

School Name	Milwaukee Area Technical College, Milwaukee, WI
Course Name	Introduction to College Reading and Study Skills
Course Format	Blended (half lecture and hands-on learning activities, half MyReadingLab)

Key Results Using MyReading Lab, students are improving their Lexile level an average of 125 points from the beginning to the end of the semester. Students who complete more than 21 topic posttests show the most significant improvement on the Mastery Check post-assessment.

Submitted by

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Course materials

College Reading & Study Skills, McWhorter; MyReadingLab

Milwaukee Area Technical College (MATC) is a public two-year comprehensive technical college based in the city of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, with three satellite campuses. Enrollment in 2012–13 was 43,000. MATC emphasizes hands-on, job-focused skills training. When recent graduates were asked their primary reason for attending MATC, one-third said they needed job training with quick employment, one-third wanted to change careers, and one-sixth were preparing for further education.

About the Course

Students are placed into College Reading and Study Skills based on their Accuplacer score. This fifteen-week, three-credit course is designed to provide learners with opportunities to develop and expand their comprehension, vocabulary, reading and study skills. Learners apply reading skills to academic tasks and read to acquire information from a variety of sources. In the 2013–14 academic year, fall and spring enrollment combined was approximately 800 students (~25 sections each semester with up to 20 students per section). A student must pass the course with a C or better to continue on to college-level course work within their program major.

Challenges and Goals

MyReadingLab was adopted in 2009 because there was a need to measure student outcome assessments at the college. These assessments evaluate the course and how well instructors are teaching. We believed that initial and final Lexile scores from MyReadingLab's reading level area would work well for this purpose. In addition to having a solid data point, we felt MyReadingLab would provide effective skill-building exercises to help students become better readers and succeed in their academic and professional careers.

MyReadingLab is used in all sections of the course, but usage varies by instructor. To study the impact of different MyReadingLab implementations on student success, we measured data points such as Lexile level change, the impact Lexile readings have on Lexile level increases, the effect of topic posttest completion on the post-assessment, and the change from Path Builder diagnostic to Mastery Check post-assessment scores across all sections.

Implementation

[This section highlights the implementation of Professor Meredith Reeves. Professor Reeves' sections showed the most improvement from Path Builder diagnostic to the Mastery Check post-assessment and from initial to final Lexile levels when compared to data from other sections. As a result, we are highlighting her effective implementation. See "Results and Data" for more information.]

The College Reading course at MATC is a blended course format, meaning half lecture and hands-on activities and half MyReadingLab. MyReadingLab assignments parallel each textbook chapter. We typically cover all 17 chapters, usually one per week, but as we progress through the textbook, shortened chapters allow us to cover two per week. When I lecture, I incorporate active learning strategies and group activities to increase students' retention and understanding of the material. We complete MyReadingLab "Activities from Your Textbook" together as a class.

“I am an ESL student, and Ms. Reeves’ style of teaching allows me to work at my own pace while improving my reading and speaking skills. MyReadingLab is great because the lessons are presented in different ways, and this helps me understand what I am reading.”

—Student

Students begin work in MyReadingLab by taking the Path Builder diagnostic and finish work in MyReadingLab by taking the Mastery Check post-assessment. Students have some class time to work on MyReadingLab, but the majority is completed as homework.

At the beginning of the semester, I hand out a worksheet listing all 27 reading skills topics students are required to complete in MyReadingLab. I find it is helpful for students to keep track of their progress with a physical and visual checklist. Fourteen topics are due before midterm, and 13 topics are due after midterm. I ask students to write down the posttest score they earn for each topic, provided it is 70 percent or higher. If students master a topic on the Path Builder, they record that as an “M.” Students complete their Learning Path modules three weeks before the end of the semester. I assign the Study Skills modules when we have time at the end of the course or to students who complete their Learning Path early.

I also assign the initial Lexile Locator diagnostic in class and ask students to complete two to three Lexile readings per week. Students record their initial and final Lexile scores on the worksheet and turn it in to me at the end of the semester to receive completion credit for their work in MyReadingLab.

In addition to MyReadingLab homework, students are given the following assignments:

- **Active reading strategy card:** I teach students how to take effective study notes; we use a laminated active reading strategy card, which summarizes the technique. I stress the importance of completing the study notes for assigned chapters before I lecture on a chapter. The card is durable, and students tell me they use it in many of their other college courses.
- **Vocabulary box:** Students create vocabulary cards related to their future career.
- **Vision board:** Students prepare a visual representation of their goals and dreams for the future on one PowerPoint slide and present it to the class around midterm. This gives the instructor and students an opportunity to learn more about one another.

