

Report of the  
Developmental English  
Redesign Team  
June 2011

# THE FOCAL POINT REDESIGNING DEVELOPMENTAL ENGLISH EDUCATION IN VIRGINIA'S COMMUNITY COLLEGES



# **The Focal Point**

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## **Acknowledgements**

The Developmental English Redesign Team membership included representatives from 17 community colleges, the Virginia Community College System (VCCS) office, and the Virginia Department of Education. Led by Dr. Frank Turnage, former President of Germanna Community College and English faculty member, and Dr. Cheryl Thompson-Stacy, President of Lord Fairfax Community College, the Developmental English Redesign Team devoted a significant amount of time and effort researching, discussing, and compiling information related to student success in developmental reading and writing courses. In addition to developmental reading and writing faculty members, the team included representatives from student services, workforce development, and the K-12 sector, as well as deans, vice presidents, and faculty from other disciplines. The members of the Redesign Team worked closely with the faculty and staff at their colleges to gather input and recommendations to inform the work of the group. Online discussion threads were established to garner broad feedback from all campus constituencies. The Redesign Team acknowledges and thanks the VCCS community for its input and support.

Special thanks go to Dr. Turnage and Dr. Thompson-Stacy for their leadership and guidance as the team established direction and developed recommendations. The Redesign Team commends Sharon Freeman, Brent Kendrick, Chris Pfautz, and Laura Powell for leading the work of the subcommittees and for drafting the report and recommendations. The extra time and effort that they dedicated to the team helped to bring forth a successful conclusion to the work.

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## **Executive Summary**

This report of the Developmental English Redesign Team, *The Focal Point: Redesigning Developmental English Education in Virginia's Community Colleges*, presents recommendations to redesign developmental reading and writing to improve student success, to implement more streamlined and efficient delivery methods, and to enhance student support services surrounding those delivery methods. It chronicles some of the major forces that have provided the momentum for the VCCS to address developmental education issues and to make changes to serve the Commonwealth of Virginia's students more effectively. Further, it reflects national exchanges of ideas and initiatives surrounding the redesign of developmental education.

In 2003, the State Board for Community Colleges approved *Dateline 2009*, the VCCS's first strategic plan to propel Virginia's community colleges forward and to create more opportunities for all Virginians and the skilled workforce that Virginia needed. Key components of the plan included enrollment, retention, graduation, transfer, and workforce training.

Two years later, the state level dialogue centered on college readiness. In 2005, Virginia received funding through the Honor State Grant Program of the National Governors Association to implement a redesign initiative to increase high school graduation rates and improve college readiness. Part of the grant work resulted in a study focusing on the academic preparedness of recent Virginia high school graduates: *College Readiness Report: How Virginia's Community Colleges Are Addressing the Academic Weaknesses of Recent High School Graduates*.

The Spellings Commission Report of 2006, *A Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of U. S. Higher Education*, stated that remediation had become far too common an experience for American postsecondary students. According to the report, some 40 percent of all college students took at least one remedial course—at an estimated cost to the taxpayers of \$1 billion. In addition, industry must spend significant financial resources on remediation and retraining (U. S. Department of Education, 2006, p. 9).

In 2005, along with four other states, the VCCS began participation in Achieving the Dream, a national non-profit organization dedicated to helping more community college students, particularly low-income students and students of color, stay in school and earn a college certificate or degree. The focus on student success was critical, but VCCS Chancellor DuBois felt that participation in Achieving the Dream gave the system something equally

important: “a framework for using data to drive an agenda with student success as a goal. *Dateline 2009* established a vision for the system, but the system was not ready to articulate how colleges could meet the plan’s goals” (Mills, 2009, p. 8). The goals of Achieving the Dream now have become part of the fabric of the system’s work, reflecting a deep commitment to and strategic action for a student success policy agenda. Data from Achieving the Dream show that of the students entering community college seeking an associate degree or higher upon entry, fewer than 45 percent successfully achieve their goals. If students begin their academic program in developmental education, their likelihood of a successful outcome is decreased. Only 17 percent of students who enroll in a remedial reading course receive a bachelor’s degree within eight years, compared to 58 percent of students who take no developmental education courses. When underserved populations are considered, only 8.5 percent of low-income and minority students referred to developmental education complete any credential within four years (Developmental Education Toolkit, 2008).

Several recent VCCS task forces addressed the issues surrounding developmental education. In 2008, the Placement Review Task Force made a series of recommendations to improve the practice of placement throughout the system. The following year, a task force examined the role that the Student Development (SDV) course played in student achievement, particularly the success of developmental education students. The Developmental Education Task Force (DETF), commissioned in 2008, created a foundation for current developmental education reform efforts throughout the VCCS. Its report, *The Turning Point: Developmental Education in Virginia's Community Colleges*, has served as the blueprint for the dynamic changes that are taking place, including the formation of the Developmental English Redesign Team.

There is a call for increased student success in postsecondary education from the White House to every state. Virginia’s Governor Robert McDonnell has called for an additional 100,000 bachelor and associate degrees over the next 15 years in the Commonwealth. Remarking on the proposed American Graduation Initiative in July 2009, President Obama called upon the nation’s community colleges to “figure out what’s keeping students from crossing that finish line, pursue innovative strategies that promote student completion, and make informed choices about which programs work” (The White House, 2009). Chancellor DuBois, the State Board for Community Colleges, and the VCCS college presidents have committed to

increase the number of VCCS students graduating, transferring, or completing a workforce credential by 50 percent by 2015 as part of the system's new strategic plan, *Achieve 2015*.

