DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION PLACEMENT

PLACEMENT IN DEVELOPMENTAL MATH: ACHIEVING THE DREAM

What Is Measured?
Percentage of students referred to different levels of developmental math

Who Is Counted?
First-time credential-seeking students who enrolled in Achieving the Dream colleges offering different levels of developmental math from fall 2003 to fall 2004

What It Tells Us
About half (51 percent) of students were referred to developmental math at Achieving the Dream colleges offering one level of developmental math. At colleges with two levels of developmental math, just under half (47 percent) of students were referred to developmental math, most often to a course two levels below the college level. At colleges offering three or more levels of developmental math, about two-thirds (67 percent) of students were referred to developmental math, most often to a course three or more levels below the college level.

Why It’s Important
Assessment for college readiness to determine the appropriate placement in a subject is particularly important for community colleges. Such assessment is needed because their open-access admissions policies and outreach to nontraditional students mean that a much larger proportion of their students take developmental education courses than do students in other sectors of higher education (Provasnik & Planty, 2008). For students needing developmental education, enrolling in the developmental course mandated by the placement test is the first step toward completion. Most institutions select from a handful of standardized assessments to place students in developmental education, but tremendous variation still exists across and within states and even institutions on which tests and cutoff scores are used (Bailey, 2009; Collins, 2008).

ABOUT THE DATA
Achieving the Dream: includes 57 public two-year institutions in Connecticut, Florida, Ohio, New Mexico, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Virginia.

Among the Achieving the Dream institutions, 9 offered one level of developmental math, 9 offered two levels, and 35 offered three or more levels of developmental math. Participating institutions were given the following instructions on how to determine whether a student should be considered referred to remedial math or reading: “Student was referred for remedial needs in mathematics [reading]. Remedial courses are instructional courses designed for students deficient in the general competencies necessary for a regular postsecondary curriculum and educational setting. The student can be referred through a counselor, a developmental office, etc.” Institutions with multiple levels of remedial education were asked to report the level to which the student was initially referred.

DATA SOURCE