

Cal-PASS

Transitions

Success at Every Level

From the Executive Director: Success at Every Level

As savvy users of Cal-PASS, you may have noticed that our tagline has changed from “identifying and removing barriers to student success” to “success at every level.” This change has been made on our Web site, in our printed material, and in all of our communication. Cal-PASS staff and users feel strongly that Cal-PASS goes beyond identifying and removing barriers to student success and creates a climate for our educational system in California to demonstrate success at every level. We take seriously what we say about our work and the “success at every level” mantra permeates everything we do.

The work of the Professional Learning Councils, in which more than 700 faculty (soon to be more than 1,000

across the state) work collaboratively across the segments to review Cal-PASS research to improve student outcomes, is a good example of “success at every level.” This work is translated into action through innovations sponsored by Cal-PASS and our partners. These innovations are showing evidence of student improvement, including outcomes such as improved test scores, more placements in appropriate courses at transition points, and greater student success. Faculty members have forwarded messages to us from former students about how the work in their classes (a Cal-PASS sponsored innovation) helped these students prepare for success in college. They are saying things like, “My average score is eight out of ten points and I am ranked at the top of the class... this writing class is no piece of cake and I probably would be failing if it weren’t for your class.”

There is evidence that when institutions work together, they create a collaborative climate that goes beyond council work. Institutions are now reporting that changes in policies or practices that had implication for transitioning students used to take up to 2 years to be fully communicated across segments. This communication lag time meant that students

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Cal-PASS on the Move!

BEST Honors Cal-PASS with Recognition

John Yochelson, president of Building Engineering & Science Talent, describes BEST in the following way:

...BEST is a San Diego-based non-profit that conducted a congressionally mandated search for the nation’s most effective programs in broadening the participation of historically under-represented groups in STEM [science, technology, engineering and mathematics] (see www.bestworkforce.org). We mainly advise the Department of Defense on its math and science education programs, but the chairman of my board, Irwin Jacobs, has long been interested in seeing BEST contribute to improving K–12 math and science education in San Diego County.

Cal-PASS is honored to be named as a program BEST sees as meeting these goals in San Diego County.

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Spotlight on Data:

Correlations Between Grades & CSTs

Cal-PASS research staff have responded to several requests from our Professional Learning Councils asking for the correlation between students' scores on the California Standards Test (CST) and grades received in the corresponding course. The hypothesis underlying these requests is that if course content and CSTs are aligned to state standards, then course grades should correspond to CST performance levels. While no such connection is made by the test publisher or the California Department of Education (CDE), the two appear to have similar measurement scales:

- CST—Far Below Basic, Below Basic, Basic, Proficient, Advanced
- Traditional grading scale—F, D, C, B, A

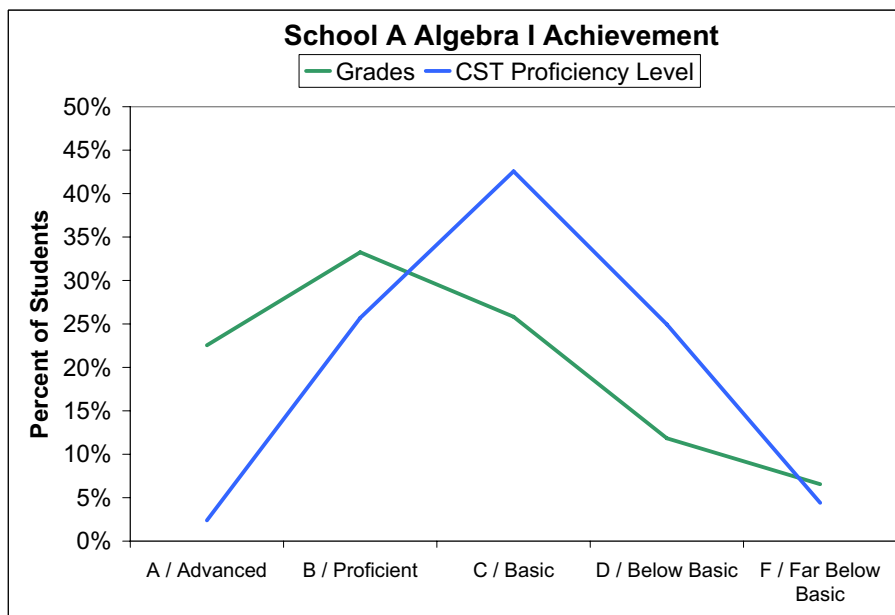
While calculating the correlation can be tempting, it can also oversimplify their relationship. A correlation value tells us the strength and direction of an association, but the same correlation value can result from very different distributions of

