CONTEXT

The sequence of English courses at Foothill College includes English 100: Introduction to College Reading; English 110: Introduction to College Writing; English 1A: Composition and Reading; English 1B: Composition and Critical Thinking; and English 1C: Advanced Composition.

Students assessed at below freshman composition reading and writing levels will place in one of three ways:
- English 100 only
- English 110 only
- Both English 100 and 110

Those students placing into both English 100 and English 110 are required to take these courses in a sequence, with 100 preceding 110. English 100 provides instruction in techniques of critical analysis for reading-college level prose, focusing primarily on expository/argumentative essays and textbook materials. Students learn to comprehend text holistically, identifying and expressing critical elements of comprehension. English 110 provides instruction and practice in writing expository essays, emphasizing logical development and clear sentence structure, including rules of and practice in punctuation.

Success and Persistence

According to the 2010 ARCC report (California), state performance indicators in Basic Skills show challenges in student progress and achievement (49.9%); course completion (61.5%); course improvement (53.2%); and fall-to-fall persistence (68.7%). While performance indicators at Foothill are higher in some areas, with course completion at 84.1%, we see challenges in student progress and achievement (67.3%); course improvement (48.3%); and persistence (72.2%).

More specifically, a recent study tracking a cohort of students whose first English course at Foothill was taken between 2003-04 and 2007-08 (tracked based on the first English course they took, not on their placement) found that over three years, persistence and success decreased over the sequence of courses from 100-1A (see fig. 1) (Johnstone).

Starting Level	Att. Two Below	Pass Two Below	Att. One Below	Pass One Below	Att. Trans. A	Pass Trans. A	Att. Trans. B	Pass Trans. B
Two Levels Below Transfer	2,774	2,194	1,547	1,261	1,253	1,054	745	662
% of starting cohort	100%	79%	56%	45%	45%	38%	27%	24%
% from previous step	---	79%	71%	82%	99%	84%	71%	89%

*Note: Two Levels Below = 100, 104A or 108, One Level Below = 110, 104B or 108, Transfer A = English 1A, Transfer B = 1B

(fig.1)

Furthermore, a related study examined pairs of sequential courses in English at Foothill College, with course enrollments covering five academic years – 2005-06 to 2009-10 (Johnstone). Success in the 2nd course in the paired sequence was analyzed by the grade received in the 1st course in the sequence. The study found that the success in the 2nd course dropped significantly based on the grade received in the 1st course, with those earning a C in the 1st course succeeding at 63% in the next course (from English 100 to English 110) and 62% in the next course (from English 110 to 1A) (see fig. 2 and fig. 3).[1]

