

School Name San Diego Mesa College, San Diego, CA
Course Name College Reading and Study Skills I and II
Course Format Compressed, Hybrid

Key Results From spring 2013 to spring 2014, 146 students passed the redesigned, compressed sections of English 042 and 048. These students are accelerating through developmental reading in half the time of students enrolled in the traditional course format.

Submitted by
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Course materials
Level I: *Guide to College Reading* and *The Longman Reader's Journal*, McWhorter; a nonfiction book; MyReadingLab

Level II: *Reading Across the Disciplines* and *The Longman Reader's Journal*, McWhorter; a nonfiction book; MyReadingLab

San Diego Mesa College is a public, two-year community college, the largest community college in the city of San Diego and the 16th largest (out of 112) community college in the state. Students take the ACCUPLACER test upon entering. Depending on their placement scores, they may have to take College Reading and Study Skills I (English 042) and/or II (English 048) for three credits each. Many developmental students are ESL learners or Generation 1.5, with limited English skills.

About the Course

College Reading and Study Skills I emphasizes reading comprehension and vocabulary development, with practice in identifying main ideas, supporting details, and inferences. In the next level, students focus on academic reading, study skills, and practice strategies to improve reading comprehension and critical thinking.

Challenges and Goals

I saw an urgent need to accelerate developmental reading students through the sequence so they could enroll in college level courses sooner. In the fall of 2012, I took a sabbatical to redesign the developmental reading sequence from 16-week to 8-week courses so that students might complete the sequence in one semester instead of two. My primary reference book was *What Works: Research-Based Best Practices in Developmental Education* by Hunter R. Boylan. Currently, I am the only professor offering the compressed format.

Implementation

Historically, I taught the 16-week courses face-to-face; class was held twice a week for 85 minutes each day. MyReadingLab accounted for 20 percent of the grade, however, students worked on MyReadingLab without supervision in a lab setting.

The compressed class now meets four days a week, 85 minutes a day, for eight weeks. Students spend half of this time working on MyReadingLab in the computer lab. The compressed class size is 25 instead of 32 due to the computer lab's maximum capacity.

After determining their initial reading levels using MyReadingLab Path Builder and Lexile Locator assessments, students work through 10 topics in the Reading Skills Learning Path related to the chapters in the textbook. Students also complete 10 or more sets of Lexile readings. The wide variety of topics available allow students to choose their preferred subject matter.

I set prerequisites in MyReadingLab so students cannot go directly to the topic post-test—they must work through the content (Overview, Animation, Recall, Practice) consecutively. Although students can complete many of the activities during class, assignments often need to be finished outside of class. Some students prefer working on Reading Level assignments over Reading Skills and vice versa; because each component is worth 10 percent of the grade, there is some flexibility for students' learning preference. Students who pass English 042 with a grade of C or better can begin English 048 the following Monday.

Benefits

My nickname for MyReadingLab is “the excuse buster” because the program allows me to monitor what students are working on and see how much time they are spending in the program. It's to their advantage, because I can intervene when necessary and remind students how many topics they should have completed by the end of each week.

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While I am not available 24/7, MyReadingLab is. Students can work on their reading skills, reading level, and vocabulary on their own time. This frees up class time to have one-on-one conferences with students and give brief “clicker” quizzes on assigned chapters in our Pearson textbooks.

