

**March 2019**

**SB 446 - Alternative  
Remedial  
Coursework Act  
Frequently Asked  
Questions**

# Frequently Asked Questions

## **What data/sources have informed this piece of legislation?**

The drafting and revising process behind this legislation has incorporated elements from the most effective existing state policies, stakeholder feedback, Illinois-specific data, and evidence from a breadth of research seeking to isolate and examine the impact of developmental education models. Some of the evidence that informed this bill has been compiled and shared in the table at the end of this document.

## **What about accelerated developmental models? Under this bill, can our institution continue to provide this model?**

Yes. Under this bill, institutions that offer one-semester accelerated models of developmental education can continue to offer them. Students who are enrolled in these programs are exempted from the co-requisite model requirement.

## **Our college employs the evidence-based PMGE model and it's working! Can we still place students in a PMGE course?**

Yes. The PMGE model works best for students who need significant help getting up to speed. We recommend employing the PMGE model for the lowest placed student as part of the 25% of students placed into developmental education who are not enrolled in co-requisite support, as accelerated models like PMGE have shown evidence of success at all student levels relative to traditional developmental education models.<sup>1</sup>

## **Some of our programs only require an Intermediate Algebra course as a prerequisite, without additional college-level math. Will we have to add additional credit hours to those students' degree program to comply with this bill?**

No. Co-requisite models are required only for degree programs that include college-level math and English requirements.

## **Community colleges are following ICCB's placement recommendations. Why do we need legislation?**

The state has taken several steps toward improving developmental education. Most recently, the Illinois Council of Community College Presidents recommended measures for placement for use at all Illinois community colleges. All 48 community colleges have agreed to implement

---

<sup>1</sup> Jaggars, Shanna Smith; Hodara, Michelle; Cho, Sung-Woo; Xu, Di, "Three Accelerated Developmental Education Programs: Features, Student Outcomes, and Implications", Community College Review, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0091552114551752>, February, 15, 2019.

these recommendations. Under ICCB's recommendations, institutions can choose among a list of 11 measures to assess a student's course placement, one of which is high school GPA. Similar to SB 446, ICCB recommends each measure be used on its own; however, colleges do not need to use all recommended measures, and despite evidence that high school GPA is the best stand-alone predictor of college-course performance, no college is required to use high school GPA in their placement decisions.

This bill takes ICCB's recommendations a step further by requiring colleges and universities to employ multiple measures, including high school GPA, successful completion of a transitional math course, ACT or SAT scores, prior credit accumulation, and previous developmental course completion as stand-alone measures for course placement. Additionally, this bill discourages the use of placement exams--which are better predictors of performance on a future placement exam than of future course performance--by including it as a last-measure for placement.

### **Colleges and universities across the state are already implementing co-requisite support models. Why do we need legislation?**

The Illinois Board of Higher Education, Illinois Community College Board, and Illinois State Board of Education have committed to increasing the number of co-requisite support programs offered in the state. Eight institutions participated in a Complete College America pilot program, and many institutions throughout the state are implementing or piloting developmental education reforms at various levels.

These reforms have resulted in hundreds of additional students completing college-level coursework in math and English. However, they are not being implemented at the scale necessary to significantly improve student outcomes at every public institution in the state. Absent full scale, there will be tens of thousands of students every year languishing in developmental coursework who could be better served by co-requisite supports.

### **What does it mean to “maximize the probability that a student will enter and successfully complete college-level coursework?” How is that defined and measured?**

Under SB 446, colleges and universities must maximize the probability that a student will enter and successfully complete college-level coursework in both English and mathematics within the student's first two semesters. That means that colleges need to put structures in place that ensure that students can engage in a course schedule that supports completion of college-level English and mathematics in two semesters. New placement policies will place a majority of students directly into college-level courses, but any students who are not must have access to a course schedule that allows them the best opportunity to complete college-level coursework in two semesters.

The State's education agencies have been tasked with the implementation, oversight and evaluation of this Act and will determine what data is necessary to validate whether an institution's placement measures are in compliance with the requirements of the bill. In the interim, colleges should locally evaluate their current placement practices, examine the default placement rules, conduct research, and design protocols that maximize student success.

