



California Acceleration Project

Supporting California's 112 Community Colleges to Redesign their English and Math Curricula and Increase Student Completion

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Accelerated English at Chabot College:

A Synthesis of Key Findings

By Katie Hern, Ed.D.

*English Instructor, Chabot College
Director, California Acceleration Project*

khern@chabotcollege.edu



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Abstract

This report synthesizes the findings of several inquiries into Chabot College's accelerated developmental English course – a 4-unit, integrated reading and writing class one level below college English, with no minimum placement score.

Included inside:

- A description of the structure and philosophy of Chabot's English curriculum;
- Over a decade of data showing that students from the accelerated course complete college English at significantly higher rates than students enrolling in Chabot's two-semester developmental sequence;
- Disaggregated data showing that all ethnic groups have lower English 1A completion rates in the longer sequence, with African-American and Hispanic students faring the worst on the slower path;
- A demonstration that the difference in outcomes between accelerated and non-accelerated students can be explained by the length of the sequence and the number of "exit points" in students' path;
- Data showing that once they enroll in college English, accelerated students do just as well as – even slightly better than – students from the longer path;
- Data showing that success in the accelerated course is correlated with higher pass rates across the curriculum;
- A history of Chabot's course offerings, which shows that the accelerated course has become the primary pathway for developmental students;
- Data showing that as more students are channeled into the accelerated course, pass rates have remained strong and students overwhelmingly report that the class is a good fit for them;
- Data showing that even students with the lowest Accuplacer scores do at least as well in the accelerated course as they do in the longer sequence.

The report closes with a discussion of implications for developmental education, arguing for reform of the widespread practice of tracking students into 2, 3, 4 or more remedial courses in reading and writing.

Chabot College English Curriculum

Structure

Students who do not meet the minimum Accuplacer scores for college-level English¹ can self-place into either of two options for developmental English:

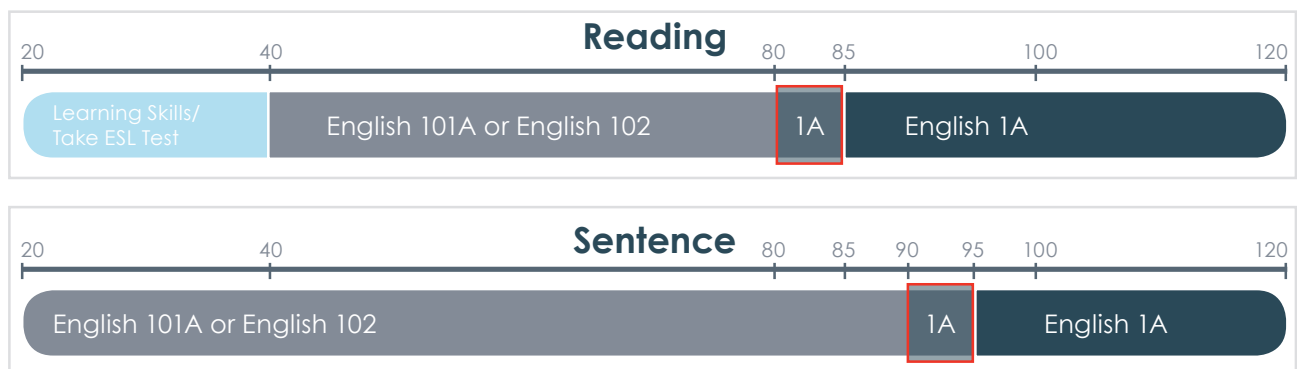
- A one-semester accelerated course that leads directly to college English (English 102, 4 units)
- A two-semester non-accelerated sequence (English 101A-101B, 8 units)

Both the accelerated course and the two-levels-below transfer course are open-access with no minimum placement score required.

There are no separate reading courses at Chabot College. All levels of English integrate instruction in reading, reasoning, and writing. In addition to the English sequence, there are also ESL classes (ESL 110A-110D) and courses targeted to students with learning disabilities (Eng 116-118). Students can voluntarily choose these courses, and/or may be directed to them by earning very low scores on the Accuplacer reading test. However, they are not blocked from enrolling directly in either developmental English option.

All composition classes at Chabot have a class size of 27 students. A full teaching load for English faculty is 3 developmental classes per semester, or 4 transfer-level classes.

