

From the Executive Director:

A Year in Review

It's been another interesting and productive year for Cal-PASS. While there have been budget constraints due to the economy, the support we have received from private foundations has allowed us to continue and expand the work we started 12 years ago.

The English composition project is now reaping the benefits of seven years' work aligning curricula. What we have found is that students who experience aligned English curricula do better in Freshman Composition than students who do not have the same experience. To see other successful Professional Learning Council (PLC) innovations, see page 3.

We've talked a lot about the Standardized Metrics for Analysis, Reporting, and Tracking (SMART) Tool over the last few years, and its capabilities will expand again this fall. The latest iterations of the SMART Tool are setting new standards for access to useful and useable academic data (see "Telling the Story the SMART Way" on page 4 for more information). The new additions will allow tracking of student cohorts between segments and will include more tracking tools.

At the Aligning Curricula and Career Education for Student Success (ACCESS) convening this summer, 65 math, English, and Career/Technical Education faculty from high school and postsecondary institutions met and continued work to align English and math curricula from 11th grade through the first year of college. Their collaboration has produced assignments/assessments with embedded real-world applications. You can read more about the ACCESS initiative on page 5.

As Cal-PASS continues to evolve, so too does our Special Projects division. See "Looking Back, Looking Ahead" (page 2) to find out what Special Projects is doing and where they are headed.

This next year will bring its own highs as well as challenges, but we look forward to working with you to help students improve throughout the state.

U.S. Secretary of Education Lauds Cal-PASS Work

In a speech to the Council of Chief State School Officers and State Higher Education Executive Officers on July 16, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan talked about the need for states to create longitudinal databases from kindergarten through postsecondary and to use the information, collaboratively, across segments to improve practice. He cited Cal-PASS as one of the entities doing just that.

In California, the Cal-PASS data network uses transcript information to hone instruction and boost achievement.

Arne Duncan

U.S. Secretary of Education

Cal-PASS is pleased to be recognized as one of the few data-driven innovations that are leading the way in this country. Thank you to all who contribute to the Cal-PASS effort. Your contributions are making a difference for students.

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Spotlight on Data:

Reports and Innovations Realized

Last year the Cal-PASS research office completed 85 requests resulting in more than 150 reports relating to a variety of disciplines. These reports ranged from briefs with descriptive information to lengthier reports with predictive analytics. One notable report examined the relationship between the 11th grade English California Standards Test (CST) and level of the first attempted community college English in a region. The analysis compared native English speakers (English Only) with students who were English learners but redesignated as fluent English proficient (R-FEP). The chart (below) shows that higher levels of CST proficiency were associated with a higher proportion of transfer-level enrollments for both groups. However, English Only students were more likely than R-FEP students to enroll in transfer-level English in every CST proficiency category.

Another recent project involved a partnership with the Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE). This project provides parent engagement workshops to encourage and teach parents to support the educational attainment for their children. Cal-PASS researchers used matched comparison groups to analyze differences in student achievement between the children of participating parents and other students with similar characteristics. The results are being used by PIQE staff to refine their services while these cohorts continue to be tracked.

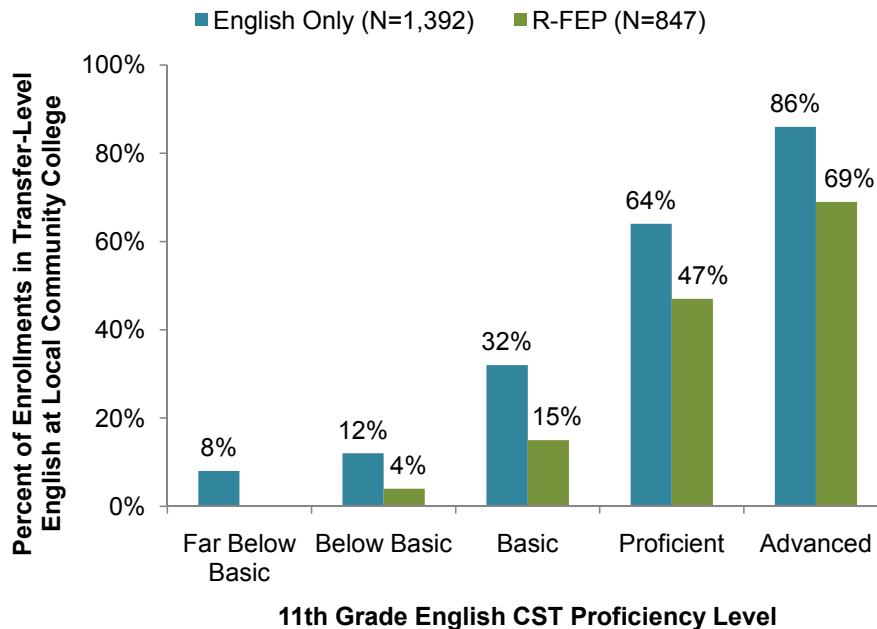
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Looking Back, Looking Ahead

Just over three years ago, Cal-PASS created the Special Projects division with a single staff member working on a single project — the basis for the current SMART (Standardized Metrics for Analysis, Reporting, and Tracking) Tool, funded by the Hewlett Foundation. The division, now called Project Development and Foundation Relations, has grown to a trio of staffers with more than a dozen projects in operation, and the division’s funding base has grown to include sources such as the Irvine, Stuart, and Woodrow Wilson Foundations, with continued support from the Hewlett Foundation.