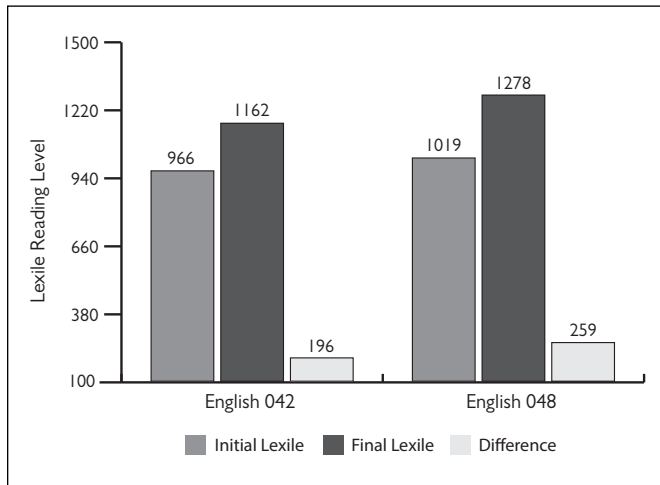


Figure 1. Initial and final Lexile levels, Spring 2014: English 042 ($n = 30$); English 048 ($n = 20$).

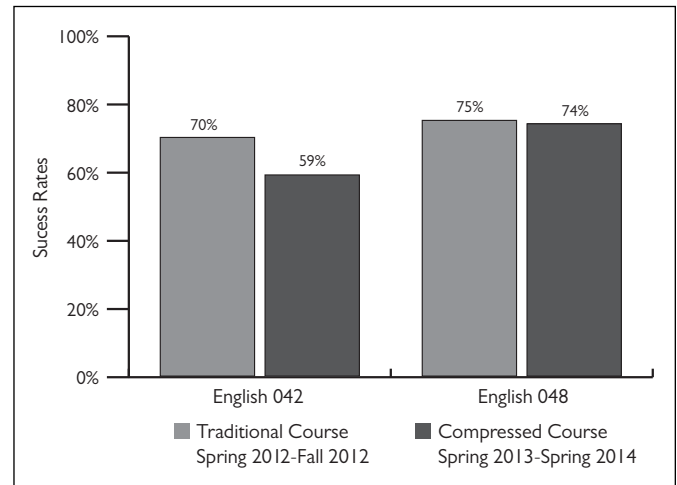


Figure 2. Success rates in compressed course: Spring 2013–Spring 2014. English 042 ($n = 126$); English 048 ($n = 97$).

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Assessments

20 percent	Clicker quizzes on textbook chapters (20)
20 percent	Tests (4)
20 percent	Final Project
10 percent	MyReadingLab Reading Skills Post-Tests (10 $\geq 80\%$)
10 percent	MyReadingLab Reading Level Lexile readings (10 sets $\geq 70\%$)
10 percent	Reflective Journal (50 pages)
10 percent	Participation

Results and Data

Students greatly improve their reading comprehension by working on diagnostic tests, reading skills modules, and reading level exercises in MyReadingLab. In spring 2014, students increased their Lexile level an average of 196 points in English 042 and 259 points in English 048 (Figure 1).

Success rates dipped in the compressed sections of English 042, however, success rates are comparable in English 048 (Figure 2). I believe this is because these students are more advanced and have generally had at least one semester on campus. From spring 2013 to spring 2014, 74 students (59 percent) passed the redesigned sections of English 042, and 72 students (74 percent)

passed the redesigned sections of English 048. These students are accelerating through developmental reading in half the time of students enrolled in the traditional course format and are enrolling in college-level courses sooner.

Of the 146 students who passed English 042 or 048, 115 (nearly 80 percent) successfully completed the required work in MyReadingLab. Although students are able to pass the course without doing their MyReadingLab work, successful students will make sure they put the time and effort needed to do well in the program. Students who neglect MyReadingLab assignments often don't finish (or even attempt) other required work, and often end up with grades too low to move to the next level.

The Student Experience

I find my students are taking the redesigned course more seriously, and most students see the value of studying and practicing with MyReadingLab. One student summed it up this way: “I have been in this class now for sixteen weeks. I can't even believe what I have been able to accomplish. The online work was one of the best things to happen in this class.”

Conclusion

MyReadingLab is phenomenal. If students put in the hours, they improve and gain the skills they need to go on to higher college studies. I will continue to gather data and will study the subsequent success rates of these students who passed the compressed course(s) in Composition I.