher education opportunities. They are developing basic skills courses which are linked to specific industries such as health care, petroleum, and automotive technology. Working with the Chancellor's Office, Linda Collins of the Career Ladders Project, and the CAA project directors, Cal-PASS is assisting in the development of evaluation tools and procedures. The proposed evaluation will use Cal-PASS data as part of a system to

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How We Collaborate

Information Technology

The backbone of the Cal-PASS system is its database. The Cal-PASS Information Technology Department manages more than 153 million records of elementary school, middle school, high school, community college, and university students (Table 1). Cal-PASS is unique in its ability to link unitary-level student records to multiple educational segments. Educators know their students well, but often have little information about their academic past or achievement in subsequent segments, courses, and grade levels. Working collaboratively with local school administrators, school information technology professionals, Professional Learning Council (PLC) participants, local researchers, and Cal-PASS staff, educators from PLCs seek to answer questions like, "Where do our students go when they leave here? How do students from a particular high school district do in selected community college courses? Is there equitable representation of the diversity of a graduating high school class at a local university? What middle school courses best prepare students for high school science courses?" The Cal-PASS database can be used to answer each of these questions by linking encrypted student identification variables so that researchers can track students from one educational segment to the next.

Table 1: Summary of records submitted by educational segments

Organization	Total Records
K–12	37,446,908
Community College	108,927,594
University	6,858,886
Total	153,233,388

In a continued effort to improve data integrity and reduce the workload of local districts, the IT Department continues to collaborate with school information system vendors to find ways to simplify or automate the Cal-PASS data upload process. Improvements have recently been made to the data validation program, easing the data submission process and giving users immediate feedback on the content of their data submission through summary reports. In addition, the IT Department is collaborating with PLCs and the Cal-PASS IT/Research Advisory Committee to add new data elements to the database, improving our ability to answer a wide variety of questions. The IT Department is committed to growing and adapting in ways that will best serve our partner schools.

Research

The Cal-PASS Research Department collaborates with PLCs to generate reports about

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From the Executive Director *continued*

if successful, efforts are made to expand the innovation—a very ground-up approach. An example of this work is the Algebra I, Algebra II, and Geometry Standards guides that math council members throughout the state have produced.

There are currently 34 PLCs throughout the state in the disciplines of English, math, English learners/English as a second language (EL/ESL), science, counseling and career/technical education. With the additional funding from the governor and the Legislature this year, these councils are expected to grow to 55 by fall 2008. The councils play a powerful role in identifying barriers to student success and developing ways to improve student success and transition as well as improve overall student outcomes. However, this work cannot be accomplished without the full participation of member schools, colleges and universities—from data submission to active PLC participation—as well as bringing on board those institutions that are currently not Cal-PASS members within each active region.

Academies *continued*

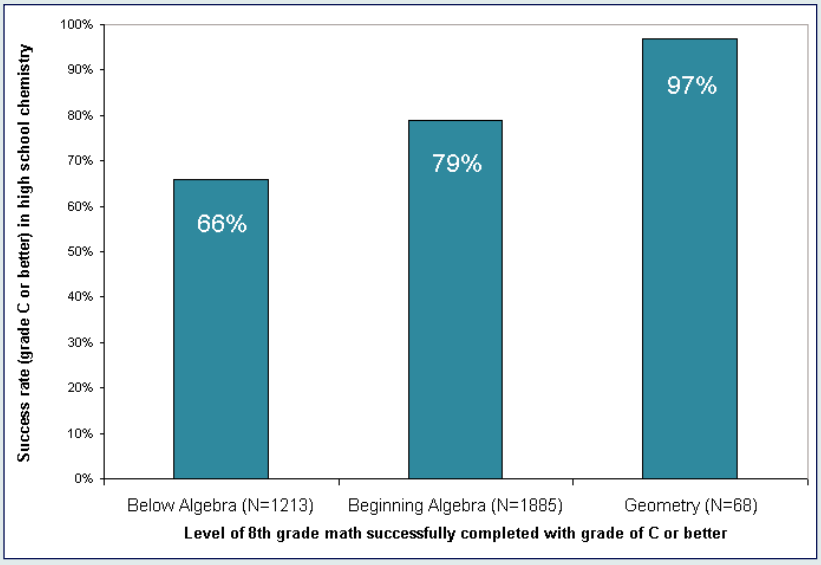
assess the achievement and persistence of these students in the community college system and beyond. Using optional fields in the Cal-PASS database, CAA consortia also will be able to assess the effects of different referral sources and compare pre-admission and post-completion student assessments. We anticipate the pending agreement between Cal-PASS and California's Employment Development Department also will allow these consortia to track the effects of their efforts as these students enter the workforce.

