COLLEGE MILESTONES
COMPLETION OF GATEKEEPER MATH: ACHIEVING THE DREAM

Among first-time credential-seeking students enrolled in Achieving the Dream colleges from fall 2003 to fall 2004 who completed developmental math and enrolled in a gatekeeper math course, percentage who completed a gatekeeper math course within three years, by level of developmental referral

What Is Measured?
Percentage of students who completed a gatekeeper math course within three years

Who Is Counted?
First-time credential-seeking students who enrolled in Achieving the Dream colleges from fall 2003 to fall 2004 who completed developmental math and enrolled in a gatekeeper math course

What It Tells Us
Overall, about four-fifths (79 percent) of students who completed developmental math and enrolled in a gatekeeper math course completed within three years of enrolling in community college. Students who were referred to developmental math two levels below the college level were the most likely to complete a gatekeeper math course (81 percent), while those referred to developmental math one level below the college level and three or more levels below the college level completed a gatekeeper math course at an equal rate (78 percent). Of the students who were referred to developmental math and then enrolled in a gatekeeper course, 57 percent began at one level below the college level, 26 percent began at two levels below the college level, and 16 percent began at three or more levels below the college level.

Why It’s Important
There is general consensus that timely completion of gatekeeper courses, the lowest-level college-level courses in the core subjects of mathematics, reading, and writing, positively affects student outcomes such as attainment of certificates and degrees and transfer to a four-year institution (Roksa & Calcagno, 2008, table 4; Horn & Lew, 2007; Offenstein, Moore, & Shulock, 2010, figure 8). Completion of gatekeeper courses fulfills requirements for graduation and transfer as well as prerequisites for more advanced courses in various fields.

ABOUT THE DATA
Gatekeeper courses: colleges chose their own “gatekeeper” courses, but the term was formally defined in the data gathering instructions to the colleges as the first college-level courses the student must take after remediation.

Achieving the Dream: includes 57 community colleges 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.
Estimated percentages of students who started at different levels of developmental math, completed the sequence, and enrolled in the gatekeeper course were calculated from table 3 of the source and do not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

DATA SOURCE