Pearson

Hennepin Technical College Summer Enrichment Program seeks to close achievement gaps with ACCUPLACER//MyLab Foundational Skills, college readiness counseling, and career exploration

School Name
Hennepin Technical College, Brooklyn Park, MN

Course name
Hennepin Technical College TRiO Summer Enrichment Program

Course format
Hybrid

Course materials
ACCUPLACER//MyLab Foundational Skills

Timeframe
2013-2016

Administrators and faculty
Lisa Roney, Director of TRiO, Educational Talent Search
Gayduobah Sizi Goyah, Math Teacher, Brooklyn Center High School
Kristina Golyer, Reading Teacher
Karen Westhausen, Advanced Placement Teacher

Results reported by
Lauren Gill, Senior Results Manager, Readiness, Progression, & Employability

Key Findings

- Students in a 6-week summer enrichment program achieved across the board skills gains in reading, writing, and math as measured by ACCUPLACER diagnostic pre- and post-tests.
- To date, 93 percent of eligible Summer Enrichment Program participants are currently enrolled in college. Four students were named finalists for Act Six (ActSix.org) and two students won full-tuition, full-need 4-year scholarships from Act Six.
- Of students surveyed, 96 percent responded that they were very satisfied or extremely satisfied with the summer enrichment program.

Setting

Hennepin Technical College's two campuses are located at the north and south end of the largest county in Minnesota and serve the entire Twin Cities area and beyond.

Lisa Roney directs a TRiO program serving 500 students in three area high schools: Robbinsdale Cooper, Brooklyn Center, and Eden Prairie. TRiO Programs are federal outreach and student services programs designed to identify and provide services for individuals who are low-income and/or first generation with the potential to succeed in college. TRiO programs offer academic advising and career exploration services, leadership activities, and financial aid advising.

Challenges and Goals

A 2016 Stanford University analysis of reading and math test score data from across the country provides evidence of the impact of socioeconomic conditions on student achievement, finding that children in school districts with the highest concentrations of poverty score an average of more than four grade levels below children in the richest districts.[1]

Among the challenges in Minnesota schools:

- Federal data indicate that Minnesota ranked last in four-year graduation rates for Latino and American Indian students, second to last for African-American students, and near the bottom for low-income students.[2]
- Minnesota has one of the highest student-to-counselor ratios (771 students for every 1 counselor). Since the 2000-01 school year, Minnesota's student-to-counselor ratio has been second to last among all states.[3]
- In the 3-school catchment area that Roney serves, up to 80% of students qualify for free or reduced price lunch. Many students balance significant work and family obligations outside of school, and periods of homelessness are a reality for some.
- A 2013 state law, known as World's Best Workforce, requires every public school district to meet goals for graduation and academic standards. In its first progress report, Minnesota Department of Education indicated that many districts are not on track to meet their goals. Metro districts, including Robbinsdale and Brooklyn Center, did not meet the majority of their achievement gap closure goals.

Hennepin Technical College's TRiO Summer Enrichment Program was designed to:

- Help students build core academic skills to better prepare them for their next academic year curriculum, for the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA) standard tests, and for college
- Build students' confidence in their ability to succeed in core academic subjects
- Provide opportunities for students to practice building relationships with peers, teachers, counselors, and others
- Offer guest presentations and field trips that provide experiential learning and college exploration opportunities that help students visualize and begin planning for post-secondary options

During the academic year, Director Lisa Roney and her staff of advisers work directly with students in the middle and high schools. Students in the TRiO program often fall behind in credits, struggle to finish high school and may not envision themselves attending a post-secondary institution. Since many students tend to forget subject matter during the summer, Roney designed the 6-week summer enrichment program to bolster students' academic progression and offer a continuity of career prep and advising during the summer break. Licensed teachers and advisors guide students through the curriculum; ACCUPLACER®//MyLab Foundational Skills® is the primary courseware, supplemented with outside readings according to grade level. The summer enrichment program is conducted in three computer labs at Hennepin Technical College, giving students access to state-of-the-art facilities and exposure to a college campus.

