# Placement 360 Update for the IC/WSSSC Joint Meeting

“Placement is Destiny . . . and Inequitable placement drives inequitable completion.”

Myra Snell, #CADECCBC2017

## **Overview**

### Phase I: Creating, Implementing, and Assessing One Measure—Transcript Grids

Fall 2014 to Summer 2015: The seeds of Placement 360 (P360) began with a solid foundation--

Lessons in change management earned from creating, implementing, and assessing a sole measure—transcript grids that placed recent high school graduates with cumulative GPA and/or grades in individual courses. As part of a community grant funded by College Spark Washington, the first stage focused on practical applications of research, evidence, and models around one best practice in placement assessment and provided support to 4 colleges in the complexities of implementation and assessment of just one measure.

Participating Colleges: Bellevue, Big Bend, Peninsula, Tacoma

### Phase II: A Holistic Approach to Placement Reform Using an Equity Lens

Spring 2017 to Spring 2018: Using the remaining funds from the initial grant, P360 extended and expanded the initial and more focused work on developing a specific measure (the transcript grids) for a specific population (recent high school graduates and Running Start Students) to a multiple measures approach.

As equitable placement is integral to the success of any guided pathways redesign, P360 intentionally aligned with the state-wide guided pathways initiative, providing 13 cross-functional teams (representing 16 colleges) a year-long learning opportunity to both

1. Examine current placement policies, practices, procedures with an equity lens to help students “get on the path” (design principle 2) and increase the likelihood of “ensuring student learning (design principle 4);
2. Work strategically and collaboratively, in the short and long-term, to reform placement policies, practices, and procedures to be more equity-producing.

Participating Colleges: Bellevue, Centralia, Clover Park, Columbia Basin, Edmonds, Peninsula, Pierce College District, Renton, Seattle Colleges, Shoreline, Spokane, Tacoma, Yakima Valley

Focus of P360

Due to a recommendation created by a workgroup commissioned by the IC in 2010, and supported by a great deal of research at the national level around a multiple measures approach to placement, many colleges across the Washington State CTC system have been addressing the inadequacies of existing standardized placement tests and navigating the larger cultural shift away from placement as a static “testing” experience and towards placement assessment as a participatory, dynamic, and educational process.

In practice, there are two primary usages for the term “Multiple Measure”:

1. Employing a “multiple measure”: As one example, Directed Self-Placement (DSP) is itself a multiple measure, as the tools created (such as a questionnaire) provide multiple indicators of an individual student’s readiness for college-level work.
2. Employing “multiple options”: Different populations of students (Running Start, recent high school graduates, returning adult students, etc.) have access to different kinds of measures. This approach might be better described as a “multiple options” approach. See chart from Highline as an example: <http://bit.ly/2u27rMY>

As research indicates that significant numbers of students who are capable of doing college-level work are under-placed in developmental coursework *and* that students from systemically non-dominant populations suffer from disparate impact, a rigorous focus on equity requires colleges to remove as many potential barriers to college-level placement as possible. Therefore, a multiple options approach to placement involves reviewing as many single indicators as possible and then employing the measure that provides the student with the highest placement.

Statement of the Problem

At the start of Placement 360, while many colleges were creating and piloting innovations such as DSP and high school transcript grids, the traditional placement test (Accuplacer) was still used as a first and primary measure to place the majority of students (arguably 80%). While many colleges intended to use multiple measures or provide students with multiple options, these innovations were primarily being used as alternatives (and sometimes in addition to or after students had been placed using Accuplacer).

Fully implementing a true multiple measures approach at scale to more effectively, efficiently, and equitably place all students poses a range of challenging issues:

### Fostering Mindset Shifts at the Institutional and Practitioner Level from Deficit to Equity

* Bensimon: Data and evidence illustrating the disparate impact of current policies and practices on student success outcomes must be approached as being indicative of organizational or practitioner learning problems rather than student learning problems.
* McNair: Organizational leadership must foster a sharp focus on making colleges ready for students, rather than students “ready for college.”

