

Cal-PASS

Transitions

Success at Every Level



From the Executive Director: Statewide Collaboration

Cal-PASS believes it is now time for the synergy of a cross-PLC collaboration that uses and showcases the expertise and talent of Professional Learning Council (PLC) faculty in a statewide project. Now that 66 PLCs with more than 1,200 faculty and other educators meet monthly across the state, there is an opportunity to leverage PLC work to create a joint product.

As a first step, Cal-PASS PLCs are working on the Aligning Curricula and Career Education for Student Success (ACCESS) grant, funded by the Hewlett, Irvine and Hass Jr. Foundations, to align curricula outcomes in English and math from 11th grade through transfer level at community colleges. The grant also is working to embed contextualized assignments from career/technical education courses into math and English courses, and to embed in career/technical education courses the English and math elements that are basic to all curricula.

The process will create aligned curricula outcomes so that students will be prepared for the next level course and for postsecondary work once they leave high school. Aligned curricula should lead to increased student transition and reduced re-

mediation as they move from one grade level to the next and when they move from secondary to postsecondary institutions.

The curricula alignment process brings faculty together from secondary and postsecondary institutions to talk about outcomes and entrance competencies and to create materials that will get students where they need to be at the end of 11th and 12th grades so they successfully transition to transfer level courses at postsecondary institutions. This work provides faculty with opportunities to discover what their colleagues are doing and to have conversations about what is working and why, which informs each faculty member's practice. Many PLCs are already engaged in this type of work.

Cal-PASS is committed to creating more opportunities that will assist in aligning curricula, removing barriers, and providing faculty professional development opportunities. This work is a giant leap toward that goal.

To learn more about this initiative, contact Dr. Eden Dahlstrom, Cal-PASS' associate director of regional collaboration and project director of ACCESS, at edahlstrom@calpass.org.

Cal-PASS Study Receives Award

The Research and Planning Group for the California Community Colleges recently selected the Cal-PASS research study "An Early Alert System for Remediation Needs of Entering Community College Students: Leveraging the California Standards Test" for the Excellence in Research—Regional/Statewide Project award. This study was funded by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and conducted by the Cal-PASS research staff. Congratulations to everyone who worked on this extensive research study.

In This Issue...

Spotlight on Sweetwater	2
How to Access Cal-PASS Data	2
Support for Your Special Project	3
Cal-PASS Data Sharing Principles	4
How to Reach Us	4

Spotlight on Data:

Making a Difference in Sweetwater

Guest Writer: Steve Rodecker, Science Specialist, Sweetwater Union High School District

Cal-PASS data have played a crucial role in science curriculum decisions within the 43,000 student Sweetwater Union High School District (SUHSD) over the last four years. It all began with the Cal-PASS South Bay Science Professional Learning Council (PLC) asking questions regarding student transition and success in science from seventh grade through community college. As the data resulting from these questions were reviewed and discussed, the following actions were taken to address specific instructional needs and assist in district decision-making regarding science curricula.

Informed Placement Report

After an unsuccessful attempt to place every ninth grade student into biology, the district decided to establish biology placement guidelines. An Informed Placement Report (IPR) grant was written specifically to analyze predictors of success in biology based on middle school grades and test scores. Using both Cal-PASS and district data, an SUHSD committee established biology placement guidelines that became district policy and were used for the 2008–2009 school year. Once data become available for the group, Cal-PASS will conduct an analysis of the effects.

Mathematics of Chemistry-Applications

In high school science curriculum, chemistry remains the gatekeeper for college preparatory science classes to meet the A–G admission requirements for the University of California D lab science. According to chemistry teachers in the SUHSD, students' inability to apply algebraic concepts keeps many from passing this crucial course. Data supplied by a Cal-PASS report to the local science PLC showed a 23 percent attrition rate of students between biology and chemistry, and that 23 percent of chemistry students received either a D or an F.

The PLC developed a Mathematics of Chemistry-Applications (MoCHA) Summer Bridge Course to address these mathematical issues that prevented success in chemistry. MoCHA was developed as a two-week (20 hours) preparatory course targeting otherwise successful high school and college students (GPA > 2.5) who were enrolling in chemistry but who had struggled in math (GPA ~2.0). The primary goal of the MoCHA Summer Bridge Course was to familiarize students with the mathematical formulas, applications, and manipulations that they had to know to be successful in chemistry. In all, 27 students began the course and 25 completed it. Subsequent end-of-year chemistry grades of MoCHA participants were compared to end-of-year chemistry grades of a comparison group of students matched on previous-year Algebra I grades, ethnicity, and gender. MoCHA participants earned grades that were 0.64 grade points higher than the comparison group (see figure, page 3) with MoCHA participants earning an average grade of just above a B and the comparison group earning an average grade of just above a C+.