Student participants and their families are counseled about the value of the summer enrichment program. Roney and her staff explain what the ACCUPLACER diagnostic scores mean. They tell students that achieving a certain score entitles them to test out of a given class. They make the financial savings explicit, too. If students score high enough on the ACCUPLACER exam to be college ready, they can avoid taking several remedial courses, saving up to $900. Students readily grasp the meaning of the savings—both time and money—and are motivated to work hard.

Implementation

Students begin their summer coursework by taking the ACCUPLACER diagnostic pre-test. ACCUPLACER's diagnostic is different from the ACCUPLACER exam used by colleges for placement. The diagnostic breaks down each subject area into discrete skills and delivers a precise score for each. Students who score proficient (12–15) won't have any exercises on that skill in their personalized Learning Path.

Director Roney says, "High school students really love the personalized Learning Path in ACCUPLACER//MyLab Foundational Skills because they hate having to work through material they've already mastered. Our summer program brings together different ages and vastly different skill levels; we have rising sophomores, rising juniors, and rising seniors. ACCUPLACER//MyLab Foundational Skills means that every student works just on the skills they need to master. A single teacher can address every student's need without losing or wasting the time of all the other students."

The six-week summer program runs from 9 am to 2 pm Monday through Friday with opportunities to stay and engage with tutors each afternoon after regular sessions conclude. The program includes transportation to and from campus each day; breakfast and lunch are served to students. Students transition, in grade-level groupings, among English, math, and writing sessions. Fridays are organized around career exploration with guest presentations, hands-on demonstrations, and field trip excursions. Career areas the program has explored include graphic design, fluid power/hydraulics, architectural design, culinary arts, welding, 3D printing, and electronics. Students also participate in one out-of-state college exploration trip each summer, visiting colleges in nearby states like Iowa, Wisconsin, and Illinois to view campuses, meet students and faculty, and experience sleeping overnight in a dorm.

Roney says, "Teachers in the program conduct mini-lessons based on group needs and facilitate students' independent work in ACCUPLACER//MyLab Foundational Skills, offering direct instruction, motivation, and guidance. If a large number of students need help with trigonometry, for example, the

teacher will deliver a mini-lesson on trigonometry. If just one student is stuck on a particular skill, the teacher will offer that student one-on-one instruction to help her over that hurdle." The personalized Learning Path in ACCUPLACER//MyLab Foundational Skills means that each student works just on their skill deficits; therefore, the gains from pre- to post-test represent genuine strengthening of essential academic skills.

Results and Data

Roney states, "The personalized Learning Path in ACCUPLACER//MyLab Foundational Skills means that each student works just on their skill deficits; therefore, the gains from pre- to post-test represent genuine strengthening of essential academic skills."

Students' skills improvement as measured by ACCUPLACER diagnostic pre- and post-tests