Current projects include program evaluations using the Cal-PASS database, research partnerships with other organizations, support to understand educational patterns and outcomes for students at member institutions, and connections between Cal-PASS’s database and other data sets. Groundbreaking linkages between Cal-PASS data and social service data are leading the way across the nation (see “Spotlight on Data,” at left, for more information). Special Projects staff members also are evaluating Cal-PASS Professional Learning Councils’ innovations to assess their effectiveness and potentially expand them.

The Project Development and Foundation Relations division will continue to create relationships to extend current work and explore new areas.



Percent of Students Enrolling in Transfer-Level English as their First Community College English Class by 11th Grade English CST Proficiency Level and English Proficiency Status.

Innovations Leading the Way

More than 1,200 faculty members from across the state participated in 64 Cal-PASS Professional Learning Councils (PLCs) this past academic year, meeting monthly to discuss their region's education challenges. By looking at regional student transition data, PLC members have been able to pinpoint curricular misalignments and other barriers to their students' success, and have developed pilot innovations aimed at alleviating these barriers. While 26 of the PLCs are focusing their efforts on the ACCESS initiative (see page 5 of this newsletter for an update), the other 38 PLCs have piloted many successful innovations:

➤ English Composition Alignment Project (ECAP) data demonstrate that students who have experienced aligned instruction in a high school English composition course do better in Freshman Composition in college than students who have not experienced aligned instruction in high school English.

➤ Math for Chemistry Bridge Program (MoCHA) is demonstrating that students who learn and use chemistry terminology within the algebra framework do better when they take their first chemistry course than a similar cohort of students who do not have this experience.

➤ Qualitative data to date suggest that students using Biology Action Models (BAM) are more engaged in learning and earn more A, B, and C grades than students in traditional biology classrooms. BAM in high school biology classes makes learning hands-on and visible for students.

➤ Jump Start Math, a Summer Bridge Program in Sonoma County for students transitioning from high school to the local community college, worked with students who had placed in remedial math on the college assessment test. Students took the 30-hour Bridge program and then had the opportunity to retake the assessment test. More than 90 percent of the students in the Bridge program placed at least one class higher than they did on the previous assessment test.

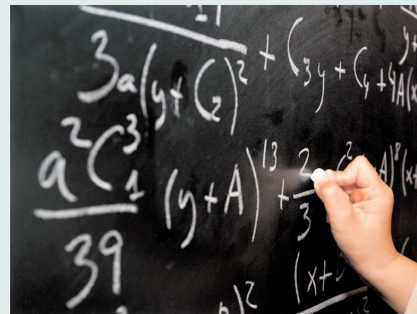
➤ The Contra Costa Science PLC received a federal grant in partnership with CalTeach to develop an integrated science course for high school students at Mount Diablo Unified School District who are at risk for not completing science A–G requirements. The PLC designed the course to enhance English, math, and EL skills while also improving student engagement by utilizing investigative, hands-on techniques to get students excited about science while reinforcing essential skills.

➤ In San Bernardino County, counselors from Chaffey College worked with high school seniors in their local feeder districts during the CST testing week. Counselors gave students placement tests, counseled them on admission policies and availability of financial aid, and helped them to fill out registration and financial forms. The outcome, over time, has been an increase in enrollment and retention of first-time students from the respective high school districts.

➤ Faculty from the West County San Bernardino Math PLC created a short refresher math course for new students who did not place in transfer-level math courses. Following the course, students were allowed to retake the placement test, and retest

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New Use for Cal-PASS's (Math) Standards Deconstruction Guides



For the past two years I have taught a Verification Process for Special Settings (VPSS) course. This course addresses the needs of teachers who find themselves teaching math without a math credential and makes them compliant under the No Child Left Behind Act. In addition to 72 hours of active engagement, the course participants are required to complete two lesson plans. The Placer County Office of Education director and I chose to use Cal-PASS's Standards Deconstruction Guides as the lesson plan model for our participants. [The guides have] worked well and we plan to use them in the future. Thanks for all the hard work.

*Jeanne Villeneuve,
Placer County Office of Education*

Telling the Story the SMART Way

The Cal-PASS principle of *Discovery* refers to a process of analyzing student data to understand the factors that contribute to academic performance and baselines of student success. This process ultimately helps Cal-PASS and member institutions “tell the story” about students, but before the process can begin the data must be in the hands of users who can make sense of it. Cal-PASS has been developing new ways to do this, including creating new versions of the Standardized Metrics for Analysis, Reporting, and Tracking (SMART) Tool.

