



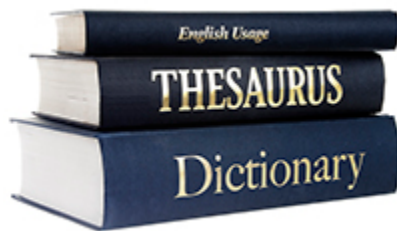
INSTITUTE *for* EVIDENCE-BASED CHANGE

English Curriculum Alignment Project (ECAP)

Alignment works

Summary: Armed with longitudinal data and guided by our staff, teachers have been able to learn important information about their students and make changes in classroom practice. The result has been improved student transition and success and a 50% reduction in remediation at the post-secondary level.

Putting alignment into practice



A team of high school, community college, and university English instructors in a Southern California suburban community were concerned about curricular misalignment: To their surprise, data showed that a large proportion of their high school graduates were not prepared for college-level English courses. Upon deeper analysis, faculty learned that high school curriculum focused on fiction, community colleges stressed non-fiction and the five-paragraph essay and universities focused on rhetoric. All three segments were calling the course English but were emphasizing different areas.

After identifying the reading and writing skills college students need to succeed in English Composition, the team designed an intervention (ECAP) that focused on improving expository (nonfiction) reading and writing skills in the 9th through 12th grades. Then, faculty from the community college and university worked collaboratively with the English department of a local high school for several years, helping them to infuse the identified skills into the high school's standards-based curriculum.

Three quarters of the high school teachers using ECAP reported that they used more expository text than they had prior to their involvement in ECAP, and more than half said the project helped them cover more of California's state standards. Even more important:

- **Enrollment in college-level courses increased.** In the 6 years after ECAP was introduced, high school student enrollments in college-level English courses grew from 36% to 57%, and enrollment in basic skills courses decreased.
- **Student success increased.** In 2005–06, 44% of students taking English Composition at the local community college earned a C or better. Two years later, after implementation of ECAP, that figure rose 14 percentage points, to 58%. In 2009-10, 74% of students earned a C or better.

After the success of the high school's students at their local community college, the college began admitting ECAP graduates into college-level composition courses regardless of their college placement scores beginning in the 2008-09 academic year.

- In 2008-09, 82% of the first group of ECAP students passed their English Composition courses at the community college compared to 68% of the general community college student population.
- In the second year, 86% of the second group passed compared to 66% of the general community college student population.
- Those who persisted to the next level course of English composition were 100% successful.

The high school district began the process of expanding ECAP to all of its high schools, with teachers from the program's early phase serving as mentors to the newest participants. At the conclusion of this project, with its participants and process relatively institutionalized, eight schools were part of the project with plans to add all the remaining schools by 2014-15.

The decrease in remediation at the post-secondary level is now consistently estimated at 50% as well-prepared high school students move directly to English Composition courses with most completing successfully.