¹ Chabot College Accuplacer Scoring Scales:



Students are placed into developmental English courses if either of their two test scores is below the cut score for English 1A. Students in the grey zone can choose the accelerated course or the two-semester sequence. Red zones indicate borderline areas where students can be advanced to college-level (English 1A) with certain multiple measures (e.g. high school GPA, 4 years high school English). Students scoring in the blue zone are referred to the ESL test or a class that assesses them for learning disabilities, but they are not blocked from enrolling in the accelerated or non-accelerated developmental classes.

Program Learning Goals & Philosophy

Throughout the sequence of developmental and transfer-level English courses, students develop increasing mastery in college-level academic literacy, specifically the ability to:

- Independently read & understand complex academic texts
- Critically respond to the ideas and information in those texts
- Write essays integrating ideas and information from those texts

Chabot's curriculum is grounded in the belief that what under-prepared students need to be ready for college is practice in the same kinds of reading, thinking and writing that a good college-level course requires, with more guidance and support. All developmental classes are graded Pass/No Pass.

Students read full-length books, primarily non-fiction, and write analytic essays integrating ideas and information from what they've read. The shorthand for this approach: "English 1A at all levels." This philosophy guides both the accelerated and non-accelerated paths.



For more information on the Chabot English curriculum:

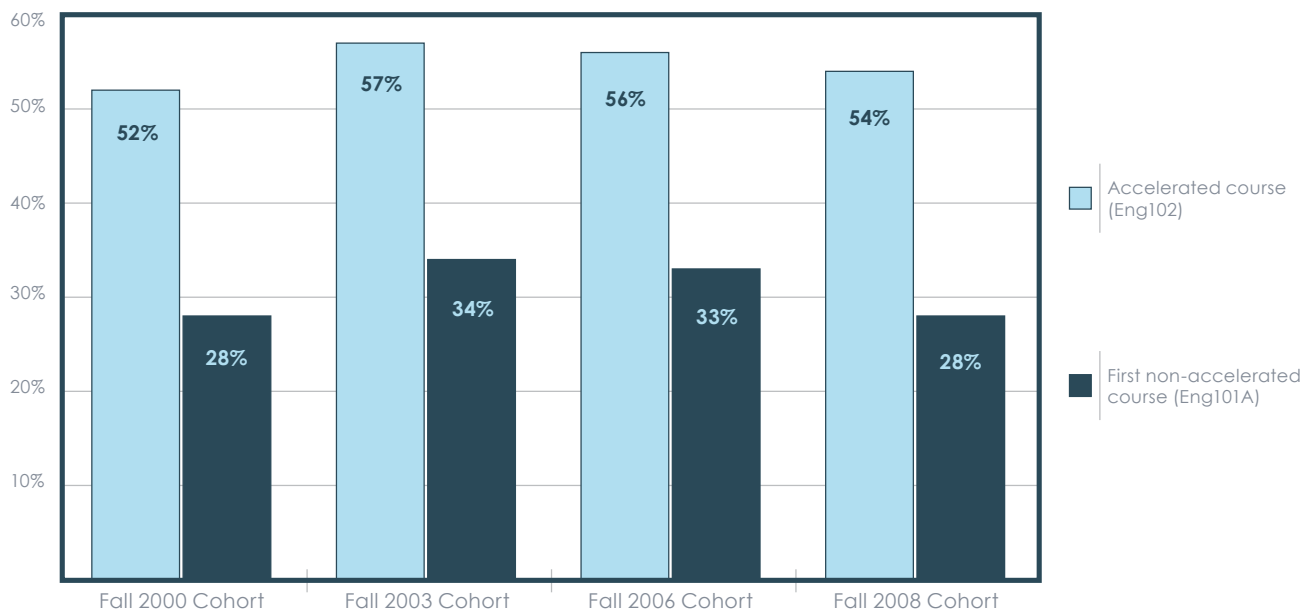
<http://www.chabotcollege.edu/languagearts/english/philosophycorecourse.asp>



How many developmental students go on to complete college English?

Over the last decade, accelerated students have completed college English at significantly higher rates than students who start in the longer sequence.

