MyReadingLab

School Name	Hennepin Technical College, Brooklyn Park and Eden Prairie, MN
Course Names	Reading Techniques, Applied Reading Techniques
Course Format	Hybrid (part lab, part lecture), compressed

Key Results From spring 2014 through summer 2015, students' Lexile scores improved an average of 90 points in lower-level developmental reading and an average of 112 in upper-level developmental reading in 8-week classes using MyReadingLab.

Submitted by
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Course materials
Bridging the Gap, Smith and Morris;
MyReadingLab + custom eText

Setting
Hennepin Technical College (HTC) was founded in 1972 to fulfill the community's growing need for a skilled workforce. Today, the need for highly trained employees with hands-on experience has never been greater.

About the Course
Students test into developmental reading courses at HTC if they do not meet the required Accuplacer cut score of 78. We currently offer 8-week compressed classes so that students can finish the 2-class sequence in one semester. We serve a varied population of resistant learners, ELL learners, and first-generation students.

Challenges and Goals
We chose to use MyReadingLab for a few key reasons. First, MyReadingLab helps identify the different needs of our students. Second, it lets instructors customize activities to meet specific needs, course outcomes, and objectives for each level of developmental reading. Third, MyReadingLab allows students to gain experience navigating technology and reading digital texts. Last, MyReadingLab makes data collection and reporting easy. Our administration wants to see accountability in numbers when it comes to our programs, and having students complete Lexile readings provides valuable data.

Implementation
We have two levels of developmental reading with 18–20 sections in the fall and spring semesters and approximately seven sections during our summer term. In my role as Intermediate Reading Coordinator, I set up the MyReadingLab template, promote its use, and help adjuncts get on board. I have found the best way to use MyReadingLab is to start small—ease into it and then adapt it to best suit your students' needs.

We use both the Reading Skills and Reading Level areas in MyReadingLab. Students take the Reading Skills Path Builder and then work through their Learning Path. Students are required to work through the modules and get two attempts to take the post-tests at 70 percent mastery. In my sections, students work collaboratively on the Learning Path in the computer lab. They are required to engage with MyReadingLab modules and Lexile diagnostics for a minimum of 90 minutes each week in the lab. I introduce students to each topic through viewing the animation. We skim and scan and do some recall and practice activities together, then I ask them to take one topic post-test by the end of class. They can retake the topic post-test on their own at any time during the semester. In fact, I recommend they go back through the modules and refresh their understanding by retaking the post-tests prior to the final exam.

Many students do this because it gives them an opportunity to build some understanding and improve their score on the second attempt.

We have seen a correlation between Accuplacer placement scores and Lexile levels. Students in Reading Techniques come in around 800–900L, and students in Applied Reading Techniques typically start between 900–1000L. Because we want to see the largest increase possible in each students' Lexile level over eight weeks, we encourage them to increase their reading level by awarding more points for higher Lexile increases:

0–39 point increase	6 points toward rubric/final grade
40–60 point increase	8 points toward rubric/final grade
80–100 point increase	10 points toward rubric/final grade

Tracking Lexile Reading Level scores from the beginning to end of each semester, and over time, allows us to show student improvement in a concrete way.
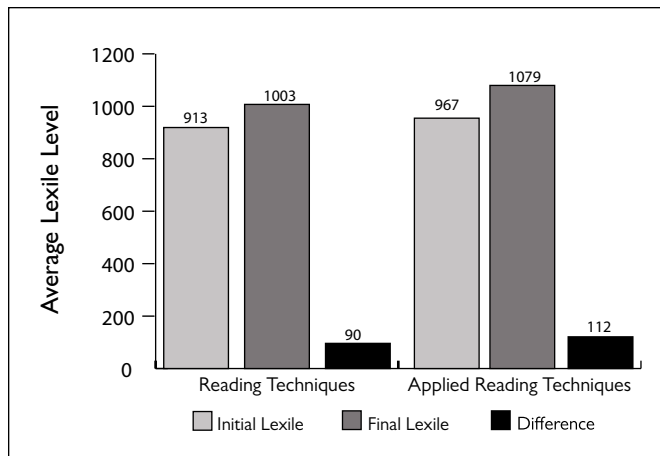

Figure 1. Initial and Final Lexile Levels, Spring 2014–Summer 2015: Reading Techniques, 9 Sections (*n* = 134); Applied Reading Techniques, 12 Sections (*n* = 185)

To make sure students are held accountable, I give a quiz at the beginning of class on the assigned textbook reading. These quizzes essentially enlist students in a conversation, with me and with their classmates, about the reading. This classroom technique works to build students' confidence in their ability to collaborate with others and reinforces how well they understand important topics related to college reading.

Custom eText

We want students to achieve their academic and career goals, and we don't want them to see a developmental reading course as an obstacle. To offer a greater connection between their readings and other courses offered at HTC (biology, medical assistant training, auto technology, etc.), I have created a custom eText that gives students a look at authentic texts related to their field of study. Comprised of a collection of sample chapters from a variety of different Pearson textbooks, the eText covers a wide range of disciplines and program areas. Students read articles related to their career paths and complete journal entries related to the readings. Students also use these chapters to practice specific reading strategies. I use these chapters as part of my performance assessment to determine if students are able to manage and regulate their reading process. The eText helps students see the value in their efforts to become better readers.

Assessments

20 percent	MyReadingLab (in-class work and homework)
20 percent	Professionalism (active engagement, attendance, accountability)
20 percent	In-class quizzes on textbook readings
20 percent	Portfolio (includes journal entries, note-taking and reading strategies)
20 percent	Final exam (includes performance assessment)

Results and Data

From spring 2014 to summer 2015, students taking Reading Techniques improved their Lexile level an average of 90 points, and students taking Applied Reading Techniques improved their Lexile level an average of 112 points (Figure 1). Tracking Lexile Reading Level scores from the beginning to end of each semester, and over time, allows us to show student improvement in a concrete way.

The Student Experience

We want to motivate students to practice reading and make it a fun "game" to see their improvement from the beginning to end of the course. Lexile readings are effective because there are a variety of readings for students to choose from. Students also improve both their cultural literacy and vocabulary through Reading Level work. One student concluded: "What best supported my learning in this course was everything from the working in groups, [the instructor] letting us choose our articles, and MyReadingLab."

Conclusion

Technical colleges are different from other schools because students declare their major from the moment they enter, and, at HTC, we are committed to helping them finish their education in 18 months. MyReadingLab is helping us achieve our primary goal of moving students through developmental education in an efficient and relevant way, and improving our students' reading levels and skills in a measurable way. Our custom eText further enhances our developmental reading courses by providing students the opportunity to read authentic materials in their fields of study.