“Catch-up” Courses: Development Proposal

GOAL
Provide greater standardization of public postsecondary education expectations for placement in remediation and college-level coursework, and ensure students have access to supports and instruction in the senior year of high school to avoid remediation.

CONTEXT
The Alignment of Standards for Accelerating Student Opportunities Work Group developed the proposal below for meeting state-wide needs to reduce remediation in mathematics and English at the college level. Developed collaboratively with school district and community college personnel, this proposal was shared with the House Resolution 477 Committee on designing catch-up courses and elements were subsequently incorporated into the Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness Act.

PROJECT OBJECTIVE
Pilot a process for teams of secondary and post-secondary educators to co-develop statewide models of “catch-up” courses and instructional supports that can be adapted to meet local needs.

CATCH-UP COURSE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS
1. Recruit Math and ELA course development teams
   Each team will include 8 to 10 faculty/subject matter experts selected by their respective high school and postsecondary institutions. At least some instructors will be experienced in teaching developmental students. A facilitator will keep the group on task, in time, and on budget; inspire collaboration; and mediate if necessary. If the course will be delivered online, an instructional designer will join the team.

   Periodically, teams will consult with high school and postsecondary administrators who know the process and policy issues that could impact course design decisions and with guidance counselors who understand the issues for students. In order for a school district to participate, superintendents must agree to submit the course(s) to their district’s curriculum approval process.

2. Establish calendar for the course development process
   We estimate that approximately 80 hours of work by each subject team will be needed to produce a scope and sequence document, daily pacing guide, assessments, and a collection of classroom activities and real-world applications large enough to provide choices for teachers. Each team will set its own calendar, but the work must be finished in time for presentation to local alliances starting in August 2016.

3. Review existing, evidence-based models and activities
   Illinois-based models are available from Elgin Community College, Harper College, McHenry County College, and Heartland Community College. Work on developmental courses has been done by the Illinois Developmental Education Advisory Council. National models include Tennessee SAILS and the Southern Regional Education Board’s math ready and literacy ready courses being used in 27 states.

4. Designate audience for each course
Who will be the target population for each course? Agreement on the group of students will help to shape course design, qualifications of instructors, and measures of eligibility. School districts will be encouraged to place students who fit the profile into these courses.

5. **Select multiple measures to determine eligibility for the courses**
   Criteria for identifying students who should enroll in each course may include courses taken; grades earned in those specific courses; attendance; overall GPA; teacher and/or guidance counselor recommendations; measures embedded into regular courses; scores on tests such as Accuplacer, ACT Aspire, and PARCC; or other factors.

6. **Determine when eligibility information will be collected and determinations made**
   Planning for senior year coursework begins as early as fall of the junior year and is usually completed by February or March. For this reason, screening may need to begin in the sophomore year. Some districts have sufficient flexibility to change senior year enrollments based on end-of-junior-year information. The course design teams will recommend timing options.

7. **Design content of senior year “catch-up” courses in math and English language arts**
   Fundamental issues that will impact content need to be decided first. These include the results to be expected for successful students, such as enrollment in a credit-bearing college course; the Illinois Learning Standards and postsecondary expectations for alignment; career pathways orientation, if any; and delivery mode (online, blended, or face-to-face).

   Comprehensive course materials will include scope and sequence, learning objectives or competencies to be achieved, lesson plans, real-world activities and applications, assessments, and grading rubrics. Course modules may be customized for specific career pathways or suggestions provided for career connections. All course content will be aligned with the Illinois Learning Standards and postsecondary expectations.

8. **Incorporate a level of instructional rigor aligned with postsecondary expectations**
   Teams will recommend textbooks, primary resources, and other instructional materials that are appropriate for developmental students but also enable them to learn the vocabulary, expectations, and affective behaviors needed to succeed in postsecondary courses. The non-cognitive demands needed for success in postsecondary courses should be highlighted, reinforced, and part of the course expectations.

9. **Devise summative assessments**
   The final assessments for “catch-up” courses will provide usable feedback to students and measurable results that may be used to determine placement in postsecondary courses. Teams may also recommend follow-up activities for students who are still not adequately prepared.

10. **Identify state policy issues that may impact delivery of these courses**
    Teams may make recommendations on state policy issues such as the following:
    - Requiring four years of mathematics for high school graduation
    - Requiring specific courses or competencies for high school graduation
    - Incentives to standardize developmental curricula and instructional materials
    - Incentives to develop additional math pathways in addition to the calculus track such as statistics for students aimed at non-STEM careers
• Incentives to reposition senior year of high school as a transition year with identified responsibilities for seniors and for schools and share communications materials
• Dashboard prototype for tracking results of developmental and dual credit courses
• Flexibility in teacher qualifications/certifications to teach the catch-up courses

11. **Identify local policy issues that may impact delivery of these courses**
   Teams may make recommendations on local policy issues such as the following:
   • Multiple measures and standard processes for placements into developmental courses
   • Scheduling early administration of PARCC
   • Flexibility in last-minute changes to senior year course schedules
   • Grading policy – high school policy or postsecondary policy?
   • Textbooks and tools; e.g., textbooks, e-books, loan programs, one-to-one programs, course management software, and other technology issues
   • Standard summative assessments
   • Consistent policies at community colleges and public universities on placement of students who successfully complete the learning outcomes for the developmental courses
   • Professional development for instructors and counselors
   • Messaging about the importance of senior year

12. **Initiate processes that support collaborative adoption or adaptation at the local level**
   In fall 2016, the course development teams will present their work to interested local alliances of high school and postsecondary educators in this region who wish to review the course(s) for potential adoption. Local dialogue among instructors in each discipline will help to build shared understanding of expectations, revise course content to meet local needs, determine qualifications for instructors, address local policy issues, and launch the local processes for curriculum adoption.

13. **Recommend processes for collection, analysis, and sharing of data**
   Data related to results of successful course completion might include performance data on the final assessment, subsequent placement in college, and performance in college credit courses. Local schools may wish to analyze the data to assess the impact of programs that target these students.

14. **Recommend professional development activities for instructors and counselors**
   Course development teams may suggest professional development activities customized for instructors who will teach the new courses and for guidance counselors. Creation of a regional learning community for instructors and counselors of these courses could have long-term benefits.

15. **Suggest common messaging and communication tools**