



# Assessing College Readiness

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# Current Model for Assessing College Readiness

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- ▶ **Current measures**
  - ▶ Teacher-generated grades
  - ▶ Titles of courses taken
  - ▶ SAT/ACT score
  - ▶ Placement test
- ▶ **These are more measures of eligibility than readiness**
  - ▶ Not well connected to the content of entry-level college courses
- ▶ **They do not measure many key skills college students need**
  - ▶ Writing
  - ▶ Reading complex informational documents and texts
  - ▶ Research
  - ▶ Problem solving
  - ▶ Interpretation of conflicting evidence



# New Definition of College Ready

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- ▶ **Four dimensions of readiness**
  - ▶ Key cognitive strategies
  - ▶ Key content knowledge
  - ▶ Academic behaviors
  - ▶ Contextual skills and awareness (college knowledge)
- ▶ **Readiness is the ability to succeed in entry-level courses without the need for remediation**



# Some Components of Readiness

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- ▶ Analyses of entry-level college courses indicate the importance of a number of skills not captured well by current measures
  - ▶ Facility with a range of cognitive strategies that allow the learner to go beyond acquiring information to applying and using knowledge
  - ▶ Understanding the structure of knowledge and the big ideas of the major academic disciplines, not just isolated facts
  - ▶ Being able to manage one's time well, to persist with difficult problems and tasks, to set goals, to study alone and with others
  - ▶ Knowing how to read strategically, particularly informational texts
  - ▶ Being able to write well, particularly expository pieces supported by evidence



# New Elements That Should Be Assessed

## ▶ Example: Key Cognitive Strategies

- ▶ Problem formulation
- ▶ Research
- ▶ Interpretation
- ▶ Communication
- ▶ Precision and accuracy

### Key Cognitive Strategies Model





# Assessing Key Cognitive Strategies

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- ▶ Assessing these complex cognitive processes requires tasks based in the classroom
- ▶ These tasks will mimic more closely what students will encounter in college classes
  - ▶ They signal as well as assess
- ▶ Tasks also develop the Academic Behaviors
  - ▶ E.g., persistence with a challenging problem, time management, study skills
- ▶ Scores are indicative of readiness across a broader spectrum



# Developing Assessments to Test College Readiness

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- ▶ **Requires careful attention to construct validity**
  - ▶ Use of task shells to constrain variance and maximize validity
  - ▶ Scoring guides that establish a “mental model” of desired performance
  - ▶ Performance standards that are aligned to and anchored by proximity to college readiness
- ▶ **Requires teachers to be actively engaged in scoring**
  - ▶ Scoring can be checked via external or internal moderation
  - ▶ Can become a substitute for current grading methods that are free floating and increasingly compressed at the high end



# College Readiness and the Common Core Standards

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- ▶ Common Core Standards have a “College and Career Ready” level
- ▶ This level contains expectations that go well beyond what current college admissions and placement tests can measure
  - ▶ Also go beyond much of what is measured by teacher grades
- ▶ The Standards have a stronger emphasis on and incorporation of the key cognitive strategies and a range of analytic and thinking skills not included in most state standards



# Example: Writing Standard from Common Core Standards, Grades 11-12

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- ▶ Write in response to literary or informational sources, drawing evidence from the text to support analysis and reflection as well as to describe what has been learned
  - ▶ E.g., literature: Analyze how an author draws on and transforms fictional source material, such as how Shakespeare draws on a story from Ovid, or a later author draws on Shakespeare.
  - ▶ E.g., literary nonfiction: Evaluate the reasoning and rhetoric that support an argument or explanation, including assessing the relevance and sufficiency of evidence and identifying false statements or fallacious reasoning.
- ▶ These tasks require complex writing that takes place over longer periods of time than allowed by current tests



# Example: Mathematics Standard from Common Core Standards

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## ► Modeling

- Use critical path analysis to determine the turnaround patterns for airplanes on the tarmac
- Model savings account balances, bacterial colony growth, or investment growth
- Plan a table tennis tournament for 7 players at a club with 4 tables, where each player plays against each other player
- These types of problems are difficult to include or complete within typical admissions exams
- They are also unusual in today's high school math classes



# The Challenge of the Common Core Standards

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- ▶ If the College and Career Ready Common Core Standards are implemented, how will they be assessed?
- ▶ What will this mean for college admissions testing?
- ▶ What will this mean for state standards-based testing?
- ▶ What will this mean for classroom assessment practice?



# Validity Study of Common Core Standards

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- ▶ Given the high stakes of the Standards, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is sponsoring a national study to determine the relationship between the Standards and entry-level college courses
  - ▶ 24 course titles in 6 subject area, over 3,000 individual courses
  - ▶ Instructor ratings of importance of the Standards for success in their classes, submission of syllabi, assignments, student work
  - ▶ Analysis of alignment between the Standards and state standards
  - ▶ Final results available in November/December 2010
  - ▶ Results will be used to help refine the Standards as appropriate