The Developmental English Redesign Team began its work in September 2010. Its charge was to review policies and practices, and to make recommendations on what steps the VCCS should take to improve student success, including implementing more streamlined and efficient ways of delivery. The team's work was guided by three VCCS goals affirmed in *The Turning Point*:

- Reduce the overall need for developmental education in the Commonwealth.
- Design developmental education in a way that reduces the time to complete developmental reading, writing, and mathematics requirements for most VCCS students to one academic year.
- Increase the number of developmental education students graduating or transferring in four years from one in four students (25%) to at least one in three students (33%).

Also, central to the team's deliberations was the VCCS research showing that although students were generally successful in the individual reading and writing courses, the sequence of developmental courses as it existed was creating an obstacle for student progression into college-level English. Research conducted by the Community College Research Center using VCCS data concluded that there were too many "exit points" in the developmental reading and writing pathways, causing a large percentage of successful students to drop out of the sequence. Most VCCS colleges had developed multiple pathways to the English gatekeeper course through separate reading and writing sequences.

The first stage of the Developmental English Redesign Team's work focused on content exploration. Two subcommittees collected course content summaries and sample syllabi for developmental reading and writing courses from all 23 colleges in the VCCS. These served as a basis for reviewing and discussing the content that a developmental reading and/or writing student needs in order to be successful in college-level courses, particularly in English as well as in other disciplines. During the second stage of the Redesign Team's work, the team regrouped into two new subcommittees charged with examining alternative structures for delivering developmental education as well as placement, student services, and professional development considerations. During both stages, the Developmental English Redesign Team conducted its work through face-to-face meetings, conference calls, and email.

Throughout the process, the Developmental English Redesign Team involved stakeholders and system-level organizations, not only sharing its deliberations with them but also soliciting their input. Members of the team delivered presentations and facilitated discussions with faculty at their home campuses. A Blackboard site was established to collect feedback from English faculty as well as faculty in other disciplines across the system. Presentations were made at meetings of various groups including the English Peer Group, Chancellor's Faculty Advisory Council (CFAC), Council of Deans and Directors (CODD), Academic and Student Affairs Council (ASAC), and the Advisory Council of Presidents (ACOP).

Feedback from these constituencies informed the members of the Redesign Team as they formulated and refined the following recommendations aimed at meeting the needs of students in developmental reading and writing. Consideration was also given to strategies that more effectively and successfully moved students through their developmental requirements into their college-level English courses:

1. The structure of developmental English plays a vital role in helping students move successfully from remediation to college-level coursework. Developmental English will be restructured as an integrated reading and writing system, with three direct pathways to ENG 111 (College Composition I). This integrated structure will ensure that most students can complete developmental English requirements within a year.
2. Within the integrated developmental English redesign course structure, content areas in both reading and writing will be viewed with equal consideration as student learning outcomes are developed. The learning outcomes for the integrated reading and writing courses are based on major content areas. They will be addressed by the curriculum committee as the new courses are developed.
3. Valid and reliable placement is vital to effective developmental education instruction and student persistence. The VCCS will implement a reading and writing placement instrument that aligns with the integrated course structure. It will be supported by systemwide placement policies addressing common placement procedures and cut scores.
4. Wraparound student services and academic support interactions play a critical role in addressing the needs of developmental English students and achieving overall student success. The VCCS will complement these services with an early alert system to

- identify high-risk students and provide early intervention, including counseling and advising.
5. Targeted professional development opportunities are imperative in order to achieve highly effective classroom instruction and student support. It will be incumbent upon the VCCS and colleges to provide ongoing professional development opportunities for full- and part-time faculty teaching developmental English and student development courses.

The Redesign Team commended developmental education faculty throughout the VCCS for their hard work and dedication. Faculty were also recognized for facilitating the successful movement of many students through the current curriculum and enabling developmental students to perform as well as college-ready English students. This redesign effort represents a transition in focus from covering material to assisting students with learning, and faculty are an integral part of that process. This transition can only be accomplished through an emphasis on the essential role of pedagogy. Colleges will continue to take the lead in supporting faculty in improving instruction, complemented by systemwide professional development efforts.

## Forces Leading to Change

It is important to note many forces have been at work throughout the VCCS and the nation. These forces have led to *The Turning Point*, to the developmental education initiatives that are underway in the Commonwealth, and in particular to the recommendations in this document. This report and these recommendations are the result of many conversations across the VCCS and include input from the State Board and college presidents, the Academic and Student Affairs Council of vice presidents and provosts, the campus deans and directors, and various cross-discipline task forces and faculty peer groups. Important policy changes stemmed from these conversations. The broad policy discussions have formulated over time and have been informed by system and college level data. Figure 1 illustrates some of the major forces that have provided the momentum for the VCCS to address developmental education issues and to make changes to improve student success.