- **Chapter 8 project:** Students locate six different graphics/visual aids (three displaying data related to their future career and three related to current events) and complete the assigned questions for each. Students present two of the graphics to the class.
- **Final project:** Students give a PowerPoint presentation that identifies and defines five strategies that they learned throughout the semester. Students demonstrate each strategy and give an example of how they will use each strategy in their future career.
- **Service learning:** Students get extra credit for donating children’s books to our book drive. I donate the books to a local elementary school. It is my intention to have students promote literacy in our local schools or at the child care center on campus.

Assessments

(Professor Reeves’ sections)

65 percent	MyReadingLab and textbook assignments
20 percent	Participation, assignments, and quizzes
10 percent	Final project
5 percent	Vision board

Best practices

To make sure students are staying active in MyReadingLab and not falling behind, I log in to MyReadingLab at least twice a week to check student progress. I send weekly emails to individual students regarding their progress in MyReadingLab and the course, and I provide weekly course updates on Blackboard. I also send “shout outs” to the entire class when someone scores 100 percent on a posttest or to students who are making good progress.

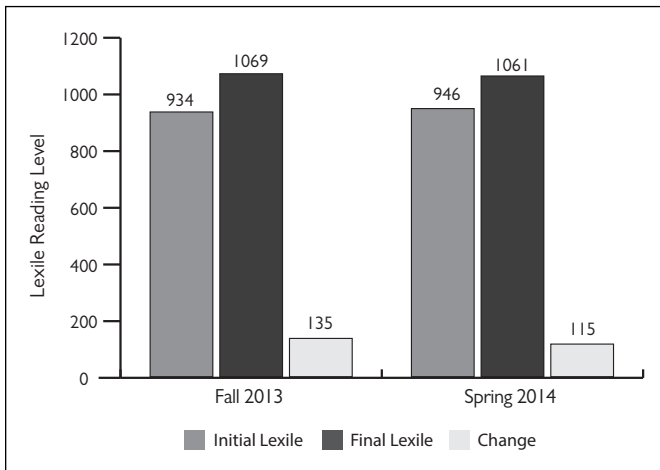


Figure 1. Average Initial and Final Lexile Scores, Fall 2013 (n = 213) and Spring 2014 (n=252)

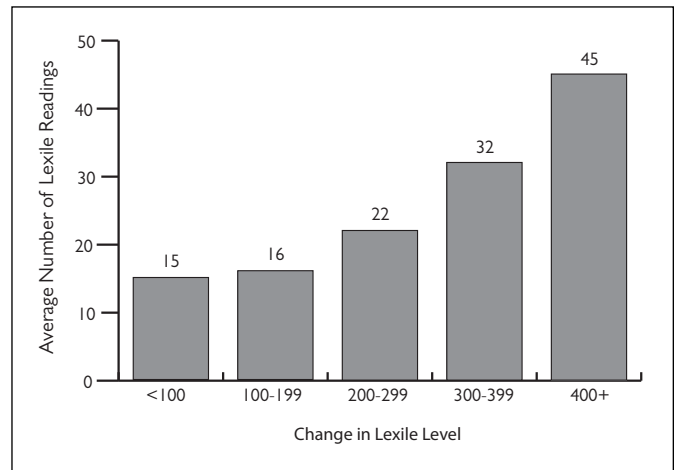


Figure 2. Average Number of Lexile Readings as Grouped by Change in Lexile Level. Fall 2013 and Spring 2014 combined (n = 465). Change less than 100 (n = 198); 100–199 (n = 159); 200–299 (n = 70); 300–399 (n = 31); 400+ (n = 7)

