What Is Measured?
Percentage of first-time credential-seeking students in Achieving the Dream colleges referred to different levels of developmental reading.

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

What It Tells Us
Overall, one-third (33 percent) of students at Achieving the Dream colleges were referred to developmental reading. At institutions offering one level of developmental reading, about two-fifths (39 percent) of students were referred to developmental reading at Achieving the Dream colleges offering one level of developmental reading. At institutions offering two levels of developmental reading, less than one-third (31 percent) of students were referred to developmental reading, most often to courses one level below college level. At colleges offering three or more levels of developmental reading, 34 percent of students were referred to developmental reading, most often to courses one level below 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 colleges, 11 offered one level of developmental reading, 20 offered two levels, and 20 offered three or more levels of developmental reading.

Participating institutions were given the following instructions on how to determine whether a student should be considered as 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