### **What about students who need significant catching up? Won't placing them in college-level courses lower their chance of success?**

While some studies have shown that students at all college placement test-assessed levels of readiness were more likely to pass college-level courses if placed in co-requisite models than those in developmental education, we recognize that not all students who matriculate into college are prepared for college-level courses. At full scale, this bill allows for 25% of a college or university's developmental education-placed students to be placed in a model other than co-requisite support. For the students who need the most support, an institution could place the student in a PMGE course or one-level developmental education course, for example. The goal is that all students have the best opportunity to complete college-level coursework in two academic semesters.

### **How can we accept self-reported GPA? Won't students lie to get into college-level courses?**

First, this legislation stipulates that self-reported GPA would be accepted in the limited circumstances when transcript data is "difficult to obtain," "not available," or "problematic to use." That said, studies show that students self-report GPA with high levels of accuracy, with one ACT study showing almost no difference between the average reported and actual GPAs for all of the GPA ranges that would likely be relevant for this legislation.<sup>2</sup>

### **Shouldn't we wait to see how the new transitional math model at our state's high schools plays out before legislating more developmental education reforms?**

In 2016, the Illinois General Assembly passed the Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness Act (PWR Act), a comprehensive bill bridging K-12 and postsecondary institutions, including four strategies aimed at helping students become college and career ready. It approaches the developmental education crisis from a K-12 angle through transitional math.

In high schools where transitional math is being implemented, high schools evaluate students' math proficiency during junior year. Students who are identified as college-ready can decide whether they want to take a math course during senior year. Students who aren't ready can choose from three types of transitional math courses for 12th grade and the content of each course corresponds to the student's career pathway of interest (STEM, statistics, or technical math).

---

<sup>2</sup> Sanchez, Edgar, and Richard Buddin. How Accurate Are Self-Reported High School Courses, Course Grades, and Grade Point Average. Report. 2016. Accessed February 15, 2019. <https://www.act.org/content/dam/act/unsecured/documents/5269-research-report-how-accurate-are-self-reported-hs-courses.pdf>.

If the student successfully passes the course, the student can enroll directly in college-level coursework at a community college and bypass remediation. If successful, transitional math will decrease the number of Illinois' high school graduates who are placed in remediation.

While transitional math and English is a great pathway to college-level coursework for our state's high school students, it's not currently implemented at scale, and won't decrease the number of adult returning students who are placed into developmental education. Transitional math coupled with multiple measures for placement and co-requisite supports will result in fewer students enrolled in developmental education and higher course passage rates for students who need additional support.

### **For students that have math anxiety, couldn't they benefit from longer course sequences to get them up to speed and build the confidence they need to succeed in college-level math?**

Research indicates that slowing down the process of working toward a degree may introduce additional barriers toward completion that outweigh perceived benefits and that students may be better served by accelerated and co-requisite delivery of supports.<sup>3</sup> Further, semester limits on financial aid and additional time requirements may discourage some students from pursuing degrees altogether.

### **Won't this bill discourage some students from pursuing a STEM degree?**

This bill is designed to give students college-level math and English options and the support needed to pass them, while recognizing the different preparation levels needed to succeed in different pathways. Research-based GPA placement recommendations sometimes set a higher cut score for the Calculus and Pre-Calculus classes that lead to STEM degrees, and the IBHE and ICCB may choose to differentiate based on the type of course.<sup>4</sup> STEM achievement, however, is an equity issue as well, and this legislation does not support counseling a student who seeks to earn a STEM degree into deciding on a less rigorous path; an institution should maximize students' probability of taking and earning college-level credit in two semesters, while recognizing their educational goals.

---

<sup>3</sup> Bailey, Thomas, Dong Wook Jeong, and Sung-Woo Cho. "Referral, Enrollment, and Completion in Developmental Education Sequences in Community Colleges." *Economics of Education Review*, Special Issue in Honor of Henry M. Levin, 29, no. 2 (April 1, 2010): 255–70. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2009.09.002>; Xu, Di, and Mina Dadgar. "How Effective Are Community College Remedial Math Courses for Students With the Lowest Math Skills?" *Community College Review* 46, no. 1 (January 1, 2018): 62–81. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0091552117743789>.

<sup>4</sup> MMAP Research Team, *Multiple Measures High School Variables Model Summary - Phase II. Report*. 2017. Accessed February, 15, 2019. [http://rpgroup.org/Portals/0/Documents/Projects/MultipleMeasures/DecisionRulesandAnalysisCode/Statewide-Decision-Rules-5\\_18\\_16\\_1.pdf](http://rpgroup.org/Portals/0/Documents/Projects/MultipleMeasures/DecisionRulesandAnalysisCode/Statewide-Decision-Rules-5_18_16_1.pdf)

## **This bill doesn't address the under-performance of students coming from our state's high schools. What is the state doing about that?**

There are many efforts in the state aimed at getting our high school students college and career ready. One example is the Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness Act, which offers four strategies to better prepare students for college and career, including transitional math and English.