How We Collaborate *continued*

students' curricular pathways and answers research questions developed by PLCs about a variety of learning issues related to success. The Research Department responds to these requests by running the data and creating reports, which are shared with the respective PLCs. Like all good research, the results generate additional discussion and follow-up research questions. For example, one PLC was interested in knowing whether a link existed between the performance of high school students in science courses and their academic histories in middle school. Preliminary analyses indicate the following results[1]:

- Students who were successful in their high school biology and chemistry courses had higher grade point averages in their middle school science, English, and math courses.
- Students who successfully completed geometry in 8th grade had the highest success rates in high school science courses, while students who successfully completed a course below algebra in 8th grade had the lowest success rates (see Chart 1).

Chart 1: Success in selected high school chemistry courses by successfully completed 8th grade math course.



Another related research project currently under investigation is the possible relationship between 8th grade CST scores and subsequent performance in 9th and 10th grade biology and chemistry courses. When added to the assortment of middle school to high school science transition data, the investigation results will give PLCs a broad base of information to use when developing evidence-based advising documents for high school science students.

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[1](Note: These results are only applicable to the PLCs for which the reports were written and should not be applied universally to all science transitions.)

Coming soon!

Cal-PASS Data Submission for '06-'07 Academic Year

The data submission period for academic year 2006–2007 will open in October and have a final due date of Dec. 1, 2007. Cal-PASS member districts may also submit past years' data during that time period. There have been minor modifications to the data fields for K–12 districts this year, and no changes to the university collection. A summary of the changes is available in the Cal-PASS Data Dictionary version. 2007.0. As always, throughout the submission period, emails will be generated giving the status of submission (either reminders to submit or confirmation of a received submission) for the district/institution. These emails will be sent to the IT and program contacts with a cc to the person whose signature appears on the Memorandum of Understanding.

Remember that prior to submission, all files must be validated by the Cal-PASS validation program, available by download from the Cal-PASS Web site at http://www.calpass.org/data/. For the academic year 2006–2007 data submission (and submission for earlier years that occurs after October 1, 2007), you should use the Cal-PASS Validation Program that contains a version number beginning with 2007. This latest version of the program contains updated CDS codes, the ability to create files for STAR and CAHSEE data from 2003 through 2007, as well as improved error messaging to assist with data cleanup. If you do not have a User ID and password for data submission, contact Mary Kay Patton at mkpatton@calpass.org or by phone at (916) 995-3183.

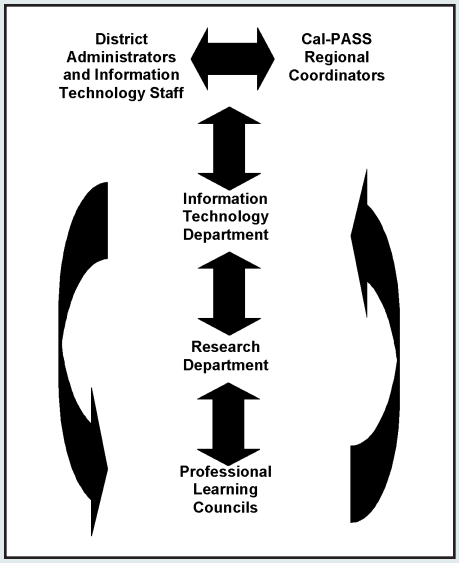
How We Collaborate *continued*

PLCs

Using research like that noted above, Cal-PASS PLCs develop innovations through Cal-PASS mini-grants to help smooth student transition. One such innovation, funded in the 2006-07 academic year, was the development of an evidence-based advising document designed to help school counselors advise students and their parents about high school science classes. This project is an excellent example of how faculty, representing different grade levels, can collaborate to create seamless transitions for students moving from one grade level and educational segment to the next. Faculty from all three segments collaborated while serving on a Cal-PASS PLC to develop a set of questions for the Cal-PASS Research Department. The resulting research report (#2007004) generated even more interest in examining middle school to high school science transitions. As noted above, preliminary evidence suggested that students who were successful in their high school biology and chemistry courses had received higher grade point averages in their middle school science, English, and math courses.

Though this conclusion seemed intuitive, the Cal-PASS database was used to confirm anecdotal assumptions and opened the door for further analyses. For example, this PLC is interested in looking at which middle school courses best prepared students for entering high school science courses, and whether there is a predictive relationship between middle school CST scores and high school science course placement and performance. The results of these reports will be reviewed by the PLC and added to the evidence-based science placement guide. This guide will be an additional tool for school counselors to help students successfully navigate through science pathways.

Image 1: Schematic of Cal-PASS collaboration



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Cal-PASS Is Growing in the North State

Cal-PASS has been busy kicking off new Professional Learning Councils (PLCs) in the north state. We have recently added nine new councils:. three English, three math, two science and one English language/English as a second language in Contra Costa, Sonoma and San Mateo counties. By the end of October, we will have an additional science council in Placer/Nevada counties. Look for more information on these new councils and our continued growth in our next newsletter.