### Broadening and Deepening Assessment Literacy

* The bodies of literature around placement as assessment are intersectional and often discipline specific; a holistic approach requires expertise in math, English, directed self-placement (DSP), disparate impact, etc. Each area is complex, with a great deal of theory, research, models, and implications for practice.
* Kezar: Institutional transformation is achieved when practitioners have regular opportunities for both “sensemaking” (i.e. making sense of the information individually) and “sensegiving” (sharing that new knowledge with colleagues in ways that will impact practice) that evolve as the work continues.

### Practicing Complex Institutional Navigation and Effectively Collaborating with Multiple Stakeholders on Campus

* Bailey, Jenkins, and Jaggers: Cross-functional teams are an excellent strategy to overcome institutional siloes and address the problem of multiple innovations being developed in isolation and out of alignment.

## P360 Interventions In collaboration with SBCTC Assessment, Teaching, and Learning (ATL), expert and experienced practitioners [Marcie Sims](http://bit.ly/2J8LS1X) (tenured English faculty, Green River), and [Shannon Waits](http://bit.ly/2MZH6pQ), (Director of Academic Assessment and Placement, Highline) provided vision, leadership, and strategy, collaboratively designing an intensive professional learning experience for almost half the colleges in our CTC system.

## Formative assessment: Designed and conducted an initial needs assessment spring 17; provided 3 more formal mentoring sessions (fall 2017-spring 2018);

## Sensemaking and Sensegiving Opportunities: Designed 4 events (1 summer 17, 1 fall 17, 1 winter 18, 1 spring 18) to provide teams with relevant theory, data, models; structured work time to set quarterly, yearly, and five-year goals for placement reform and data collection; and opportunities for colleges to learn from each other (particularly “sister” colleges);

## Vetting and Creating Resources: Based on the needs assessment, mentoring calls, and events, Sims and Waits continuously curated relevant research and created new tools for colleges to use in implementing, assessing, and improving placement in their institutional context in a Canvas shell (<http://bit.ly/2EXbNrq>);

## Coaching and Accountability Structure: In addition to the formal mentoring sessions and events, Sims and Waits provided informal “just-in-time” coaching on how to use the resources created, as well as offering advice and solutions when teams encountered challenges.

## P360 Impact

## Adding More Placement Options

## At the start of P360, the initial needs assessment and first mentor call (spring 2017) indicated that some teams had only one placement option for students (Accuplacer), while other teams had two or three. At the Summer Institute (August 2017), Sims and Waits challenged the teams to set clear goals to add more placement options for students and to strengthen, scale up, revise, or phase out current measures already in place. By the end of the project (Spring 2018), all participating teams increased to having at least three options and some as many as 5 options. At least one college plans to completely phase out Accuplacer.

## Using Evidence for Improvement

## Institutional Data

## Very few teams had well developed internal systems to track data around their current system of placement. After learning about data collection possibilities, each team created a plan to collect data and assess the new placement measures’ success. At the winter institute, each team brought information about student placement distribution (% in English 101, 091, etc. % placed into Math 081, 091, 098, etc.) aggregated by the measure (Accuplacer, HS transcript, DSP) and used this information to set short and long-term goals. Each team created an embedded structure internal to its institution and will continue to collect and assess data regarding current and subsequent changes to placement.

## ATL is currently in the process of securing a policy research intern who will interview participants to collect both qualitative data and quantitative data at the institutional level, as well as maintain and update the Canvas shells for P360, DSP, and transcript grid placement.

## Policy Level Data

## State Board analysis of transcript data over the past five years shows several colleges had an increase in the percent of new students starting in college level math and English courses. The colleges with this increase also have an increase in the percent of students successfully completing a college level course in math and English. Early evidence suggests colleges can continue to increase the percent of students completing college level math and English courses by placing more students in college level courses (or courses closer to college level with adequate support, as in a co-requisite model) to be successful. SBCTC staff will continue to monitor quantitative placement data at the system level as colleges continue to implement placement reforms.

## Five Year Plans

At the final convening (Spring 2018), each team set goals for the next 5 years to build on the substantial amount of work done this year. The three-part plans include on-going review of measures, communicating policies and procedures effectively to multiple audiences, and continuing to collect and evaluate data to inform continued efforts.

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