In high schools where transitional math is being implemented, high schools evaluate students' math proficiency during junior year. Students who are identified as college-ready can decide whether they want to take a math course during senior year. Students who aren't ready can choose from three types of transitional math courses for 12th grade and the content of each course corresponds to the student's career pathway of interest (STEM, statistics, or technical math). If the student successfully passes the course, the student can enroll directly in college-level coursework at a community college and bypass remediation. If successful, transitional math will decrease the number of Illinois' high school graduates who are placed in remediation at our public institutions.

Other ongoing reform efforts at the K-12 level include increased access to dual credit, a new equity-based funding formula, and an increasing number of high school and postsecondary partnerships.

While there are a number of efforts aimed at improving college-readiness among our state's high school students, there are fewer statewide initiatives at the postsecondary level. Even with a well-functioning K-12 system, current placement and developmental education delivery practices will result in students being over-placed in developmental education and many students not progressing to degree. SB 446 meets students where they are by more accurately placing students into college-level coursework and scaling differentiated supports to students who need them.

## **Doesn't the difference in high school characteristics affect the validity of high school GPA as a stand-alone measure?**

Though this sentiment is commonly expressed, research from the University of Chicago's Consortium of School Research considers this "one of the most pervasive myths in secondary education," and counters it with CPS data on the similarities of GPA across high schools for students with similar ACT scores.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> Roderick, Melissa, Matthew Holsapple, Kallie Clark, and Thomas Kelley-Kemple. "From High School to the Future: Delivering on the Dream of College Graduation," n.d., 51.

## **Much of the research cited here on placement accuracy discusses Accuplacer or COMPASS tests, and we use ALEKS. Isn't ALEKS more predictive of college performance?**

There has been a decade of research and pilots that support the predictive power of GPA and high school coursework-based multiple measures, and how using these can lead to more students enrolling and completing in college-level coursework.<sup>6</sup> ALEKS is relatively new as a placement measure, and initial judgment on its effectiveness are based largely on case-studies, some of which claim success and others which show it to be less predictive than GPA.<sup>7</sup> Of the 11 Illinois community colleges that are implementing ALEKS, 6 have different cut scores for the same course levels, which raises questions about how useful any predictive test can be if its results are interpreted differently by each college.

Beyond its predictive power, however, a placement test itself can be a barrier to college enrollment. This may be especially true if these tests have high stakes and need to be taken more than once, two concerns listed under the ALEKS effective placement guidelines.<sup>8</sup> Holding off on proven placement methods in favor of newer ones keep onerous processes for students in place without a body of research that shows them to be more effective for placement.

## **Aren't equity issues for community colleges reflecting those of prior education levels, not increasing them?**

The placement percentages by race and Pell status are staggering: Black, Latino, and Pell-eligible students are far more likely to be placed into developmental education courses and far less likely to complete their degree once placed into these courses. While inequities in education and preparedness do not start in college, implementing evidence-based methods for helping students overcome those inequities and succeed in college are necessary to improve these issues; to better achieve equity in education, each level of education must take responsibility for helping to close gaps. Better placing students and scaling co-requisite models across Illinois are evidence-based, equity-improving policies.

---

6 "PilotCollegeResults2017Final.Pdf" Dropbox. Accessed February 15, 2019. <https://www.dropbox.com/s/z479z2ii8rb7jdv/PilotCollegeResults2017Final.pdf?dl=0>.

7 Mourad, Roger, Wccnet Edu, Lan Nguyen, and Wccnet Edu. "Analysis of ALEKS Placement Test," n.d., 28; Ahlgren, Alison, and Marc Harper. "Assessment and Placement through Calculus I at the University of Illinois," n.d., 2.

8 "Math Placement." Accessed February 15, 2019. <https://www.aleks.com/highered/ppl>.