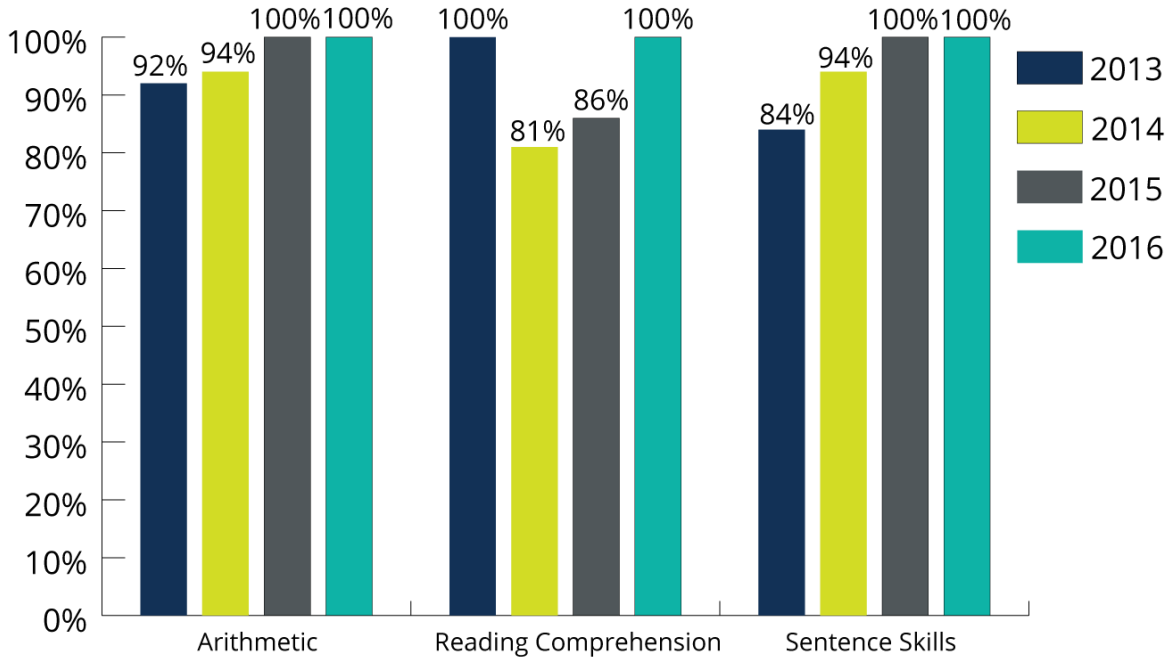

Figure 1. Percent of Students Improving in One or More Topic Areas 2013 (*n*=13); 2014 (*n*=16); 2015 (*n*=21); 2016 (*n*=7)

> "Relationships and student engagement are powerful drivers for student achievement. Having great teachers who return every year is essential to our success."
>
> —Lisa Roney, Hennepin Technical College

What went well

Roney notes, "After six weeks of our hybrid structure with students working independently in ACCUPLACER//MyLab Foundational Skills and teachers leading small group lessons, students are given the post-test ACCUPLACER diagnostic test in each subject area. The students made consistent, incremental learning gains in all skill areas."

She continues, “Relationships and student engagement are powerful drivers for student achievement. Having great teachers who return every year is essential to our success.”
“We’ve secured funding for another five years based on the consistent results our students have achieved,” says Roney. “We hope to establish ongoing funding that enables us to extend program participation to more students.”

The Student Experience

- 96% of students surveyed responded that they were very satisfied or extremely satisfied with the program.

Sample student comments:
Yes, I will encourage friends to attend the summer enrichment program because it:

- *“is an amazing program for learning and improving as well as making new friends.”*
- *“helps you stay active mentally throughout the summer.”*
- *“is a great opportunity to find the right college.”*
- *“really helps with career research.”*
- *“offers both educational opportunities that are greatly beneficial and fun team-building activities as well.”*
- *“I used to hate math because the problems were tricky and I didn’t understand them. Mr. Goya helped me get more comfortable with my math skills. I expected to have a hard time in the math class but I walked out victorious.”*
- *“I learned to face my fears.”*
- *“My favorite part was the college visits.”*
- *“I learned communication and teamwork.”*

Conclusion

Roney states, “We are achieving our program goals. Instead of losing academic skills during the summer break, our students are strengthening core academic skills that will enable them to succeed in their next academic year curriculum, to graduate high school on time, and to demonstrate readiness for college. ACCUPLACER//MyLab Foundational Skills provides personalized learning and support for our mixed-age, mixed-skills student participants. We look forward to tracking outcomes as more of our student participants graduate and move confidently toward their post-secondary college and career aspirations.”

1. Reardon, Sean F. et al. “The Geography of Racial/Ethnic Test Score Gaps” Stanford U.April 2016.https://cepa.stanford.edu/seda/papers.
2. “Public High School Four-Year On-Time Graduation Rates and Event Dropout Rates” National Center for Education Statistics April 2014. www.nces.ed.gov.
3. Fitzgerald, John. “Minnesota’s School Counseling Crunch” September 2009 MN2020. www.mn2020.org