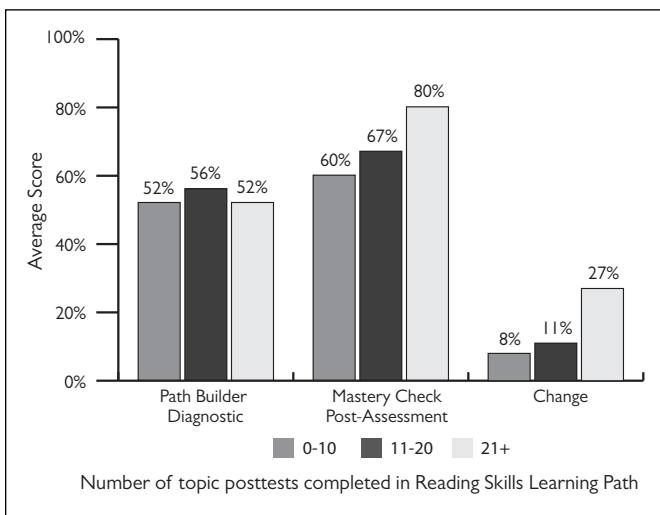


Figure 3. Fall 2013 and Spring 2014 Path Builder Diagnostic and Mastery Check Scores as Grouped by Number of Topic Posttests Completed. Zero to 10 posttests (n = 16); 11 to 20 posttests (n = 70); 21 or more posttests (n = 47)

“To make sure students are staying active in MyReadingLab and not falling behind, I log in to MyReadingLab at least twice a week to check student progress.”

—Professor Reeves

Results and Data

For the class sections that were active in Lexile Reading Level work during fall 2013 and spring 2014, students who completed an average of 18 reading selections showed an average increase in Lexile level from 940L to 1065L, a difference of 125L (Figure 1).

We wanted to find out if the number of Lexile readings a student completes has a direct impact on their Lexile level improvement from the beginning to end of the semester. Figure 2 shows a steady increase in Lexile levels as the number of readings a student completes increases. This has been useful information to show our students how their efforts will lead to success.

Because our instructors are implementing MyReadingLab in different ways, we wanted to study how the number of topic posttests completed in the reading skills Learning Path connects to success on the Mastery Check post-assessment. Figure 3 illustrates that the more topic posttests a student completes, the better the chance they have of achieving a higher Mastery Check score. When we looked at what sections were doing the best on the Mastery Check, we noticed students from Professor Reeves’ sections had some of the highest scores. Figure 4 compares Path Builder and Mastery Check scores in Professor Reeves’ sections to all other sections with Path Builder and Mastery Check data.

“I enjoy using technology, so MyReadingLab is easy to use and has helped me feel more confident when reading my college textbooks.”

—Student

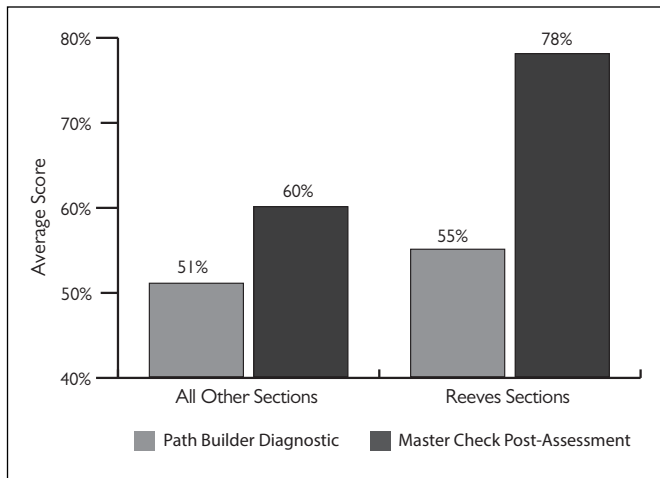


Figure 4. Path Builder and Mastery Check Scores in Reeves' Sections ($n = 78$) Compared to Other Sections ($n = 163$)

Conclusion

We believe that the MyReadingLab implementation Professor Reeves set in place for her sections led to better results on the Mastery Check post-assessment and increased Lexile levels. We will use these results to persuade other instructors to follow suit in their own sections, and to employ Professor Reeves' best practices, such as emailing students to stay on track, giving students a checklist to fill out as they make progress on their Learning Path, etc. Although some instructors have trouble embracing technology, it is clear that when an instructor implements MyReadingLab in a way that is clear, consistent, and worth a significant portion of the course grade, students are more likely to do their assigned work and succeed in the process.

The Student Experience

Although there is sometimes resistance from students who are uncomfortable using a computer, for the most part, students are agreeable to doing their course work online. MyReadingLab compels students to be engaged with the material. In addition, Professor Reeves' students have noted that:

- “This class provides many opportunities for me to learn the information, and I do not feel rushed. After Ms. Reeves teaches the strategies and we practice the strategies, we then work independently in MyReadingLab.”
- “I enjoy using technology so MyReadingLab is easy to use and has helped me feel more confident when reading my college textbooks.”
- “I enjoy using MyReadingLab because I can see the progress that I am making and it helps me do better in my other courses.”