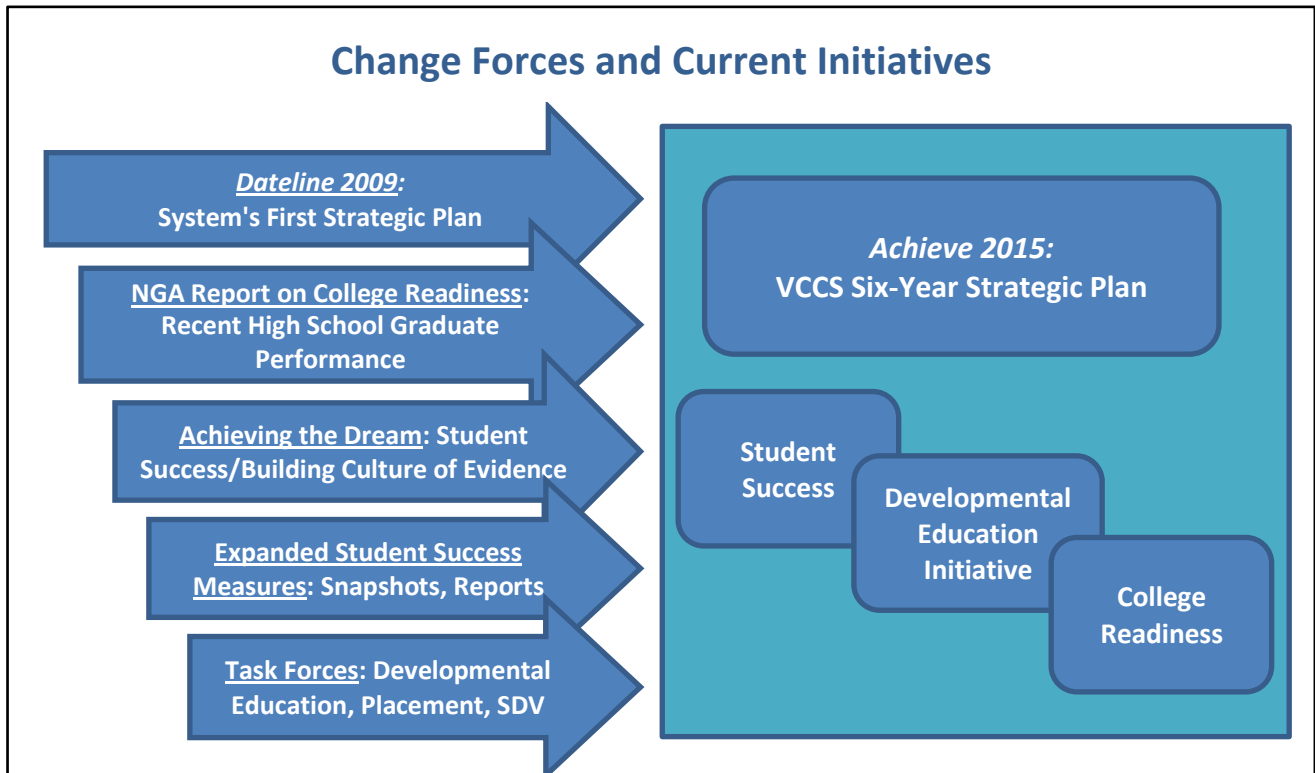


Figure 1.

In 2003, the State Board for Community Colleges approved *Dateline 2009*, the VCCS's first strategic plan designed to propel Virginia's community colleges forward, to create more opportunities for all Virginians, and to create the economic vitality and skilled workforce that Virginia needed (*Dateline 2009*, n.d.). Enrollment, retention, graduation, transfer, and workforce training were key components of that strategic plan.

In 2005, the state-level dialogue centered on college readiness; and Governor Warner appointed the P-16 Council to improve connections and ease the transition among all sectors of education. Virginia concurrently received funding through the Honor State Grant Program of the National Governors Association to implement a redesign initiative to increase high school graduation rates and improve college readiness. Part of the grant work included a study focusing on the academic preparedness of recent Virginia high school graduates. That study resulted in the *2007 College Readiness Report: How Virginia's Community Colleges Are Addressing the Academic Weaknesses of Recent High School Graduates*.

The Spellings Commission Report of 2006, *A Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of U.S. Higher Education*, stated that remediation had become far too common an experience for American postsecondary students, a result of substandard preparation and poor alignment between high schools and colleges. According to the report, some 40 percent of all college students end up taking at least one remedial course—at an estimated cost to the taxpayers of \$1 billion. In addition, business and industry spend significant financial resources on remediation and retraining (U.S. Department of Education, 2006, p. 9).

In 2005, the VCCS joined four other states in the *Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count Initiative*, a national initiative focusing on student success, which now has 18 states participating. The focus on student success was critical, but VCCS Chancellor DuBois felt participation in the *Achieving the Dream* initiative gave the system something equally important: “a framework for using data to drive an agenda with student success as a goal. *Dateline 2009* provided a vision for the system, but the system was not ready to articulate how colleges could meet the plan's goals” (Mills, 2009, p. 8). The goals of *Achieving the Dream* now have become part of the fabric of the system's work, reflecting a deep commitment and strategic action for a student success policy agenda. Mills quoted John Dever, then Executive Vice President of Northern Virginia Community College and Chair of the 2008-09 Developmental Education Task Force, that former Vice Chancellor Sullivan put “ ‘the success of our students at the center of

every meeting. He made us focus on indisputable data' and asked how the system could use the trail of evidence that it was producing to improve the delivery of the service" (p. 5). Today, student success snapshots highlighting various dimensions of student success and providing actionable data are presented at leadership meetings and spark conversations throughout the system.

A series of recent task forces addressed the identified issues surrounding developmental education. In 2008, the Placement Review Task Force made a series of recommendations to improve the practice of placement throughout the system. The following year, a task force examined the role that the Student Development (SDV) course played in student success, particularly the success of developmental education students. The DETF, commissioned in 2008, laid the foundation for current developmental education reform efforts throughout the system. The first recommendation in *The Turning Point* was that the VCCS must redesign English, mathematics, and reading developmental education (Virginia's Community Colleges, 2009, p. 14). The system chose to address developmental mathematics first, redesigning the courses and structure of developmental mathematics through the work of the Developmental Mathematics Redesign Team. The recommendations from the Redesign Team were outlined in their report, *The Critical Point*; and the lessons learned from the mathematics redesign informed the efforts of the Developmental English Redesign Team.

There is a call for increased student success in postsecondary education from the White House to every state. Virginia's Governor Robert McDonnell has called for an additional 100,000 bachelor and associate degrees over the next 15 years in the Commonwealth and created the Governor's Commission on Higher Education Reform, Innovation, and Investment to formulate a strategic plan to achieve that goal. Remarking on the proposed American Graduation Initiative in July 2009, President Obama called upon the nation's community colleges to "figure out what's keeping students from crossing that finish line, pursue innovative strategies that promote student completion, and make informed choices about which programs work" (The White House, 2009). Chancellor DuBois, the State Board, and the college presidents have committed to increase the number of VCCS students graduating, transferring, or completing a workforce credential by 50 percent by 2015 as part of the system's strategic plan, *Achieve 2015*.