Completion of English 1A within 3 Years



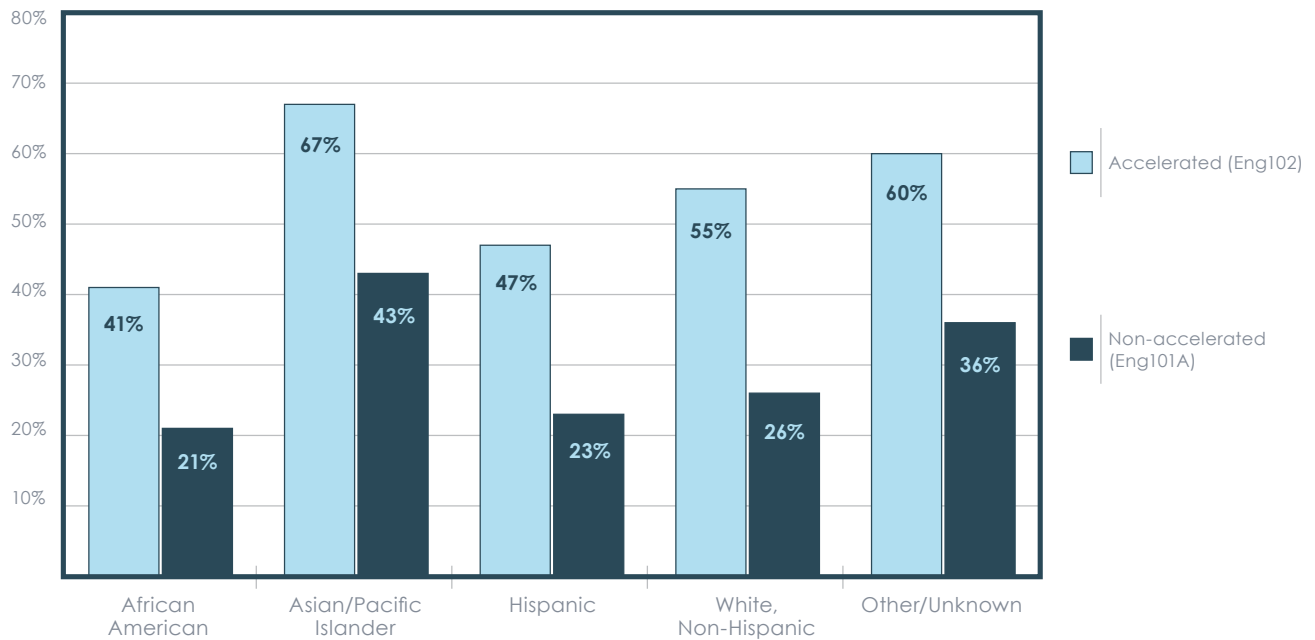
N = 1,605 accelerated students; 1,996 non-accelerated students. ²

² Unless otherwise noted, all data in this report comes from the [Basic Skills Progress Tracker, Data Mart](#), California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office. Students are followed for three years from their first enrollment in a basic skills English course (English 101A or 102) and tracked for all subsequent enrollments in English, including repeats.

How do completion rates vary by ethnicity?

All groups have lower completion rates in the longer sequence, but some groups fare worse than others.

Completion of English 1A within 3 Years | Fall 2006 & Fall 2008 Cohorts Combined



N = 970 accelerated students, 915 non-accelerated.

Why do accelerated students complete college English at consistently higher rates?

Two-Semester Developmental Sequence

Starting two levels below transfer, students face 5 exit points where they can fall away before completing the college course:

Fall '06 Cohort

1) Do they pass the first course?	66%
2) If they pass, do they enroll in the next course?	93%
3) If they enroll, do they pass the second course?	75%
4) If they pass, do they enroll in the college-level course?	91%
5) If they enroll, do they pass the college-level course?	78%

The 1A completion rate is calculated by multiplying the above percentages together:

$$(.66)(.93)(.75)(.91)(.78) = 33\% \text{ complete college English from two levels below}$$

One-Semester Accelerated Course

In the accelerated path, students face only three exit points before completing the college course:

Fall '06 Cohort

1) Do they pass the first course?	74%
2) If they pass, do they enroll in the college-level course?	90%
3) If they enroll, do they pass the college-level course?	85%

$$(.74)(.90)(.85) = 57\% \text{ complete college English from accelerated course}$$

The Structural Inevitability of Attrition in Longer Sequences

Even with very high pass rates in the first non-accelerated course, we would see little improvement in the completion rate for college English:

$$(.90)(.93)(.75)(.91)(.78) = 45\% \text{ would hypothetically complete English 1A}$$