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[1] Students may have started in the 2nd course in the sequence without taking the 1st course (placed there directly, completed equivalent of 1st course at another school, etc.). These students were grouped and analyzed separately. Students may also be in the 2nd course in the sequence after most recently being unsuccessful in that same course; these students were also grouped and analyzed separately.
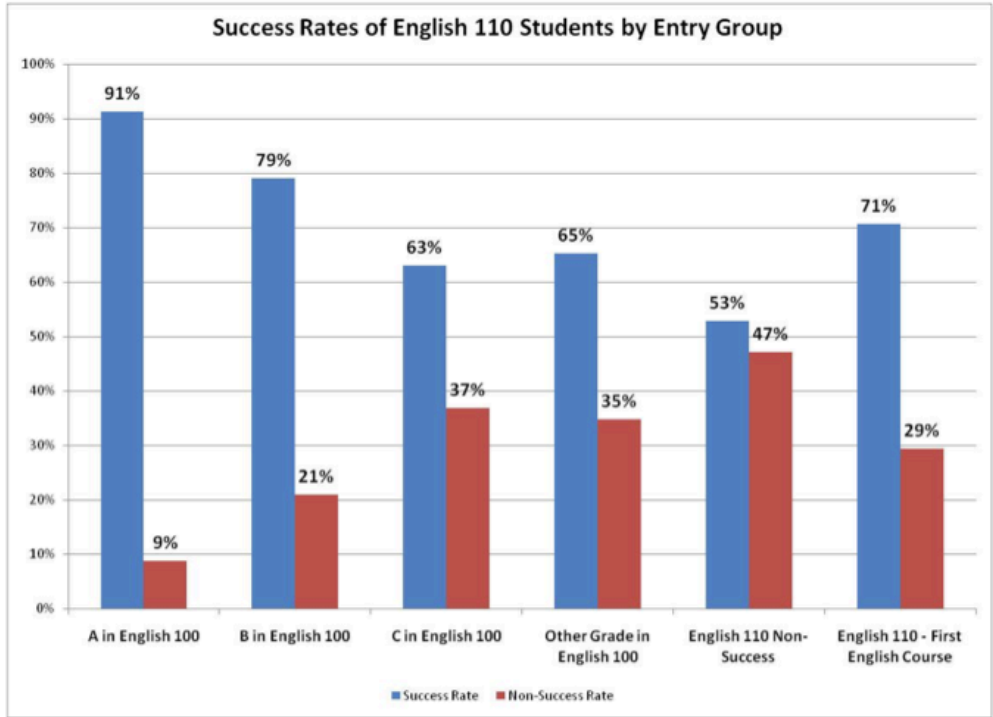
(fig. 2)
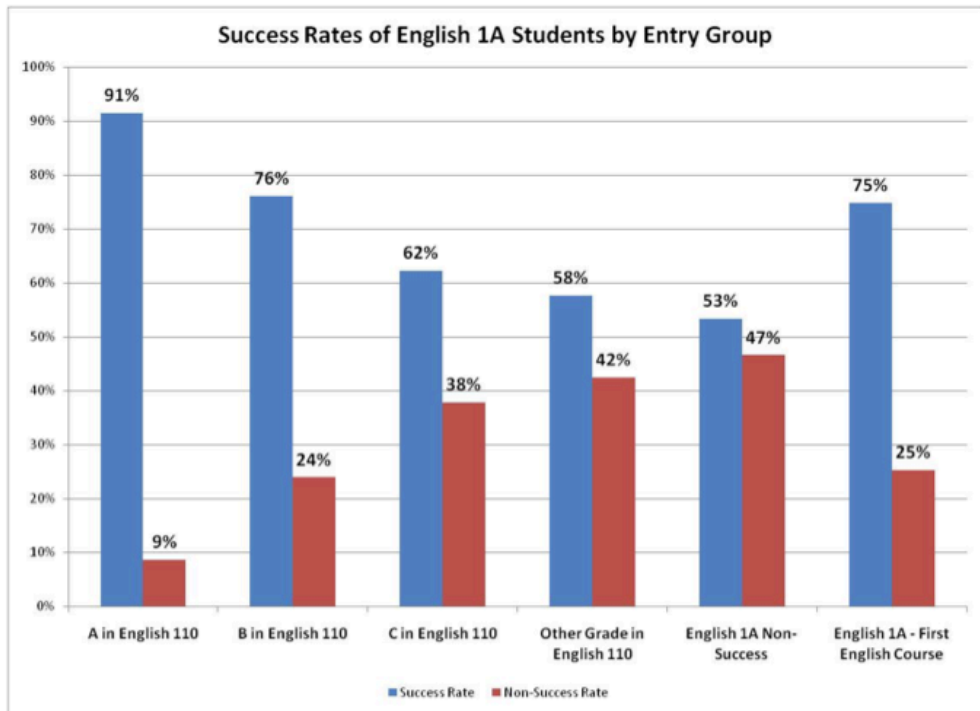
(fig. 3)

PATHWAY DESIGN

Integrated Reading and Writing Course

Acknowledging the existing strengths of our basic skills programs, we seek to add an additional pathway, adding to our current menu of programs such as Puente and Mfumo. In this program, students eligible for both ENGL 100 and 110 based on assessment information would enroll in a 2-quarter, 10-unit, integrated reading and writing course that scaffolds instruction in freshman composition outcomes over two quarters, taking an accelerated approach that enables students to accomplish in two quarters what would take them three quarters in the 100-110-1A sequence.

Instruction would introduce students to college-level reading and writing as integrated processes and integrated concepts, and continue the study and practice of techniques for increasingly sophisticated expository and argumentative writing based on critical reading and thinking about texts of increasing complexity and difficulty (through college level). Instruction in reading and writing would be treated holistically and in an integrated fashion, with students studying, identifying, and producing elements of effective written communication.

Critical Thinking: Student-Managed Portfolio Development Co-Requisite

In addition, the course would be supported by a two-quarter, 4-unit co-requisite in student-managed portfolio development. In this course, instruction will survey basic theory, design, and implementation strategies for student-managed portfolios, with emphasis on the reflective and evaluative processes necessary for portfolio development. Students will gain practice in managing and maintaining the information and artifacts of a portfolio as a comprehensive and integrative analysis of the student learning experience. A critical outcome of the portfolio development co-requisite course is for students to increase meta-cognitive awareness of the integration between reading and writing processes and elements of effective written communication; of the student's location within discourse communities, including the academic campus community; and of the behaviors necessary for college success, with students increasing ability to transfer knowledge and learning across disciplines.