PLC Growth and Innovation

Growth in Professional Learning Councils (PLCs) continues at a furious pace. During the fall semester Cal-PASS added 15 PLCs, bringing the total to 40 councils representing more than 700 faculty members statewide who collaborate monthly with their discipline colleagues. Current plans for the spring of 2008 include PLC kick-offs in Central LA County, Santa Barbara, Monterey, San Joaquin, and San Francisco, resulting in a total of 55 PLCs in 14 regions across California by the end of this academic term. That means there will be more than 1,000 faculty members meeting monthly to analyze Cal-PASS data and discuss the implications for practice.

Existing PLC innovations continue to be updated and improved. The Content Standards Deconstructions in Algebra I and Algebra II have been reviewed and revised by math faculty and are available on myCal-PASS. The Algebra I and Algebra II deconstructions are currently being used by districts across the state for teacher training, as a focus in textbook adoption, and for scope and sequence development.

New content standard work includes Geometry, which will be available after March 1, and 11th and 12th Grade English Content Standards Deconstruction, which should be available later this spring. Next in this series will be the Pre-Calculus Content Standards Deconstruction encompassing the Linear Algebra, Math Analysis and Trigonometry standards, and Biology Content Standards Deconstruction. We are currently looking for interested faculty to participate in these projects. There is a stipend for work on these projects, for which we provide a template and instructions for pre-work to be done prior to a



grades. The charts (second chart is on page 4) show data on Algebra I achievement from two high schools sampled from the Cal-PASS database. While both sets of data show a correlation of around 0.4, the relationship between the variables is drastically different. CST scores are centered around the same point and spread evenly while grades are concentrated at different ends.

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Stuart Grant Puts Focus on Foster Youth

The Stuart Foundation recently awarded Cal-PASS a planning grant to identify ways California's educational system can serve foster youth better and improve educational outcomes for this population. To support the Foster Youth Education Data System planning process, Cal-PASS will use the funds to determine whether our existing database is able to track the participants in Foster Youth Campus Support Programs, jointly funded by the Stuart Foundation and Walter S. Johnson Foundation. Additionally, Cal-PASS will explore the feasibility of linking to the child welfare services database (CWS-CMS) to track educational outcomes for foster youth.

Foster youth, as a group, traditionally have had poor educational outcomes.

These include high drop-out rates and low rates of successful transition across educational segments. Cal-PASS will use some of the planning grant funds to explore ways foster youth can be tracked using the Cal-PASS database, thereby allowing the foundations to assess the effects of the Foster Youth Campus Support Programs and engage in continuous program improvement efforts.

Cal-PASS will use planning grant funds to work with the Center for Social Services Research (CSSR) at the University of California, Berkeley. CSSR manages the child welfare services database, conducting research, writing reports, and supporting Web-based access to qualified users.

PLC Growth and Innovation *cont.*

one-day meeting, affording participants the opportunity to meet with colleagues from across the state. If you or any of your faculty members are interested in more information about how to participate in these projects, please contact Shelly Valdez, Director of Regional Collaboration, at svaldez@calpass.org.

In other news, Cal-PASS has opened a conversation with Southern Oregon

University about the prospect of including their institution in regional consortia meetings across the north state. Professional Learning Councils in the north coast and Siskiyou regions, in particular, have the most to gain from the addition of Southern Oregon's data to council research reports. Look for updates in future issues.

Help Desk Improves Data Availability

As new districts join Cal-PASS and convene PLCs, participating faculty members are excited at having real data that show their students' success rates when moving through the educational system. All too often, however, no data are available for reports at the first PLC meetings—a deflating experience for those in attendance.