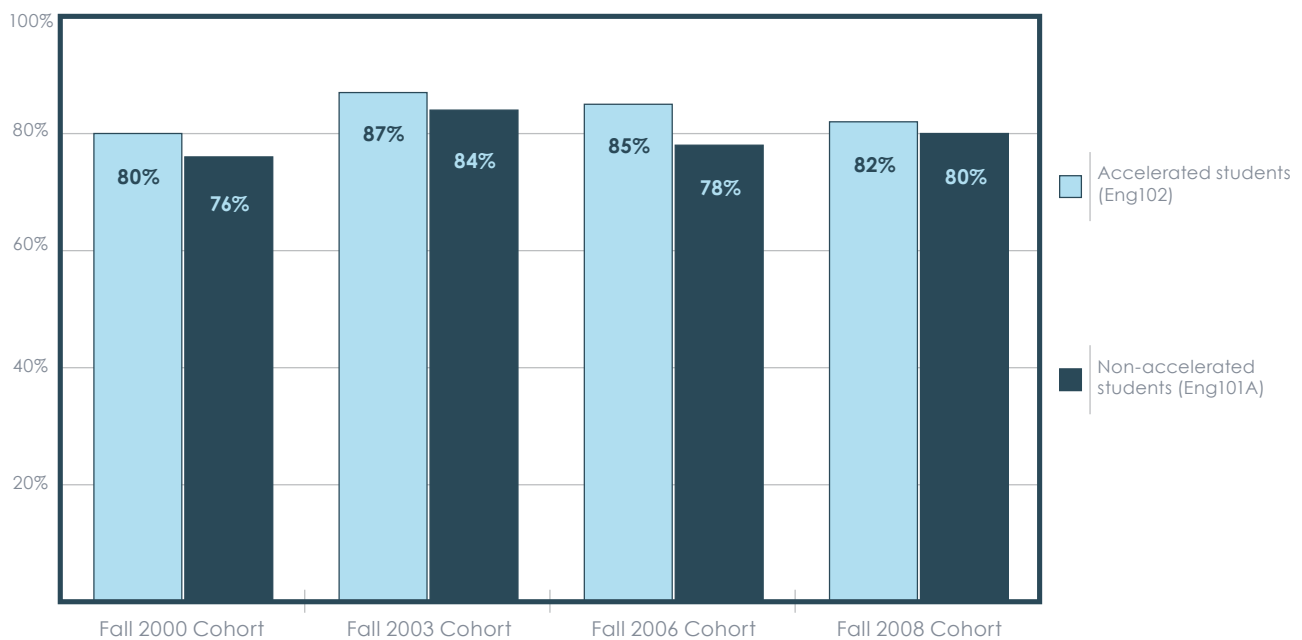
if the success rate in the first course increased from 66% to 90%³

³Exit point analysis developed by Myra Snell and Katie Hern. Cohort data tracks students who first enrolled in a basic skills English class at Chabot in Fall 2006, following them for all subsequent enrollments in English over three years. Pass rates include students who passed on first attempt and those passing on a repeated attempt. N= 428 accelerated students, 445 non-accelerated.

How do accelerated students perform when they go on to college-level English?

In addition to reaching college English at significantly higher rates, accelerated students do just as well inside the course as students from the longer sequence. In fact, they slightly out-perform the non-accelerated students.

Success Rates inside College English (Eng 1A)