# Table of Sources

Co-Requisite Remediation			
Type	Title	Author (s)/Source	Conclusion
Report	Should Students Assessed as Needing Remedial Mathematics Take College-Level Quantitative Courses Instead? A Randomized Controlled Trial	Logue, Watanabe-Rose, Douglas	Positive effects of co-requisite model in CUNY compared to traditional developmental education courses
Report	Spanning the College Divide	Complete College America	In Illinois, 7,500 and 4,600 additional students each year could pass gateway math and English courses, respectively if co-requisite model scaled statewide
Report	The Extensive Evidence of Co-Requisite Remediation's Effectiveness	Alexandra W. Logue, Inside Higher Ed	Summation of RCT from CUNY and field of evidence to support scaling co-requisite
Report	Understanding and Interpreting the AB 705 Adjustments	Hayward, Hetts, Newell, Rutan, Willett, The RP Group	In California's model, for no student who was highly unlikely to succeed at transfer level was likelihood of completion of transfer-level courses maximized by traditional developmental education
Report	Co-Requisite Models in Illinois	ICCB	IL CCA co-req pilot info and preliminary outcome data. At SIUE/C the mean score of the co-req class was slightly higher than the standard college algebra students. At SIUE success rates went from 36% in two semesters to 58% in one
Report	Design Principles for Corequisite Mathematics	TACC	Explores corequisite models for TX colleges and universities in response to state legislative change (HB 2223)
Report	Co-requisite remediation pilot study and full implementation	Tennessee Board of Regents	After the first semester of statewide, full-scale implementation of co-requisite support in TN, completion of college-level courses doubled in English and quadrupled in math in half the time of traditional remediation

### Over-placement in developmental education

Type	Title	Author (s)/Source	Conclusion
Report	2009-11 High School to College Success Report	The ACT	2.75 GPA average among all students who placed into dev ed in Illinois
Data	Fall 2013/2014 Student Advancement and Graduation	ICCB	IFY2013 and FY2014 Cohorts, Advancement and Graduation numbers by Race and Pell Status
Data	FY16-18 Statewide Remedial by Race and Ethnicity	ICCB	FY2016-2018, Dev Ed enrollment by Race and Pell
Report	Investigating developmental and college-level course enrollment and passing before and after Florida's developmental education reform	National Center for Education Evaluation	Despite sudden implementation, SB 1720 greatly increased the numbers of students in Florida finishing gateway courses -- gains largest for Hispanic and Black students -- fewer students enrolling in dev ed -- more students enrolling in credit-bearing courses
Report	Do High-Stakes Placement Exams Predict College Success?	CCRC	Shows that 25%+ of students placed in Dev Ed could pass gateway course -- and shows "severe error rate" risk with placement test
Report	Improving Developmental Education Assessment and Placement: Lessons From Community Colleges Across the Country	CCRC	ACT is not as predictive as GPA
Report	How Accurate Are Self-Reported High School Courses, Course Grades, and Grade Point Average?	ACT	High school measures like GPA are accurate to self-report
Data	Data from IL HS students being referred to dev ed	ISBE	46% of HS CC students enrolled in dev ed, only declining 1% per year
Report	Improving the Accuracy of Remedial Placement	CCRC	Nationally, 68% of CC students take one developmental education course

Type	Title	Author (s)/Source	Conclusion
Report	From High School to the Future: Delivering on the Dream of College Graduation	Consortium of School Research	Recent research indicates that grades across CPS high schools are fairly consistent for students of similar test-scores. Students with ACT scores of 25 and higher see less than a half-point difference in GPA between the lowest- and highest-performing schools in the district. Similarly, students with ACT scores between 18 and 24 see a GPA difference of about 0.7 grade points between the lowest- and highest-performing schools in the district
Report	Remedial Education Reforms at California's Community Colleges	The RP Group	Even without any additional supports or course redesigns, the lowest performing high school students would have been more likely to complete transfer-level English, statistics, or pre-calculus if placed directly into these courses as compared to taking below transfer-level remediation.
Data	FY16-18 Statewide Remedial by Race and Ethnicity	ICCB	FY2016-2018, Dev Ed enrollment by Race and Pell
Report	Investigating developmental and college-level course enrollment and passing before and after Florida's developmental education reform	National Center for Education Evaluation	Despite sudden implementation, SB 1720 greatly increased the numbers of students in Florida finishing gateway courses -- gains largest for Hispanic and Black students -- fewer students enrolling in dev ed -- more students enrolling in credit-bearing courses
Report	Do High-Stakes Placement Exams Predict College Success?	CCRC	Shows that 25%+ of students placed in Dev Ed could pass gateway course -- and shows "severe error rate" risk with placement test