These are demanding, yet exciting, times for the VCCS as it formulates ways to meet the needs of its developmental students effectively, develops a plan for systemic change, and improves success rates for all students. The VCCS is at a turning point in its developmental education efforts. It is no longer just about opening doors and providing access, but it is also about improving the educational experiences and success of VCCS students (Virginia's Community Colleges, *The Turning Point*, 2009, p. 13). If the colleges are to achieve the lofty goals set by national and local leaders, the rate of success for those students who enter institutions in developmental education must significantly improve. Virginia's Community Colleges must prepare these students to be successful in their college-level courses and then to move in an efficient and effective manner to meet their individual academic and career goals.

## **Developmental English in Context**

Virginia's Community Colleges provide many meaningful learning experiences for students, and many students have been able to reach their educational goals through the work of dedicated faculty and staff. However, data show there is more work to be done. Reports about the lagging U.S. economic competitiveness and the need to provide better education for everyone are headline news. Coupled with louder calls for accountability, community colleges are challenged to help students complete their higher education goals. Furthermore, in the next few years, there will be major shifts in the populations that community colleges serve. More minorities and more low-income and first-time-in-college students will be entering the VCCS, as well as students who did not take full advantage of their high school curricula.

In 2009, the Developmental Education Task Force researched, discussed, and compiled information related to student success in developmental education. The focus throughout the process was on how Virginia's Community Colleges can have a greater impact on the success of those students needing developmental coursework upon enrollment in our institutions and resulted in the publication *The Turning Point: Developmental Education in Virginia's Community Colleges*. Three overarching goals guided the work of the Developmental Education Task Force:

- Reduce the overall need for developmental education in the Commonwealth.
- Design developmental education in a way that reduces the time to complete developmental reading, writing, and mathematics requirements for most VCCS students to one academic year.
- Increase the number of developmental education students graduating or transferring in four years from one in four students (25%) to at least one in three students (33%).

At the Chancellor's annual planning retreat in August 2010, the Reengineering Task Force released thirteen "Promising Big Ideas," including the call to redesign developmental education:

- Implement the developmental mathematics redesign proposal.
- Launch the planning for developmental reading and writing redesign.

Implementing the recommendations of the task force will be critical if Virginia's Community Colleges are to meet the student success goal of *Achieve 2015*. Increasing

educational attainment is an economic development issue for the Commonwealth. Community colleges serve as a workforce engine for their communities, providing pathways to high-skill, high-wage occupations. Community colleges also serve as a major pathway for students to attain a bachelor's degree. It is imperative that community colleges and other higher education institutions in the Commonwealth significantly increase their degree production in the coming decade if Virginia is to remain a competitive force in the global economy and if its citizens are going to have the ability to advance. Increasing the rate of students attending college must be accompanied by a corresponding focus on helping students complete their college degree. Success in developmental education is essential to impact degree completion rates positively. (From the Executive Summary of *The Turning Point*)

### **Charge to Developmental English Redesign Team**

As the group embarked on its work, the Redesign Team was provided with the following charge:

The Developmental English Redesign Team will review policies and practices and make recommendations on what steps the system should take to redesign developmental reading and writing to improve student success and implement more streamlined and efficient ways of delivery. The recommendations from the Developmental English Redesign Team are expected to help meet the student success goal in *Achieve 2015* and are anticipated to align with the recommendations of the Reengineering Task Force.

Through data, the Developmental English Redesign Team will examine holistically the role that developmental education plays in VCCS student success. As part of its redesign efforts, the Developmental English Redesign Team will consider the following:

- Content:
  - Specific content needed within developmental reading and writing courses.
  - Overall content needed in the developmental reading and writing course sequences.
  - Skill set needed to be successful in English gatekeeper courses.
- Alternative structures for developmental education that may include:
  - Mainstreaming students who place into upper level developmental reading and writing.

- Accelerated pathways through developmental reading and writing sequences.
- Integration of reading and writing instruction.
- Strategies to ensure that most students are able to complete successfully developmental reading and writing requirements within a year.
- Methods to integrate technology into developmental reading and writing curricula.
- Testing and placement procedures to ensure that students enroll in the appropriate developmental course including a sample.
- Implications of other recommendations of the Developmental Education Task Force.

### **Basic Assumptions**

Several tenets informed the work of the Developmental English Redesign Team:

- The purpose of developmental studies is to prepare students for academic success in postsecondary education.
- Simply tweaking what is in place is not enough. Substantive change is needed in order to meet the *Achieve 2015* goal of substantially increasing student success.
- Students need to move quickly and successfully into college work. It is important to reduce the time needed in developmental reading and writing to one academic year and maintain students' momentum into college-level courses.
- Faculty have facilitated the successful movement of many students through the current curriculum and have enabled developmental students to perform comparably to college-ready English students. Faculty are recognized for their hard work and dedication. This redesign effort is not meant to denigrate what faculty have accomplished. It represents a transition in focus from covering material to assisting students with learning.
- The Chancellor, State Board for Community Colleges, the Advisory Council of Presidents (ACOP), and the Academic and Student Affairs Council (ASAC) support the work of this team and have high expectations for the resulting recommendations.