The success of MoCHA in the summer of 2007 inspired the next iteration of the class

continued on page 3

How to Access Cal-PASS Data

Cal-PASS offers members three ways to access data: on-line queries, custom reports, and the ability to download unitary-level data. Data are available as authorized by Cal-PASS participants' Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) and the list of Cal-PASS sharing partners.

On-line queries are reports that answer specific questions about students in a pre-defined way. These queries cover such areas as MOU and data submission status, student counts, course enrollments, student transitions, and Tech Prep. Users select the appropriate district or institution and timeframe from drop-down menus and receive a report based on those selections. The results are presented onscreen but may also be exported, enabling the user to save the results locally, print a report, or incorporate portions of the report into another document.

The second avenue that gives users access to Cal-PASS data are custom reports prepared by Cal-PASS staff. These reports are usually requested by Professional Learning Councils (PLCs) (but may be requested by others*) and provide information about particular patterns of student course-taking and outcomes. Samples of custom reports are available on our Web site at www.calpass.org/SampleReports/Default.aspx. Cal-PASS staff assists PLC members with defining research questions and identifying variables to include, as well as finding the best way to present data.

The third access point for Cal-PASS data is through the direct download of unitary-level encrypted data. These data

continued on page 4

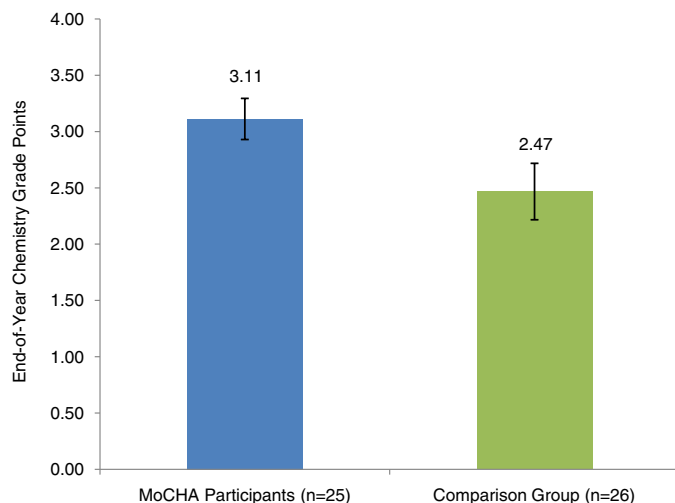
*See Special Projects on page 3.



A Partnership of the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office
and the Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District

Spotlight on Data *cont.*

Average (Mean) End-of-Year Chemistry Grade Points Earned by MoCHA Participants and a Comparison Group Matched on Previous-Year Algebra I Grades, Ethnicity, and Gender.



Note: Error bars show one standard error above and below the mean.

in the summer of 2008, this time funded by a GEAR UP grant. In addition to mathematics, this course also covered lab work and data analysis.

Recent changes for CSU admission now all but require a student to take chemistry or physics in addition to biology. District curriculum decision-makers realized that a summer bridge chemistry–mathematics program provided the necessary support for many students with weaker algebra skills who now had to take and pass chemistry to complete their D lab requirement. As a result, MoCHA 2009 is currently being planned as a 60 hour credit-bearing math support class and will be funded by the district. There will be an expanded curriculum which will include data analysis and emphasis on differentiated strategies to provide students with varied approaches to apply math to chemistry.

Biology Action Models

All students wishing to complete A–G requirements for admission to a UC or CSU must take and pass biology. Understanding many biological processes now requires the visualization and conceptualization of invisible dynamic molecular and cellular interactions, making biology a much more challenging class than it was 15 years ago. A strategy was necessary that allowed students to visualize a dynamic biology concept in action while at the same time requiring students' active use of appropriate vocabulary and conceptual knowledge in explanations. Action models meet these requirements. Action models are physical animations of a concept wherein students manipulate model pieces while explaining the dynamic process to their teachers.