At this stage, we have gained departmental and divisional approval to fulfill the Foothill College reading and composition requirement for the AA/AS degree and are submitting the course for approval to satisfy the university-transfer general education requirement in English reading and written composition.

RATIONALE/NEEDS JUSTIFICATION

Integrated Reading and Writing

Underlying the creation of this pathway is the notion that reading and writing are two interconnected processes of making meaning through language. Kutz, Groden & Zamel (1993) explain that "readers, like writers, are actively involved in creating meaning from texts" and that "reading, like writing, is an inventive and constructive activity" (p. 133). In other words, reading is not simply a receptive passive act, but rather an active way of forming knowing that involves negotiation and transaction with a given text. Nor is writing simply an act of dumping thoughts on a page, but also "a way to re-see texts" and "a means for working out a reading" (Zamel, 1992), as well as a highly recursive process which involves rereading and revision. Reading and writing, like listening and speaking, are two aspects of communication, both igniting discovery and understanding. Thus, this pathway is neither a writing course in which students read, nor a reading course in which students write, but rather a course in which students learn and use practices of academic literacy, becoming better readers through writing and becoming better writers through reading.

One of the main goals of this course is to bring students into conversation with texts, both published texts and texts of their own, and thereby coax these students to begin to see themselves as readers and writers within a larger context and give them concrete experiences with the dialogic and transactional nature of reading and writing. Through analysis and exploration of their own texts, the texts of their peers and published texts, students can begin to see themselves as part of a cycle of communication existing within social and culturally formed contexts. Through these conversations with texts, students will also begin to see themselves as possessing authorial voices within these conversations. Like Bartholomae and Petrosky (1986), we aim, through the work of the classroom, to provide "access to the language and methods of the academy" (p. 9) and push students to "reimagine themselves as readers and writers" (p. 8).

There also appears to be a strong correlation between integrated reading and writing programs and quantifiable student success. At San Francisco State University, for example, Goen-Salter & Gilotte-Tropp (2003) found that students in the accelerated integrated reading program had higher completion rates, higher scores on standardized reading and vocabulary tests, and a higher success rate in their future classes than students who completed their writing requirements using more traditional routes. Also at Skyline College in San Bruno, California, data gathered from program review (2008) of their integrated reading and writing program suggest "that students enrolled in the integrated developmental reading and writing course persist and succeed at a higher rate than students enrolled in the equivalent but separate reading and writing courses." (p.3)

Metacognition

Within this pathway, we also hope to promote metacognition. That is, in the words of Goen-Salter & Gillotte-Tropp, to help students "attain awareness and knowledge of their own mental processes such that they can monitor, regulate, and direct themselves to a desired end" (p. 13).

When students have knowledge of their thinking processes, as well as the thinking processes of others, they are better able to solve unexpected problems as they arise, and to transfer the knowledge they learn while completing one task to use in completing another.

Metacognition involves making what is very often invisible become visible to students (Bartholomae & Petrosky, 1984; Donahue & Salvatori, 2004; Graff & Birkenstein, 2006; McCormick, 1994). For example, oftentimes students infer that the apparent ease with which some people read and write are innate talents, rather than skills that are built up through hard work over time. To illustrate for students the reality that literate people are made and not born, we will emphasize that all writers struggle with writing, and that difficulty and struggle are natural, and often productive, facets of the writing process (Donahue & Salvatori, 2004). Also, in the interest of making students more self-aware, goal-oriented and reflective learners, they will complete a variety of self-reflective assignments and activities over the course of the course, in order to help them identify what they hope to learn, as well as to help them monitor their own progress.

Another great benefit of explicit instruction in metacognition is the ability of students to transfer knowledge across tasks as well as disciplines. Initially in this course, students will work to transfer their preexisting skills at making meaning in the world to making meaning with written texts in the academy. They will then work to transfer the metacognitive tools and strategies they have developed from their reading to their writing experiences, and vice versa. Additionally, this course is designed to explicitly explain that the metacognitive strategies introduced over the course of this class will also be applicable to their work in other disciplines.