## **The Work of the Developmental English Redesign Team**

The Redesign Team, a group of faculty and administrators, began meeting in September 2010 under the leadership of Dr. Frank Turnage, former president of Germanna Community College, and Dr. Cheryl Thompson-Stacy, president of Lord Fairfax Community College. The charge of the Redesign Team was to review policies and practices and make recommendations on what steps the system should take to redesign developmental reading and writing to improve student success, including implementing more streamlined and efficient ways of delivery. The Redesign Team met face-to-face and via conference calls. Much of the in-depth work was carried out in subcommittees. The first stage of the Redesign Team's work was to examine the content that a developmental reading and/or writing student needs in order to be successful in college-level courses, both in English and other disciplines. Two subcommittees were formed: one for developmental reading content and the other for developmental writing content. The second stage of the redesign was to regroup into two different subcommittees. The first subcommittee was charged to develop a recommended structure for developmental reading and writing, and the second subcommittee was charged to make recommendations related to placement, student services, and professional development.

The Redesign Team created a Blackboard site as a vehicle to collect feedback from English faculty as well as faculty in other disciplines across the system. Team members and system staff monitored the discussion board, responding to questions and commenting on the feedback. Deans and directors—a vital link to campus stakeholders—encouraged faculty and staff to provide feedback through the Blackboard site to ensure that a broad spectrum of campus stakeholders participated in the redesign initiative. Faculty input was shared with the Redesign Team at the face-to-face meetings.

During the content exploration stage, the Redesign Team collected course content summaries and sample syllabi for developmental reading and writing courses from all 23 colleges. The subcommittees then used these as a basis for their review and discussion. During the second stage of the redesign, the Redesign Team examined alternative structures for delivering developmental education. These alternative structures included mainstreaming students who place into upper level developmental reading and writing, accelerated pathways through developmental reading and writing sequences, and integration of reading and writing

instruction. The Redesign Team also examined VCCS and national data on placement, student services, and professional development. Team members also viewed a demonstration of capabilities of the new placement system presented by the new VCCS placement vendor.

Presentations were made at meetings of various groups including the English Peer Group, Chancellor's Faculty Advisory Council (CFAC), Council of Deans and Directors (CODD), Academic and Student Affairs Council (ASAC), and the Advisory Council of Presidents (ACOP). In addition, members of the Redesign Team delivered presentations and/or facilitated discussions with faculty at their home campuses. These sessions provided further opportunities to inform faculty about items being considered and to solicit feedback on what was needed to improve student success in developmental reading and writing.

This feedback, together with the information gathered from the Blackboard site, informed the members of the Redesign Team as they worked to formulate preliminary recommendations. The four subcommittees, working in tandem with the full Redesign Team, used input from campus stakeholders and system-level organizations to refine further the recommendations to redesign developmental education in reading and writing.

## **The Path to Redesign**

Nationally, community colleges enroll almost half of the undergraduate population. In the Commonwealth, Virginia's Community Colleges enroll more than half of all undergraduate students. Community colleges are the primary access point to higher education for students from underrepresented populations: students from low-income families, students of color, and first generation college students. Nationally, they enroll 47 percent of all African American undergraduates, 55 percent of the Hispanic students, and 57 percent of all Native American students. Community colleges provide opportunities for students who would not be able to enroll in higher education otherwise.

The community college open admissions policies have provided an entry point into higher education but that opportunity has not always led to a successful outcome. Data from the *Achieving the Dream* initiative show that of the students entering community college seeking an associate degree or higher upon entry, fewer than 45 percent successfully achieve their goals. If students begin an academic program in developmental education, the likelihood of a successful outcome is decreased. Only 17 percent of students who enroll in a remedial reading course receive a bachelor's degree within eight years, compared to 58 percent of students who take no developmental education courses. When underserved populations are considered, similarly only 8.5 percent of low-income and minority students referred to developmental education complete any credential within four years (Developmental Education Toolkit, 2008).

Stemming from involvement in the *Achieving the Dream* state policy initiative, the VCCS was awarded a Developmental Education Initiative grant, funded by the Lumina Foundation and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Through this grant initiative, six states have committed to implement reform efforts that will significantly increase the success of students beginning their higher education programs in developmental education. Success in developmental education should only be a milestone for these students on their way to the completion of a degree or a workforce credential.

Close examination of the reading and writing developmental pathways in the VCCS uncovered structural barriers to student success. Students were relatively successful in individual courses in the developmental sequence: 68 percent of students passed the lower level developmental writing on their first attempt and 67 percent of students passed the upper level of

developmental writing on the first attempt. The developmental reading success rates are similar, with 65 percent of students passing the lower level developmental reading course on the first attempt and 72 percent passing the upper level reading course (Figure 2).

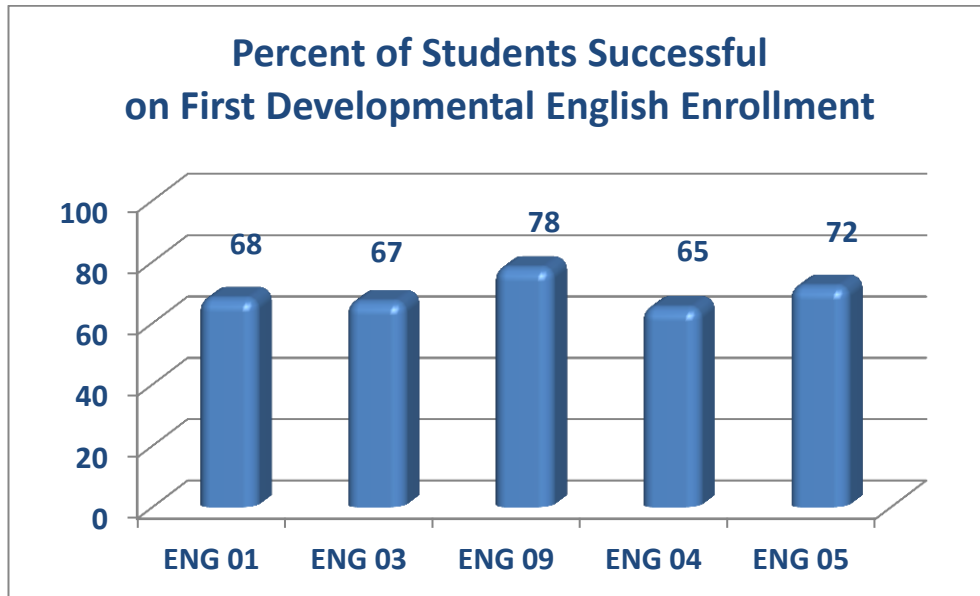


Figure 2.

