

February 2012

JOHN W. GARDNER CENTER for Youth and Their Communities

English Articulation Between the San Francisco Unified School District and the City College of San Francisco

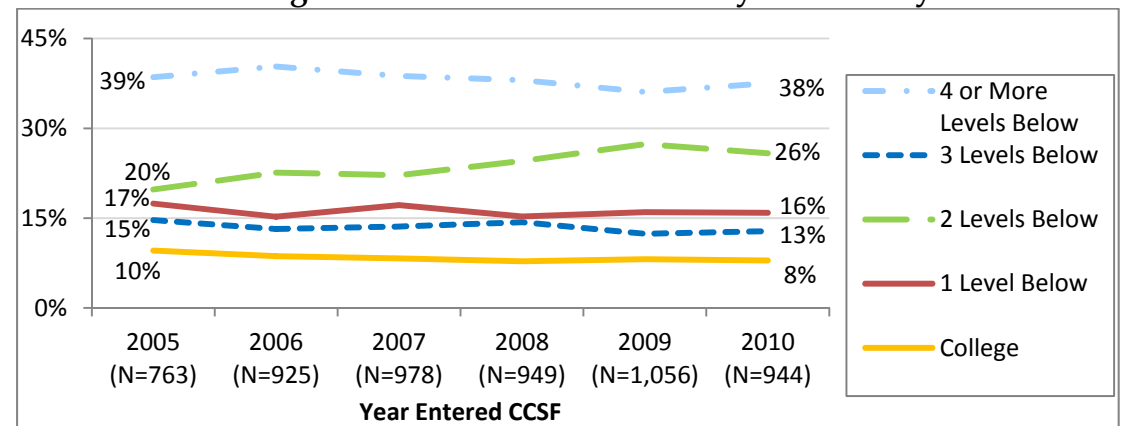
Background

San Francisco's Bridge to Success (BtS) initiative brings together the City and County of San Francisco, the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD), the City College of San Francisco (CCSF), and key community organizations to promote postsecondary success for underrepresented students. At the request of BtS leadership and the SFUSD-CCSF English teaching team, the John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities (JGC) at Stanford University used its Youth Data Archive (YDA) to examine the relationship between students' high school English performance at SFUSD and their performance on CCSF's English placement test for incoming students.

Placement Test Results for SFUSD Graduates Attending CCSF

CCSF's English department uses an internally developed placement test that assigns students to a set of placement categories ranging from college-level English to eight levels, or semesters, below college-level English. Exhibit 1 shows that just 8% of SFUSD's four-year graduates placed into college-level English in 2009-10. English placement varied significantly by student ethnicity: among non-English learners, 23% of White students placed into college-level English at CCSF, compared to 13% of Chinese students and 4% of African-American, Filipino, and Latino students.

Exhibit 1. CCSF English Placement Test Results by CCSF Entry Year



Notes: This analysis followed 5,615 students who were enrolled as first-time SFUSD 9th graders in any school year from 2000-01 through 2005-06, entered CCSF from 2004-05 through 2009-10, and took CCSF's English placement test. The Issue Brief version of this report includes a full description of the placement categories and the required English course associated with each placement test result.

Key Findings

Higher performance on commonly used academic achievement measures increased the likelihood of placing into college-level English, but did not guarantee college-level placement:

- High School GPA: Approximately 22% of students who earned a high school English GPA of 3.0 or higher placed directly into college-level English at CCSF.
- California Standards Test (CST) English Language Arts (ELA) Exam: Students who performed well on the 11th grade CST ELA exam also performed well on CCSF's English placement exam; however, the threshold required to place into college-level English at CCSF is much higher than the threshold required to meet state standards on the CST. As a result, 11th grade SFUSD students who placed Proficient or Advanced on the CST, which indicates meeting state standards, only placed into college-level English 12% and 51% of the time, respectively.
- Early Assessment Program (EAP) Exam: About half (52%) of students who were classified as "college ready" on the EAP, an augmented version of the CST ELA that was designed by the California State University system to measure the college-readiness of 11th grade students, placed into college-level English at CCSF.

From Findings to Action

Common measures of high school academic preparation did not consistently predict placement into college-level English. This is a key issue for high school students who rely on GPA and standardized test results to determine whether they are on-track for college-level coursework, and for school districts that use these measures to ensure they are preparing students appropriately. State and local policymakers must work together to identify what standards determine whether a student is prepared for college-level English, whether at CCSF or any postsecondary institution.

Partners in the BtS initiative are engaging in multiple strategies to increase the number of students who place into college-level English and reduce the amount of time students spend in pre-collegiate English coursework. Some activities include: increasing students' understanding of the importance and format of CCSF's placement tests; implementing the Common Core Standards, a voluntary, state-led effort to establish a national set of educational standards for high schools, to better align curriculum between SFUSD and CCSF; and shortening the current CCSF English curriculum sequence. In addition, CCSF's English department is engaging in a pilot that will allow students who were designated as "college ready" on the EAP to place directly into college-level English. CCSF will monitor these students to gauge how well they perform in their English courses. Working together, SFUSD and CCSF are making changes to ensure that all students are given appropriately demanding coursework that prepares them for their futures, while removing institutional barriers that might hinder student progress toward the completion of their postsecondary schooling.