Portfolio Development

The Portfolio co-requisite course provides a structured environment to raise student's metacognitive awareness of their developing reading and writing processes, giving them the tools to analyze their reading and writing processes and representative products; this increased awareness will allow for the easier and accelerated transfer of knowledge, as it relates to effective changes they make to their processes and their products, from essay to essay, from reading to reading, and from class to class, inside English or across the disciplines. In addition, the co-requisite course provides a structure for faculty teaching in the program to monitor the program, its strengths and weaknesses, along with careful consideration through portfolio assessment techniques, student outcomes in the Integrated Reading and Writing course.

For the student, the portfolio course heightens the student's awareness of the calculated steps they take as readers and writers, recording these in two types of portfolios--the Process Portfolio and the Product Portfolio.

- In the Process Portfolio, the student manages the many artifacts that go into the development of any given project, from the earliest hypothesis, to important annotations, to reading responses through idea drafts and peer response sheets from other readers/writers to final drafts. Through critical refection and analysis, they can more carefully identify strengths and weaknesses in the reading and writing process and make effective changes to those intricately interwoven steps.

- In the Product Portfolio, students present their finished work in an authentic form to demonstrate their understanding of tangible course outcomes; by reflecting on the product portfolio, the student identifies his/her growth and needs as they relate to the content, form, and other shared criteria used to evaluate finished projects. Because the student has carefully organized and ranked their own work to showcase in their portfolio, they see the development of their own knowledge.

In carefully analyzing the finished works side by side in the portfolio (process or product), students make their learning visible to themselves and the instructor, and continue the reflection process whereby they affirm strengths and address needs.

Acceleration and "Stretch" Models

The history of basic writing programmatic design is long and continues to evolve. Professor William Lalicker, in "A Basic Introduction to Basic Writing Program Structures" (1999), and based on a survey conducted of Writing Program Administrators, categorizes basic writing into six broad categories, of which the most traditional is a what he terms the "baseline" or "prerequisite model" – a non-credit "skills" course in which "basic writing is viewed as a perquisite to be completed before taking 'college-level' composition."

Lalicker outlines five alternatives that seek to integrate basic writing instruction into regular college course structures:

1. Directed self-placement, with students advised on the availability of basic writing courses but left to make their own placement decision.

2. The "stretch model," in which students are given two semesters to complete a regular one-semester composition course.

3. The "studio model," in which basic writers take regular first-year composition along with a required studio workshop in which they receive additional help with reading and writing.

4. The "mainstreaming model," in which basic skills "remediation" is eliminated and all students are placed in regular composition, with instructors not already trained in teaching basic writing receiving resources and support in the form of professional development workshops, mentoring, and tutorial services for students.

5. The "intensive model," in which basic writing students are assigned to composition courses in which the students meet for more hours than required for regular composition courses and receive extra support. (Otte and Mlynarczyk)

The above models seek to address several critical filter points that may collectively contribute to low retention and low persistence among Basic Skills students. Some students may decline to enroll in developmental courses during their first year of college – a decision that may result from the stigma often associated with basic skills courses. Some students may skip quarters between the courses in the developmental sequence, which prevents them from immediately applying the skills learned to subsequent course outcomes. Or as we see in the cohort data for Foothill, they may fail to enroll in the next course in the sequence.

Research at Santa Monica College on a compressed program of writing study, in which students enrolled in a 6-week accelerated course versus a 16-week full-semester course, found that students enrolled in 16- week sessions dropped more courses than those in 6- or 8-week sessions, roughly in inverse relationship to the success rates seen in the same sessions. This underscores what is known as the "pipeline effect" – that the longer the pipeline through which students must pass in order to be successful, the less likely they are to persevere and the more likely they are to drop out. The faculty at Santa Monica College acknowledge that a number of factors outside the college influence student decisions to drop courses, but reflect that students seemed less affected by these factors when taking fewer courses in a compressed format. The group also found that GPA's earned in the second course apparently show that students can learn and use the material equally well in a sequential course taken immediately whether the first course was taken in 6- or 16-weeks. Performance in the second course supports the previous results that show that students earn better grades in the 6-week sessions (Logan and Geltner).

We believe the accelerated pathway, in concert with integrated reading and writing pedagogy and metacognitive portfolio development course, can address and improve success and retention rates in the pre-college to transfer-level sequence. Because developmental outcomes are connected to the transferable English 1A course outcomes, students will opportunities to apply basic skills outcomes immediately to transfer-level coursework, leveraging the momentum and consistency gained by the cohort. We believe this immediate application will be of particular benefit to those who might earn a C in the traditional basic skills courses, improving retention, persistence, and success. If students complete the accelerated program in their first year, we anticipate that they will increase their opportunities for enrollment and success within the remainder of the English program and across the disciplines.

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