The VCCS research showed that although students were generally successful in the individual developmental reading and writing courses, the existing sequence of developmental courses created an obstacle for student progression into the college-level English courses. Research conducted by the Community College Research Center (CCRC) using VCCS data concluded that there were too many ‘exit points’ in the developmental reading and writing pathway, causing a large percentage of successful students to drop out of the sequence. Figure 3 provides an overview of the success rates for those students who enroll in developmental reading and/or writing courses in the VCCS. Of those students who begin in a developmental reading or writing course, only 39 percent successfully complete the English gatekeeper course. Developmental reading and writing students graduate and transfer at a lower rate (29%) than those who took only college-level courses (38%).

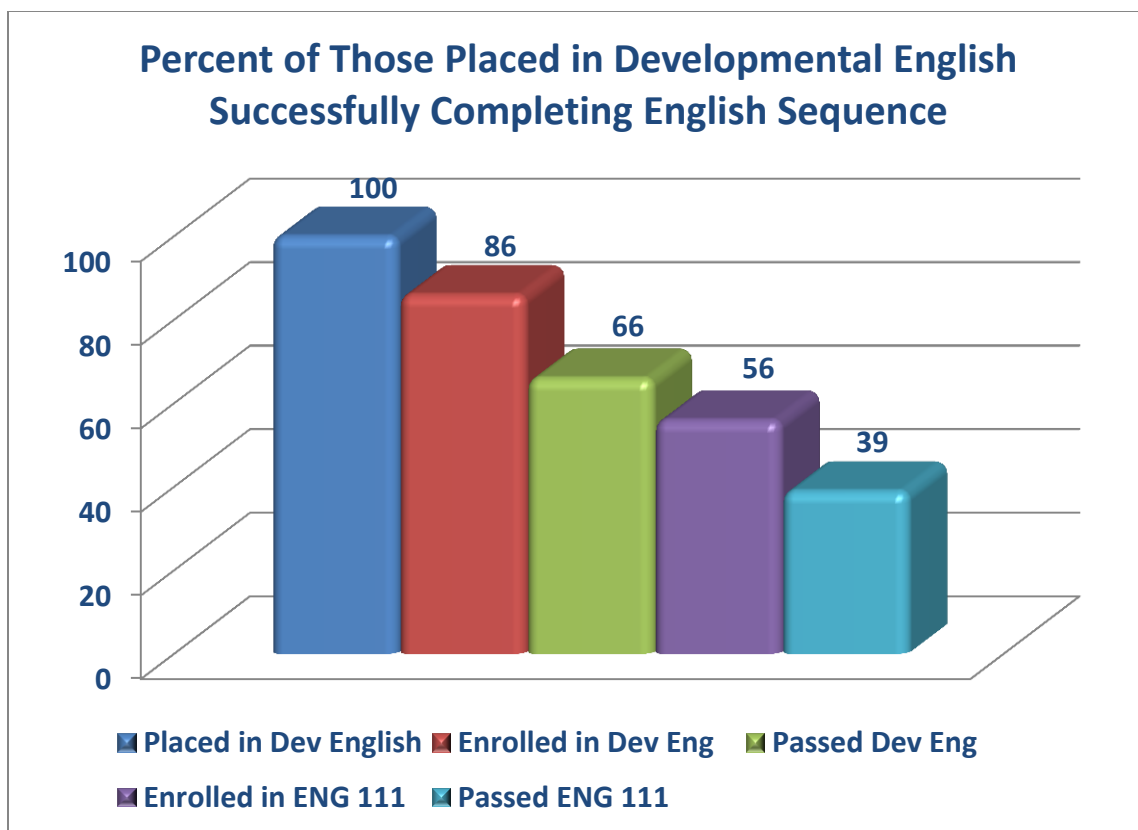


Figure 3.

VCCS colleges had developed multiple pathways to the English gatekeeper course through separate reading and writing sequences. Colleges had anywhere from single courses to three-course sequences to satisfy developmental requirements, with credit hour requirements for the courses ranging from three to five credit hours each. One college offered an integrated reading and writing course to satisfy the developmental requirement, and a number of colleges offered a “bridge” course that met a developmental requirement for those students close to the placement cut score. Students in the bridge course co-enrolled in the gatekeeper course. The variance in structure created difficulty for students who moved among the VCCS colleges or were co-enrolled at two or more colleges.

## **Recommendations**

In order to meet the needs of students in developmental reading and writing and to move them more effectively into their college-level English courses, the Developmental English Redesign Team recommends the following:

- 1. The structure of developmental English plays a vital role in helping students move successfully from remediation to college-level coursework. Developmental English will be restructured as an integrated reading and writing system, with three direct pathways to ENG 111 (College Composition I). This integrated structure will ensure that most students can complete developmental English requirements within a year.**

The current developmental English sequence is based on a traditional progression model, requiring students to complete one level before progressing to the next higher level. The new integrated reading and writing structure will have a comprehensive set of reading/writing learning outcomes that students must attain before advancing to ENG 111.

Figure 4 shows the three direct pathways to ENG 111 based on students' placement scores. (It is important to keep in mind that the lower level Tier A will include the entire comprehensive set of reading/writing learning outcomes, and Tier B and Tier C will include subsets of learning outcomes appropriate to students' placement scores and remediation needs.)