Currently three district teachers from the science PLC are developing action models

continued on page 4

Support for Your Special Project

Are you working with an evaluator who needs student data to assess the effects of your program? Do you need reports on the outcomes of your special programs? Cal-PASS Special Projects can help by working with member institutions to access data from the Cal-PASS data set.*

Special Project staff has consulted with funders, evaluators, and staff at educational institutions throughout California to support a variety of efforts. Cal-PASS staff provides Web-based access to your student data using the *myCalPASS* Web site and helps flag your project in the Cal-PASS database using a custom Web-based upload or an existing spreadsheet or database. Cal-PASS staff will then develop a custom Web-based system for accessing data about students in your program that may be driven by questions such as: “What are the demographics of the students in my program?” or “What are the initial math and English placements for students in my program?” Important student outcomes may include movement across the educational segments, initial course enrollments and level, GPA, persistence to the next term or year, and degree attainment. Help is available for uploading other data linked to your identified students, such as support services provided, dosage of services, and entry and exit assessments, which may be included in the analyses.

Contact Jordan Horowitz, Senior Director for Special Projects, at jhorowitz@calpass.org or (562) 743-7920 to discuss a custom scope of work, obtain a cost estimate, and see a demonstration of our unique Web-based reporting system.

*See How to Access Cal-PASS Data on page 2.



A Partnership of the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office
and the Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District

Spotlight on Data *cont.*

to use with their classes. Students will make the model pieces, construct the models, and explain the models to their teachers. Teachers will compare classes in which they implement models to classes that are taught traditionally to determine the effect of modeling. These models will be made available to teachers everywhere via the internet.

Cal-PASS data and science PLCs have been instrumental in identifying and defining problems that led to data-driven solutions. The placement of SUHSD students into biology is now based on clearly defined parameters; chemistry students have summer math support classes to ensure increased success in chemistry; and biology students will have action models with which to understand biological concepts. By sustaining and institutionalizing these Cal-PASS innovations, student outcomes are improved and collaboration among faculty is enhanced at Sweetwater Union High School District. As these innovations are implemented elsewhere, Cal-PASS will track outcomes.

How to Access Data *cont.*

provide tremendous value to local researchers at Cal-PASS member districts; however, because of the depth of the data, access is available only to select authorized users. To encourage collaboration and awareness of research being conducted in the region, Cal-PASS now gathers specific information about the proposed use of data and provides this information via e-mail to all partners whose data are being considered for inclusion. The partners may contact the person requesting the data to obtain additional information about the study. Any analysis conducted using Cal-PASS data must be provided to Cal-PASS upon completion.

Regardless of the method in which Cal-PASS data are accessed, two things remain constant: All access is governed by the Cal-PASS MOU, and users must adhere to the Cal-PASS data sharing principles, listed below.

How to Reach Us:

2236 Encinitas Blvd., Ste. G
Encinitas, CA 92024
(619) 933-7489
www.calpass.org

Brad Phillips

Executive Director, bphillips@calpass.org

Michelle Kalina

*Senior Director, Operations,
mkalina@calpass.org*

Jordan Horowitz

*Senior Director, Special Projects,
jhorowitz@calpass.org*

Mary Kay Patton

*Senior Director, Technology and Research,
mkpatton@calpass.org*

Terrence Willett

Director of Research, twillett@calpass.org

Shelly Valdez

*Director of Regional Collaboration,
svaldez@calpass.org*

Eden Dahlstrom

*Associate Director, Regional Collaboration,
edahlstrom@calpass.org*

Lauren Davis Sosenko

*Associate Director, Special Projects,
lsosenko@calpass.org*

Help Desk

help@calpass.org
(619) 933-0381

Cal-PASS Data Sharing Principles

Cal-PASS reports are not for public distribution. Use of reports is subject to the terms and conditions for Cal-PASS data as agreed to by each participant's Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Any misuse of a Cal-PASS report may result in termination of participation in Cal-PASS by the district/institution.

The user agrees to the following:

1. Cal-PASS data are for internal use and are only to be used for conducting studies for the purpose of improving instruction.
2. Release of reports for external use must be agreed to by every consortium member with data included in the report.
3. Any reports utilizing consortium data shall not disadvantage any consortium member.

For further information about Cal-PASS data sharing and reporting rules, please refer to the Cal-PASS MOU available at <http://www.calpass.org/Data/Principles.aspx>.



A Partnership of the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office
and the Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District