



MAINE CTE PROMISING PRACTICES MINI CASE STUDY
Sanford Regional Vocational Center (SRVC)
Sanford, ME
Director: Deborah Guimont

PROMISING PRACTICE: Connecting Assessment Data and Math Support

At SRVC all students have been taking the Accuplacer for the past five years as part of a partnership with Southern Maine Community College (SMCC). Three years ago, the center began pre- and post-testing and developed a support process through its PLATO Lab. Two years ago the center decided that the post-test should occur in February, not May, so seniors can include scores when applying to post-secondary programs.

All students at the center (juniors and seniors attend from seven sending high schools) take the Accuplacer the second week of school and they get the results immediately after taking the test. SMCC staff and guidance counselors are there to help them interpret their results in each area and make a plan for how they will use the PLATO Lab, sign up for additional coursework, and otherwise use supports at the CTE center and their high school to help them improve their scores.

Instructors get a print-out of their students' scores on the Accuplacer math, reading, and writing tests from the SRVC office each fall. At a staff meeting early in the school year, each instructor is expected to analyze the scores using a "three color" approach: green means that the student has met the SMCC cut score in that area; yellow means that the student scored in the range where one remedial class will be required in that area; and red is for those students who have a lot of catching up to do, based on their Accuplacer scores.

But, Guimont emphasizes, this is not just about getting scores up to get into college — it is also about developing a solid enough understanding of the math, as well as the reading and writing skills, that will be needed to succeed in technical fields. The focus to date has been "more on the math than the reading."

All students go to the PLATO Lab for 45 minutes each week. There they use the technology based curriculum to strengthen math skills needed to succeed in technical program areas and to meet the cut score on the Accuplacer used by SMCC to determine admission eligibility without need for remediation. The instructor, Steve Mikeriz, also integrates pieces of the Skills USA curriculum during the weekly class period, including what is needed for job success and how to write resumes. Thus, the class, which all SRVC students take, also incorporates a career preparation focus.

What difference is it making?

According to Guimont, they have been seeing some good results with the approach. "We have kids who find out that if they just get their scores up a little, they will meet the cut-off and then they really buy into PLATO or take an extra math class. They really work hard at getting those scores up." SRVC students tend to do better on the Math section of the SAT than they do on the Critical Reading section or Writing sections, perhaps testimony to the success of the approach SRVC is taking.

Guimont says that they have looked at the correlation between Accuplacer and SAT scores and have found that they are "pretty close," but that ESL students tend to do better on the Accuplacer and that they have not looked at the writing/language results from both tests in conjunction with one another.

The project appears to be supporting many more students to meet college ready math cut scores on the Accuplacer. Guimont says that before the program started, SRVC math ready percentages in arithmetic

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hovered at around 13%. In contrast, Accuplacer data¹ collected between Fall '06 and May '08 indicate the following:

Area Assessed	Beginning of Project – College Ready (out of 50 students)	End of Project – College Ready (out of the same 50 students)
Reading	5 (10%)	27 (54%)
Sentence Skills	2 (4%)	21 (44%)
Arithmetic	14 (28%)	32 (64%)
Algebra	2 (4%)	7 (14%)

Next steps:

Sanford Regional Vocational Center will continue its focus on working to support students to get into college and be successful when there. Three new initiatives, two of them grant-funded, will support activities related to this beginning in the 2008–09 school year. MELMAC funds will be used to create informational videos about planning for post-secondary options, completing FAFSA forms, evaluating options, etc. A STEM grant will support teachers from four sending high schools, SRVC, USM, and staff at the Boston Museum of Science to strengthen science instruction aligned with new Maine Learning Results related to engineering and technical design. And an early college partnership project with SMCC will mean that students who meet eligibility criteria on the Accuplacer will be able to take a college algebra class for credit at SRVC. The course, taught by a SMCC instructor, increases the number of college credits that students in mathematically oriented programs, like drafting, can get while enrolled at SRVC. Twenty students enrolled in the course for the fall of 2008.

Student results on the SAT Critical Reading test have led the center to look more closely at the apparent success of integration of reading, writing, and critical thinking on a daily basis in the media and information technology programs. SRVC will be exploring how to integrate more technical reading and writing — and instruction in strategic reading, writing, and vocabulary learning — into the regular practice of more of its program area instruction. This will be focused on the types of reading and writing that students actually have to do in each program area, as well as how to support students to do more critical thinking. One goal is to improve the plateau of having about 50% of students meet college ready standards in reading on the Accuplacer.

For more information, contact Deb Guimont at 207-324-2942 or email her at dguimont@sanford.org

¹ Data is based on a cohort of 50 SRVC students who took the Accuplacer at least two of the following times: Fall '06, Fall '07, January '08 and May '08. Data analysis was conducted by Deb Guimont in September 2008. “College ready” delineation uses the Accuplacer cut scores provided by SMCC to indicate that students are ready for college level classes (as opposed to developmental or remedial classes). Students may have taken the Accuplacer multiple times.