- **Tier C (Bridge Course).** The curriculum for this 2-3 credit course will have the smallest subset of reading/writing learning outcomes and will be designed for students who have the highest placement scores (nearly ready for college-level English), thereby requiring the least amount of remediation. Students in Tier C will co-enroll with ENG 111.
- **Tier B (Mid-Level).** The curriculum for this 3-4 credit pathway to ENG 111 will have a larger subset of reading/writing learning outcomes and will be designed for students who have lower placement scores than Tier C students (but higher scores than those in Tier A) and who need a moderate level of remediation.
- **Tier A (Lower Level).** The curriculum for this 6-8 credit pathway to ENG 111 will include the entire comprehensive set of reading/writing learning outcomes and will be

designed for students who are at the lowest range on the placement instrument, thereby requiring the most remediation.

For students who successfully complete Tier A or Tier B, faculty will have two options: (1) if students require some additional support to achieve success in college-level English, faculty can recommend that they enroll in Tier C (Bridge Course) concurrently with ENG 111; or (2) if students require no additional support, faculty can recommend that they enroll directly in ENG 111.

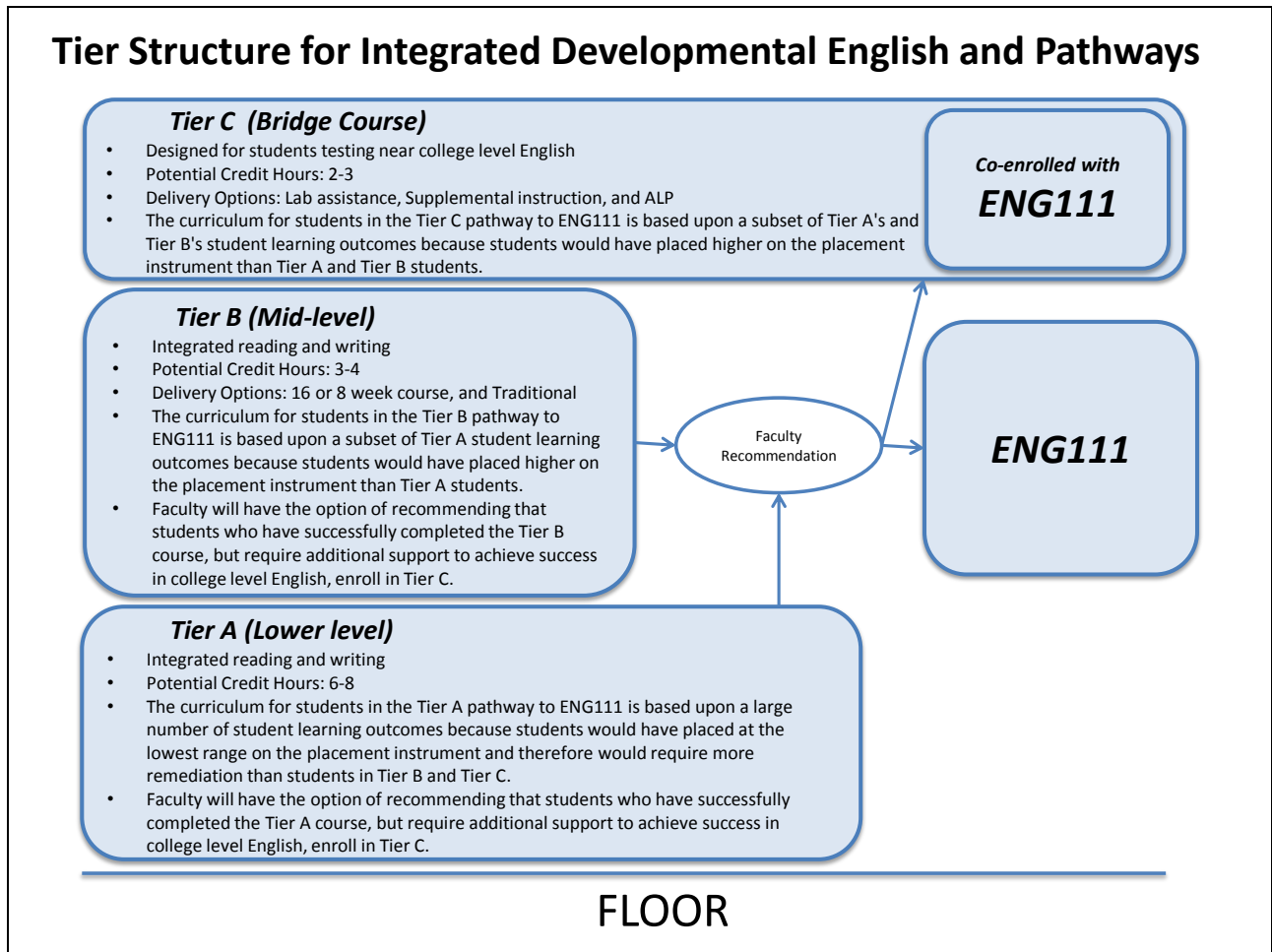


Figure 4.

Within this new integrated reading and writing structure, colleges will determine their own delivery options based on their student populations and their resources. For example, as shown in Figure 4, the delivery options for Tier C (Bridge Course) might include lab assistance, supplemental instruction, or Accelerated Learning Program (ALP).

Finally, policies regarding placement can directly or indirectly affect developmental success. The new integrated reading and writing structure will have a VCCS-wide standard floor, with a common entry point for students testing into developmental English.

Each college must establish a mechanism to provide services to students below the floor, such as adult basic education, partnerships with community organizations, non-credit offerings at the college, and credit-based basic skills courses.