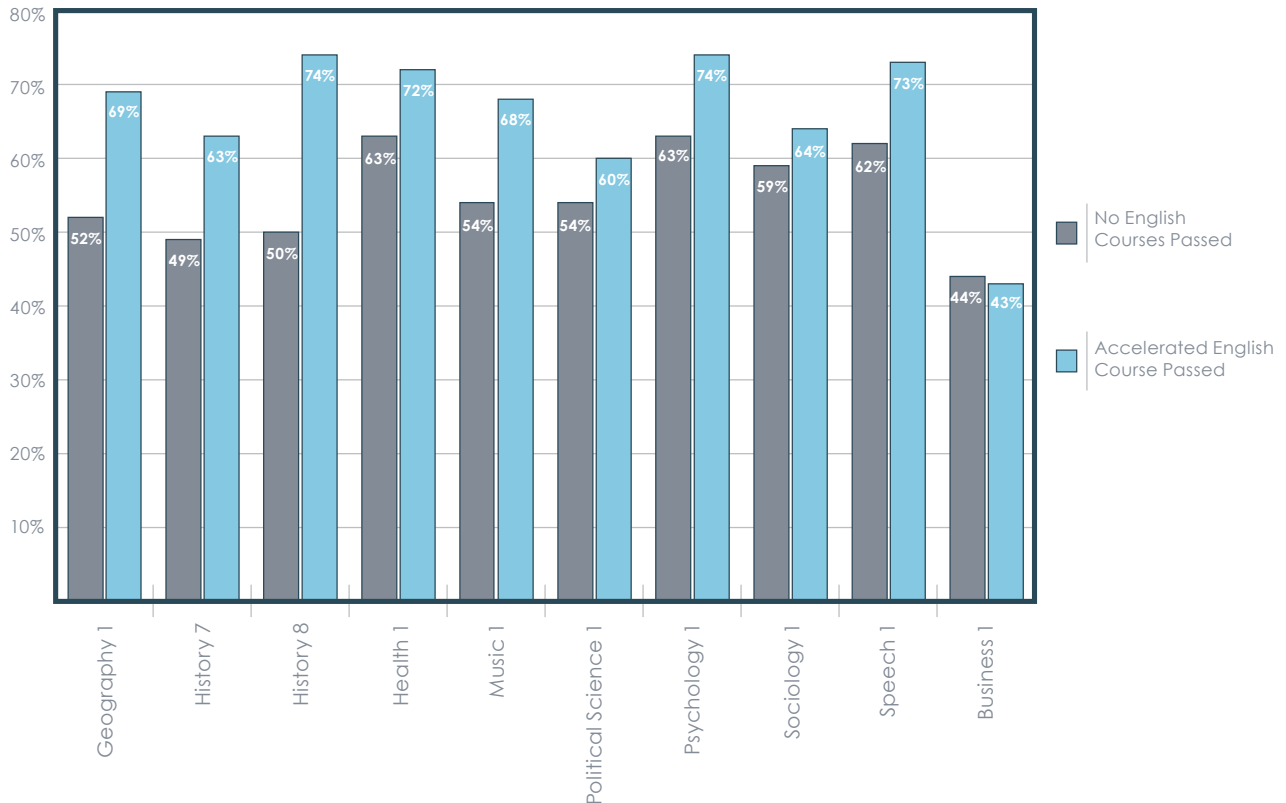
Success = Grades of A, B, C, and CR.

N= 1,058 accelerated students enrolling in English 1A, 772 non-accelerated students.

How do accelerated students perform in other classes?

Success in the accelerated course is correlated with higher pass rates in 9 out of 10 general education courses across the curriculum, compared with students who have passed no English courses.

Success in High-Enrollment General Education Courses Fall 2007 - Summer 2009



Success = Grades of A, B, C, and CR.

N = 1,698 students who had passed accelerated English, 17,033 students who had passed no English.

(None of the above courses have English pre-requisites.) ⁴

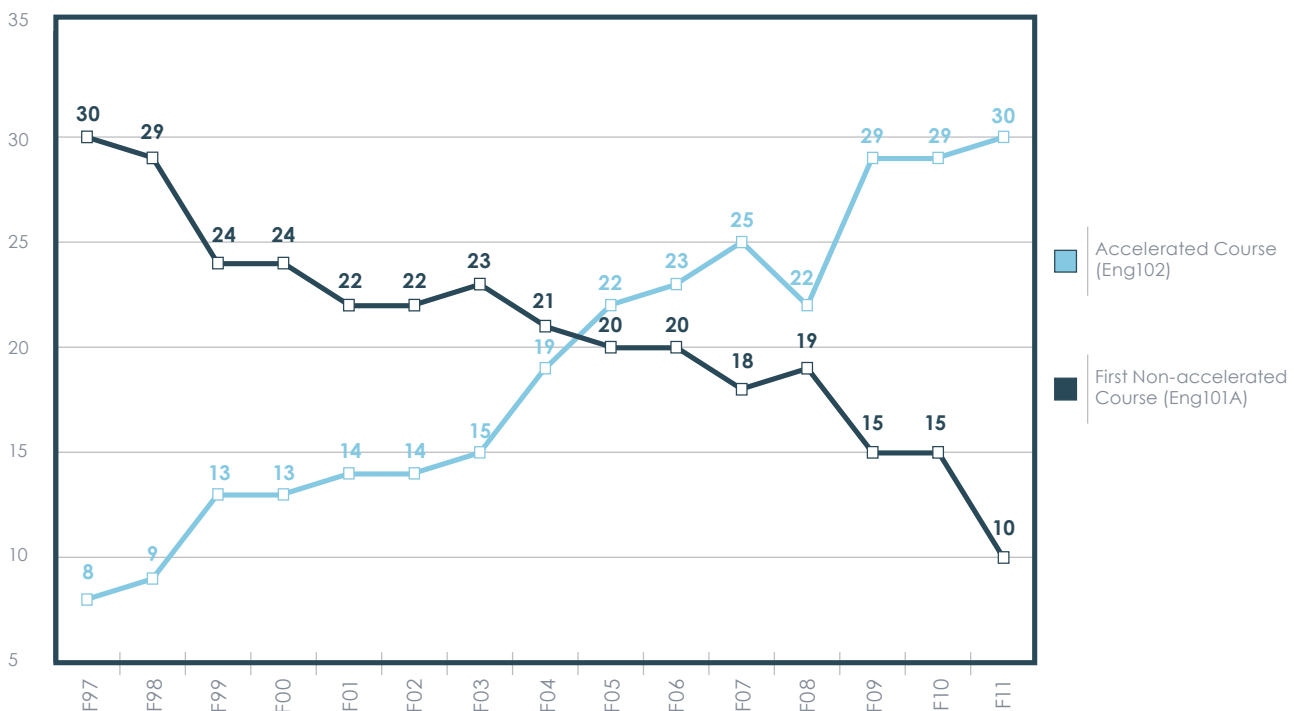
⁴ Hern, K., Arnold, C. & Samra, R. (November 2009). Student Success and Persistence in Accelerated Developmental English. Hayward, CA: Chabot College.

