

INTRODUCTION

Washington State's 2004 Master Plan for Higher Education calls for defining college readiness in mathematics, science, English, world languages, social studies and the arts. In 2005, the State Legislature provided funding for the Higher Education Coordinating Board to define college readiness in English and science.

The Need

Even though the majority of Washington's students enroll in a 2- or 4-year state college within a year of graduation, a significant number of students do not score high enough on college placement tests to take credit-bearing coursework without first taking remedial coursework in English and/or mathematics.

A recent analysis of Washington's 2004 high school graduating class by the Social and Economic Sciences Research Center, Washington State University (Puget Sound Division), revealed the following:

- Among the 2004 public high school graduates attending Washington's state universities, community and technical colleges in their first year after graduation, 42 percent enrolled in at least one remedial course (English or math, or both).
- About twice as many recent graduates enroll in remedial math than in remedial English.
- Remedial enrollment is much higher among students at the open-enrollment community and technical colleges (55 percent), compared to the competitive admission universities (13 percent).

Since specific placement tests do not exist for the sciences, college remediation rates are neither known nor reported. In addition, the state has developed Grade Level Expectations (GLEs) through the 11-12th grades in mathematics, but English and science GLEs do not exist beyond the 10th grade. The math GLEs contain thoughtfully constructed learning goals that provide useful guidance for both teachers and learners through the 12th grade. The college readiness attributes and definitions included in this document were constructed by teams of educators in Washington State with that same intent—to provide an essential educational framework so that students will be better prepared for the rigors of college-level learning in the sciences and English (reading, writing, and communications).

The Process of Phase I

In January 2006, Phase I of the English and science college readiness project began by engaging content development teams composed of secondary teachers and college faculty whose charge was to define the skills and knowledge that students need to be prepared for entry-level general education college

coursework. Both teams provided a wide range of experience and expertise in various science and English disciplines (see attached list of team members).

To begin their work, the teams examined a summary of college readiness criteria that have been developed by other states and national organizations. The teams also reviewed state K-10 learning goals, such as those contained in Washington's Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs) and Grade Level Expectations (GLEs). Because GLEs do not exist in English or science beyond tenth grade, the teams set out to develop college readiness documents that would bridge the gap between established secondary learning goals and the competencies students need to be prepared for the rigors of college-level courses.

For the past 11 months, the content teams have been engaged in extensive development, writing, reviewing, and editing of draft documents. Their collective efforts have produced the preliminary college readiness attributes and definitions contained in this document. *Preliminary* is stressed because it is anticipated that these attributes and definitions may be modified after they are piloted in classrooms across the state in a planned Phase II of the project.

The English and science college readiness documents are similar in format to the mathematics standards document that was published in 2006 through the efforts of the Transition Mathematics Project, led by the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges. The adoption of similar formats was to facilitate eventual implementation of college readiness strategies across subject areas after field testing and adequate professional development has taken place.

Like the math project, the English and science college readiness attributes and definitions are intended to articulate the relationship between Washington's K-10 learning standards and the knowledge and skills students need to develop throughout high school, particularly during the last two years of high school.

Finally, in proposing English and science college readiness, the development teams emphasized that the intent is not to add another assessment layer or requirement to the K-12 system. While development of measures to determine whether individual students are "college ready" is viewed as valuable for both teacher and learner, additional statewide testing is considered unnecessary and, perhaps, counterproductive at this time.