**2. Within the integrated developmental English redesign course structure, content areas in both reading and writing will be viewed with equal consideration as student learning outcomes are developed. The learning outcomes for the integrated reading and writing courses are based on major content areas (see Table 1) and will be addressed by the Curriculum Team for Developmental English Redesign as the new courses are developed.**

Table 1. Developmental Reading and Writing Content Areas

<p><b>Developmental Writing Content Areas</b></p> <p><b>I. Conventions of Standard American English</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grammar</li> <li>• Punctuation</li> <li>• Usage</li> <li>• Sentence Structure</li> </ul> <p><b>II. Writing Process</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-writing</li> <li>• Writing/Draft</li> <li>• Revising</li> <li>• Editing</li> </ul> <p><b>III. Paragraph and Multi-Paragraph Essay</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand audience and purpose</li> <li>• Focused</li> <li>• Well developed</li> <li>• Clearly organized</li> <li>• Unified</li> <li>• Coherent</li> <li>• Rhetorical modes</li> </ul> <p><b>IV. Critical Reading/Thinking Skills</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read and respond to model paragraphs and essays</li> <li>• Information literacy (basic research and documentation)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Developmental Reading Content Areas</b></p> <p><b>I. Vocabulary Development</b></p> <p><b>II. Reading Process</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purposes for reading</li> <li>• Before reading</li> <li>• During reading</li> <li>• After reading</li> </ul> <p><b>III. Comprehension</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognizing paragraph patterns</li> <li>• Determining main idea (stated and implied)</li> <li>• Paraphrasing</li> <li>• Summarizing</li> <li>• Annotating</li> <li>• Locating and analyzing supporting details</li> <li>• Determining author's purpose and tone</li> <li>• Understanding organizational relationships between reading and writing</li> </ul> <p><b>IV. Critical Reading/Thinking Skills</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Study Skills</li> <li>• Literary Genres</li> </ul>
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**3. Valid and reliable placement is vital to effective developmental education instruction and student persistence. The VCCS will implement a reading and writing placement instrument that aligns with the integrated course structure and will be supported by systemwide placement policies addressing common placement procedures and cut scores.**

The reading and writing placement test will include a writing sample and upon completion of the test, students will receive their placement recommendations. In conjunction with the new placement test, the Redesign Team recommends the following:

- Establishment of a VCCS-wide policy that program-placed students will complete placement testing upon entrance into the program.
- Establishment of a VCCS-wide policy that any course needing proficiency in reading, writing, or mathematics will list placement testing as a prerequisite.
- Establishment of a VCCS-wide policy that waives placement testing for students who meet or exceed commonly accepted SAT/ACT scores.
- Establishment of VCCS-wide standardized placement cut scores.
- Establishment of a VCCS-wide standard floor with a common entry point for students testing into developmental English. Each college must establish a mechanism to provide services to students scoring below the floor such as adult basic education, partnerships with community organizations, non-credit offerings at the college, or credit-based basic skills courses.

**4. Wraparound student services and academic support interactions play a critical role in addressing the needs of developmental English students and achieving overall student success. The VCCS will complement these services with an early alert system to identify high risk students and provide early intervention, including counseling and advising.**

The Redesign Team supports the recommendations identified within *The Critical Point* and *The Turning Point* to:

- Implement a student development course targeted specifically for developmental education students and require that this course be completed within a student's first semester. This approach will provide high-risk students with a means of ongoing counseling, advising, and invaluable personal connections to the campus.

- Implement a system-level, enterprise early alert system. Early detection and tracking of high-risk students will provide an increased opportunity for intervention with appropriate academic and support services.
- Implement academic support interactions targeted to developmental education students. Colleges are encouraged to customize student interactions that meet the needs of their student populations. Support interactions might include, but are not limited to: embedded tutoring in developmental education courses, supplemental instruction, structured study-groups, cooperative learning, learning communities, or lab assistance.

**5. Targeted professional development opportunities are imperative in order to achieve highly effective classroom instruction and student support. It will be incumbent upon the VCCS and colleges to provide ongoing professional development opportunities for full- and part-time faculty teaching developmental English and student development courses.**

The integrated structure for developmental English courses will call for additional professional development opportunities for faculty to explore best practices for implementation and course delivery. Items to consider in professional development include faculty attention to:

- The interdependent relationship between developmental reading and writing.
- Best practices for developmental education instruction (e.g., learning communities, integrated instruction).
- Student affective domains (i.e., impact of student motivation, attitude, and emotions on learning).

Professional development opportunities will also be made available for faculty and staff teaching student development courses targeted for developmental education students. Items to consider in professional development include:

- Effective implementation of the Virginia Education Wizard ([www.vawizard.org](http://www.vawizard.org)) into classroom instruction.
- Utilization of an early alert and tracking system to identify better, and provide guidance to, students at risk of not succeeding.

- Evaluation of affective domains and best practices in engaging students in appropriate student services and academic support interactions.

## **Next Steps**

During the fall 2011 semester, a curriculum team of reading and writing faculty members will be convened to lead the curriculum development for the new integrated courses outlined in the recommendations will be convened. The faculty team will develop course content and student learning outcomes and will make recommendations on academic resources to support instruction in the new integrated model. A second team of faculty will work during the spring 2012 semester alongside the testing vendor to create a placement instrument aligned with the student learning outcomes and content for the new courses. The redesigned developmental English structure will be implemented across all 23 VCCS colleges in spring 2013.

In tandem with the curriculum and test development, student information system modifications, financial aid, and other system implications will be evaluated and addressed. Policies, master course file additions, and appropriate prerequisite modifications will be reviewed and necessary changes will be addressed through existing VCCS structures.

Accountability for achieving the recommendations will be facilitated and monitored by the Vice Chancellor for Academic Services and Research. A progress report on the recommendations will be presented to the Academic and Student Affairs Council at its regular business meetings.

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