How many sections of the accelerated course are offered?

For years, the majority of Chabot developmental students were channeled into the non-accelerated sequence (Eng 101A-B). However, since Fall 2005, the accelerated course has been the pathway for a majority of developmental students, with the proportion of sections increasing significantly in 2009.

Early on, the accelerated course was offered primarily inside learning communities with additional support built in. (In Fall 1997, 5 of the 8 accelerated sections were embedded in learning communities.) However, most accelerated sections are now offered as regular stand-alone classes. (7 of the 29 sections offered in Fall 2010 were part of learning communities.)⁵

of developmental English sections offered



⁵Hern, K. & Samra, R. (April 2011). History of course offerings at Chabot College. Accelerated Developmental English: A High-Leverage Strategy for Increasing Student Success in College-Level Coursework. Presentation by George Railey, Katie Hern, & Patricia Shannon. Annual Meeting of Title 3 and 5 Project Directors. Washington, D.C.

As more students are channeled into the accelerated course, how are they handling its academic demands?

In Fall 2010, Chabot offered more sections of the accelerated course than ever before: the course constituted 66% of entry-level developmental sections. Data from that term suggest that students are doing well with the demands of the course.

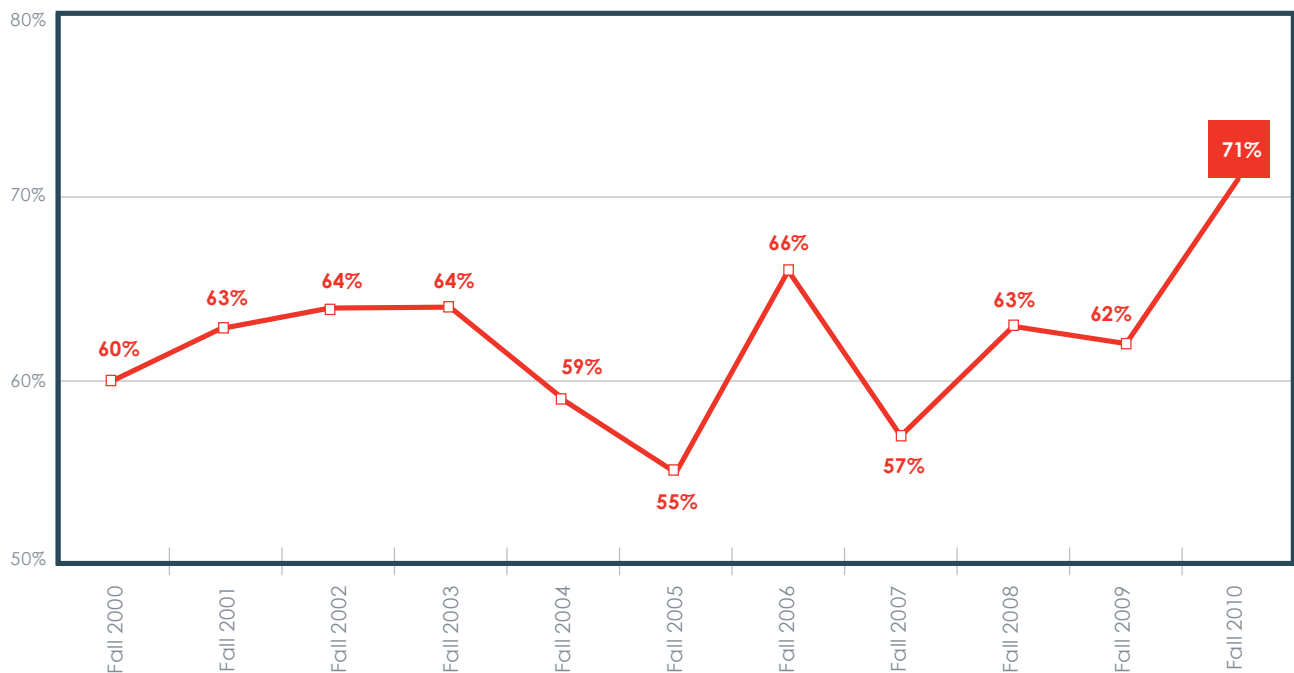
Student Survey Fall 2010

A mid-semester survey of all sections of English 102 and 101A asked students if they felt they had made the right choice when selecting the accelerated/non-accelerated option:

- 85% of accelerated students said they had chosen the right course.
- Of the 15% who responded “No” or “Not Sure,” the most common reason students gave was that they felt it was too easy and that the college-level course would have been better for them. ⁶

Accelerated Course Pass Rates

In Fall 2010, the average pass rate across all accelerated sections reached its highest point in ten years. ⁷



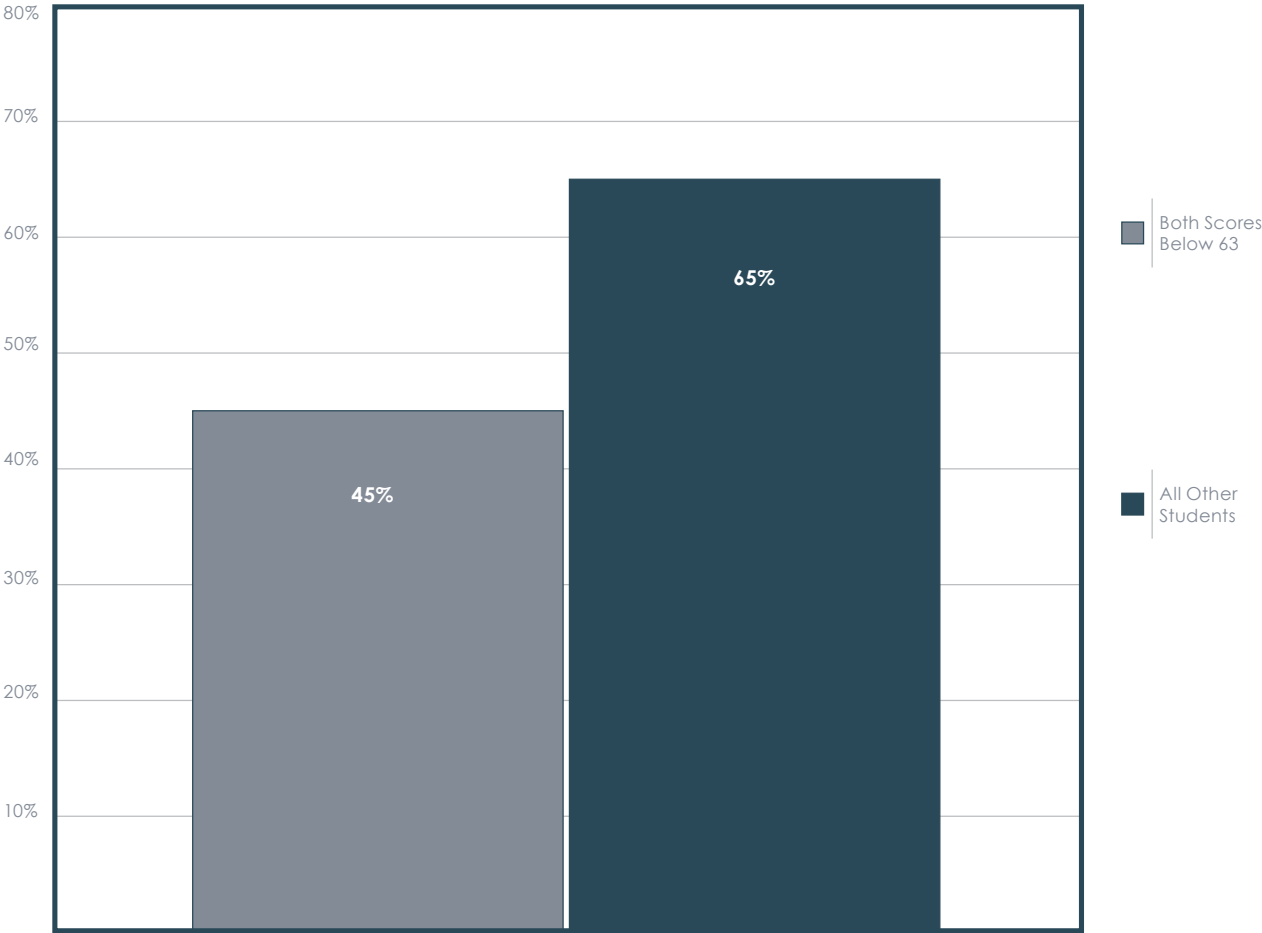
⁶ Hern, K. & Foth, H. (March 2011). Why do students choose English 101A and 102? And Do They Feel They Made the Right Choice? Findings from a Survey of English 101A and 102 Students Fall 2010. Hayward, CA: Chabot College.