The SMART Tool is a quick, comprehensive and configurable way to view data, allowing users to zero in on the piece that tells the story. It has become the product most requested by Cal-PASS’s clients. In response to those requests, Cal-PASS has designed and deployed SMART Tools for community colleges to assist with program review and for cohort tracking on special projects such as Career Advancement Academies and the California Leadership Alliance for Student Success (The CLASS Initiative). New Transitions and Assessment SMART Tools are being released in beta form this month. (As always, districts will continue to own their data and Cal-PASS will never include data in projects without consent.)

SMART Tools offer a way to display results that makes the most of multidimensional data. Three-dimensional tables, known as online analytical processing (OLAP) cubes, allow users to easily “point and click” and “drag and drop” to get answers fast. OLAP is an interactive way to view data from different perspectives, leading to better understanding of what the data mean. Users can “drill down” or “roll up;” they can filter, sort, limit to a range, and swap data from an x-axis to a y-axis in seconds. They can view this quick transformation of data as a grid or a chart with multiple formatting options such as colors, chart types, labels, and legend placement. Users also can export results from the SMART Tool into familiar applications such as Word, Excel, or PowerPoint, helping make students’ stories more accessible to a wider variety of audiences.

Register Now for SMART Tool Workshop

At this year’s RP Group “Strengthening Student Success” conference in Costa Mesa (Oct. 6–8), Cal-PASS will be hosting a preconference workshop to discuss and demonstrate the Cal-PASS Standardized Metrics for Analysis, Reporting, and Tracking (SMART) Tool. Titled “Tools for Data-Driven Decision Making,” this preconference will be held from 9 a.m. to noon on Wednesday, Oct. 6. The workshop will cost \$25 (separate from the full conference registration) and does not require attending the full conference. For a complete list of conference sessions and registration information, as well as tips for finding funding for the event, go to <http://www.rpgroup.org/events/SSS10>.

For more information about Cal-PASS’s preconference workshop, contact Terrence Willett at twillett@calpass.org.

A Day in the Life of Data

Occasionally, member institutions wonder if Cal-PASS cleans the data they submit or if anything is changed or deleted. Cal-PASS never makes changes to the data received. Data exist exactly as they come from users, either directly or via their submission to the Chancellor’s Office MIS database. Cal-PASS will, however, label the data values to make it well-suited for performance and reporting (substitute the word Hispanic for ethnic code 500, for example).

Sometimes reports are better with new data elements that are derived from other elements (new elements are defined in the data dictionary). Generally, to better present the data, elements are categorized into two types. The first category is best described as data that contain results (test scores, grades, awards, or other performance indicators that change), and are only relevant for a term or course. Data in this category go directly into a dimensional data model and are stored in fact tables. The second category contains the values that allow grouping of the first category. Elements such as term, gender, ethnicity, and home language are uploaded to Cal-PASS using codes that represent values. A translation process converts the code (meaningless without a codebook) to the label used in reports or SMART Tools. Cal-PASS also calculates cumulative values such as grade point averages. Other calculations are useful to show progress or change under different circumstances.

To ensure that what you send is what you get, tests are performed throughout the process to ensure that no data are ever eliminated or excluded and that all translations are done correctly. Each uploaded data file can be audited in the event that any data displayed in reports or SMART Tools needs to be verified against the original source.



Convening Outcomes

In June, Cal-PASS hosted a convening of 65 math, English, and Career/Technical Education faculty from the Aligning Curricula and Career Education for Student Success (ACCESS) initiative. Participants representing their local Professional Learning Councils (PLCs) finalized project competency work and further developed assessment items for 11th grade through transfer-level math and English curricula. The new assessment items were contextualized using one or more of the 15 industry sector pathways defined by Career/Technical Education curriculum.

ACCESS staff are summarizing and formatting the outcomes of the convening so that the 26 PLCs collaborating on this project can review and continue to refine them through the fall 2010 term. By summer 2011, Cal-PASS will distribute curricula guides that include the aligned competencies and the sample assignments and assessments that have real-life applications embedded in them.

Spotlight on Data *cont.*

A current project called Ready to Succeed (RTS) is funded by the Stuart Foundation and partners Cal-PASS staff with researchers from UC Berkeley's Center for Social Services Research (CSSR). The CSSR maintains data on California's foster youth. In the RTS project, Cal-PASS institutions agreeing to participate are having their student data matched with foster youth data in a secure setting to track educational progress of current and former foster youth. This project provides an opportunity for two human services databases to be linked to improve services for an at-risk population. A report on this project will be published in the near future.

Finally, as Cal-PASS research continues to evolve, more automated reports will be available for users. The next generation of reports will allow tracking of students between segments and more cohort tracking tools.

Innovations *cont.*

scores were used for placement. More than 90 percent of the students placed at a higher level than they had previously, thus reducing the time to complete a degree or certificate.

➤ West County San Bernardino counselors participating in "I'm Taking My Parents to College" gave a presentation to feeder district middle school students on the importance of good academic performance in high school as they prepare for college. Early outcomes indicate that students engaged in this counseling innovation achieved higher pass rates than a similar group of students who are not working with counselors.

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