To address this problem, Cal-PASS now has a help desk staffed with a data technician, Bill Duvic. Duvic can assist with all aspects of data submission, accessing myCal-PASS, and anything else that will help speed the process of getting student data into the Cal-PASS system so that it will be available for each PLC by their first meeting. Duvic will be involved in Web trainings and creating tutorials to assist users.

To manage the technical assistance contacts, Cal-PASS is building a help desk issue tracking system and knowledge base, both of which will greatly improve communication with participating districts and speed the process of getting district data into the Cal-PASS system. As each school provides a unique and challenging dilemma, the knowledge base will collect every bug, problem, issue, and trick to ensure that when these problems creep up again, they can be dealt with quickly and efficiently. This information will assist Cal-PASS when making modifications and improvements to software and Web applications.

Duvic will be contacting each member district/college that has either never submitted or has not submitted data this year. The following are some of the issues that have already been identified:

- Districts are unaware that there are Cal-PASS extract utilities built into the Eagle Aeries and SASI Student Information

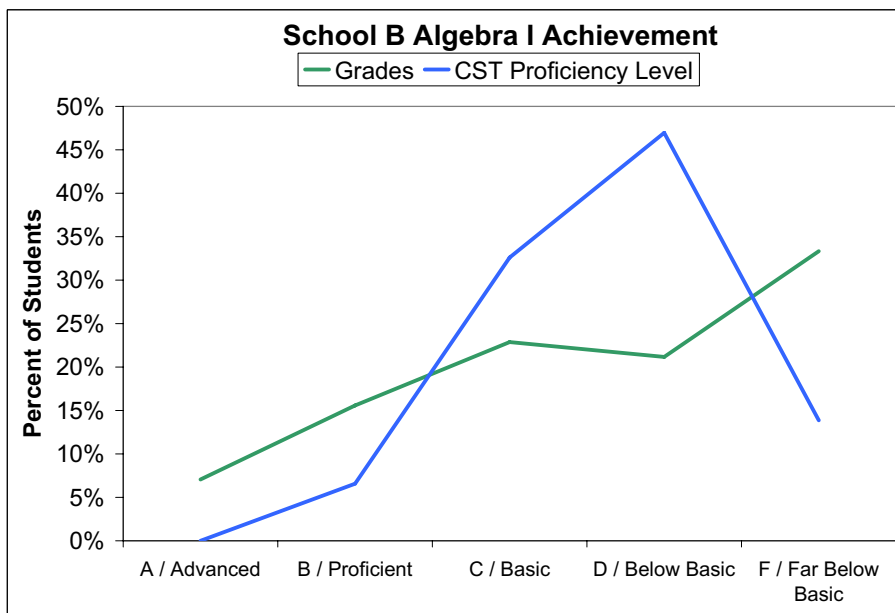
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Spotlight on Data *cont.*

Standardized assessments and course grades represent two different processes and produce data that behave differently, as shown. Test results represent not only ability or content knowledge but also the test-taking process itself, while grades represent not only ability but also adherence to classroom policies. There is one group of middle school teachers in Escondido that is explicitly working to have their math grading policy result in grade distributions that match the CST performance levels: http://www.eusd4kids.org/Schools/hidden_valley/teacherfolders/sellis/website/class/grades.html

While these efforts should be appreciated, others may have reasons for not expecting or wanting grades and CST scores to be perfectly correlated. For example, each measure may have important information that is not carried by the other and having both measures may be desired in some cases. Cal-PASS researchers are excited to be a part of these discussions and attempts to better measure student success.



From the Executive Director *cont.*

were not getting current information, which ultimately had an impact on their transitions. Currently, due to the work of the PLCs, the changes are being communicated in less than a month, ensuring that students are getting timely information and that their transition path is smoother.

Our goal is to facilitate the success of every institution we serve and to see that students reach their goals. Success at every level is more than a mantra.



A Partnership of the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office and the Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District

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Help Desk *cont.*

Systems to simplify the data submission process.

- The SASI extract is no longer limited to only full CSIS reporting districts. It is now available to all software users regardless of license type.
- STAR and CAHSEE files may now be submitted independently of the Student, Course and Award files.

For technical assistance, contact the help desk: help@calpass.org or (619) 933-0381.