⁷ Chabot College Office of Institutional Research. 2011 Environmental Scan Presentation. <http://www.chabotcollege.edu/IR/Environmentalscan.asp>

How do low-scoring students perform in the accelerated class?

Students scoring in the bottom 20% of Chabot Accuplacer scores have much lower pass rates in the accelerated course than students with higher scores.

Pass Rates in Accelerated Course by Accuplacer Score



Bottom 20% = Students scoring below 63 on both Accuplacer tests (reading, sentence skills)
N = 2,716 students enrolled in accelerated course Spring '06-Fall '09

Do low-scoring students perform better in the slower path?

While these students have lower pass rates in the accelerated course than other students, they are not more successful in the first course of the longer sequence.

	Pass Rate in Accelerated Course (Eng 102)	Pass Rate in First Non-Accelerated Course (Eng 101A)
Students Scoring in Bottom 20%	45%	46%
Students Scoring in Bottom 7%	48%	45%

Bottom 20%: Students scoring below 63 on both Accuplacer tests (Reading, Sentence Skills)

N = 401 accelerated, 556 non-accelerated students, Spring '06-Fall '09

Bottom 7%: Students scoring below 50 on both Accuplacer tests (Reading, Sentence Skills)

N = 126 accelerated, 205 non-accelerated students, Spring '06-Fall '09⁸

⁸Hern, K. with Snell, M. (2010). Analysis of Accuplacer Scores and Student Performance in Accelerated and Non-Accelerated Paths. Presented at 8 regional workshops throughout California in 2010-11. California Community Colleges' Success Network (3CSN).

Implications for Developmental Education in English/Reading

Taken together, the long-term outcomes of Chabot's accelerated class make a strong case for reforming the current system of developmental education, in which standardized placement tests are used to track students into 2, 3, 4 or more remedial courses in reading and writing. The Chabot data make clear that when students take just one additional developmental level, their completion rates in college English are consistently and substantially lower.

At community colleges nationwide, many of Chabot's accelerated students would be blocked from even enrolling in a course one-level-below college English. But because Chabot's course has no minimum placement score, students from the full range of scores have been able to demonstrate that they can handle the academic demands of this level.

It is especially noteworthy that as Chabot has shifted its offerings so that a majority of students are now channeled into the accelerated path, student outcome data have remained strong. Pass rates inside the accelerated course are steady, students overwhelmingly report that the course is a good fit for them, and English 1A completion rates remain substantially higher among accelerated students than students from the longer sequence.

The accelerated course appears to be a positive option even for students scoring at the very bottom of the Accuplacer scale. While these students have lower pass rates than higher-scoring students, they do not have better outcomes on the longer path. These data – combined with the analysis showing the impact of exit points on completion rates – undermine the traditional assumption that weaker students will be better served by multiple semesters of remediation. Instead of tracking this high-risk group to the slower path, it might be better to target them for additional, *simultaneous* support in the accelerated course.

Taken together, the outcomes from Chabot's accelerated course point to a number of promising directions for the reform of developmental education. First, they show that an open-access integrated reading and writing course can bring significant, long-term, large-scale gains in student completion of college English. Second, the data suggest that to increase student completion of college-level courses, community colleges should reduce the length of their remedial pathways and eliminate the exit points where students are lost. Finally, the data on low-scoring students suggest a new possibility in the area of placement: rather than using placement tests to track students into multiple levels of remediation, colleges might use low test scores to identify high-risk students and target them for additional, simultaneous support in accelerated or college-level courses.



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