THE NEBRASKA MATH READINESS PROJECT

PERSISTENCE, RETENTION, COMPLETION, SUCCESS

Central COMMUNITY COLLEGE

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Project Introduction

Students entering post-secondary education are required to possess a minimum standard of knowledge. College-ready students have a base of knowledge that supports their educational success as they take college-level courses in their primary program of study. Unfortunately, many students are entering post-secondary education without being college-ready and are required to take developmental coursework upon entry to a post-secondary institution.

- Less than one-third of Nebraska high school juniors met benchmarks according to the 2016 Nebraska ACT scores.
- Of Nebraska high school graduates entering a community college, 25% required a developmental math course before meeting the requirements to enter a college-level math course for their program of study (NCCA Study, Fall 2016).
- Nationally, the number of high school graduates who are failing to meet college-level benchmarks has increased by 8% over the last four years.
- This results in over two-thirds of community college students who are required to take developmental coursework. Only 20% who begin with developmental courses successfully finish a college-level math course (Rutschow, Diamond, & Serna-Wallender, 2017).

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To increase the number of students who are college-ready upon high school graduation, five of Nebraska's community colleges (Central Community College, Mid-Plains Community College, Northeast Community College, Southeast Community College, and Western Nebraska Community College) are working together to provide a clear path to post-secondary educational attainment. The Nebraska Math Readiness Project (NMRP) establishes a collaboration among the community colleges and fifteen identified high school partners to assist students in achieving their academic goals. The community colleges will work with identified high school partners to communicate expectations of college-readiness, provide a consistent assessment level of what it means to be college-ready, and assist with program implementation.

The NMRP has the goal to be the statewide, systematic approach that addresses the low percentage of Nebraska high school students who are college-ready in math upon high school graduation. Data will be obtained to provide evidence-based information showcasing the impact and benefits of the project on students across the state from small, medium, and large high schools as they enter and complete post-secondary education.

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Project Intent

The purpose of the NMRP is to provide a bridge to success for high school seniors who need to improve their math skills before entering and completing a college-level math course. The project will be lead by a high school math teacher to improve understanding and reinforce learning. Students will work in a MyLabsPlus course that will provide personalized tools to learn new math skills and build upon existing knowledge. Upon successful completion of the course, students will not need to take foundations-level math classes in college. Instead they will be able to directly enter college-credit math classes upon acceptance into a partnering community college. This allows students to pay less tuition, immediately start taking classes that count towards their degree, be eligible for financial aid, and have the ability to finish their degree on time.

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Population

The NMRP will be a pilot project coordinated by Central Community College, Mid-Plains Community College, Northeast Community College, Southeast Community College, and Western Nebraska Community College with fifteen public high schools. Through these partnerships, a math readiness course will be offered to high school seniors who did not to show college-readiness on their ACT Math exam by scoring between 13 and 16 and also declared intentions to pursue a post-secondary education. The ACT exam was chosen for this project due to its state-wide use by all high school juniors beginning in 2017. In addition to the availability of a standard assessment tool, this population was chosen as early intervention can greatly impact a student's success.

During the initial three years, it is estimated that the NMRP would serve a total of 1,100 students through 80 sections of instruction.

The ultimate goal of the NMRP is a statewide implementation of math readiness instruction across all high schools in the state of Nebraska with support from the Nebraska Department of Education and state leaders.

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MyLabsPlus

The coursework, with the assistance of MyLabsPlus software, will provide a customized and adaptive learning experience for students to increase preparation for college-level math coursework prior to entering in post-secondary education. This intervention is driven by technology and allows a student to learn through personalized pretests, homework, quizzes, and tests. Students can access the MyLabsPlus virtual platform two ways: 1) during the required, in-class course where an instructor is present to assist with indepth questions and instruction, and, 2) outside the traditional classroom with internet and computer accessibility to continue advancing their skills at an individualized pace.

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Teachers

The role of the math teacher within the NMRP is to facilitate the learning process for each student. While much of the curriculum will be online through MyLabsPlus, a math teacher is vital to the success of the project. Students will need daily assistance, monitoring, and counseling throughout the course. Having a teacher that is familiar to the student and knowledgeable on the content will be a great advantage to students and further promote their future success in the NMRP and in their post-secondary education.

Throughout the progression of one year, students will successfully complete two levels within the course. Level I is Arithmetic, where students will focus on obtaining a sound understanding of arithmetic skills and number sense. Level II is Algebra, where students will use their Level I skills to communicate algebraic concepts and solve problems. A detailed timeline will be given to each partner high school to help keep students on track. The teacher may need to jump-start students' motivation for learning if they should fall behind on the timeline. A remediation plan may need to be developed to get students back on track.

For grading and credit allocation of the course, the NMRP allows each partner high school to create their own system.

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Students

Students in the NMRP are to aim for success and be motivated. This is one more opportunity in a student's high school career to improve their math abilities and knowledge. The course has been developed in a way that it can find a student's strengths and weaknesses and build on that foundation.

Students that are placed into developmental math in post-secondary education face especially low odds of graduation. This is viewed as the single biggest obstacle for student success. Early help can greatly impact a student's success.

With the successful completion of both levels of the course, students going to any Nebraska community college will not need to take foundations level math courses which do not count for their program of study. Instead they will be able to immediately take college-credit math classes they need for their program. This will save the students time, money, and give them a better opportunity to finish their program.

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Liaisons

The role of the college faculty liaisons within the NMRP is to ensure that the project is being implemented and offered to students consistently in their corresponding partner high school. Liaisons are also to provide teachers and students support in the application of the course.

It will be very important to the success of the project if the liaisons, high school administration, and high school teachers are on the same page. Due to this project being in its infancy, communication and presence will be key. Correspondence through phone, email, and formal visits will aid in the process. Liaisons may also refer to the the NMRP director for guidance.

Liaisons should contact teachers and administrators one week before the start of the school year for the partner high school. This will give the partner high schools a chance to talk to their liaison and ask any questions before the school year begins. As the year progresses, the liaison should feel like a guide who is helping the partner high school reach project completion. Answering questions as they arise, aiding in grade book updates, watching out for potential problems, and sending deadline reminders for high school teachers and students.

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Liaisons should also plan to do three visits to the specific class over the course of the year. The first visit should occur close to the start of the year. The second visit should be prior to the end of the first semester or the beginning of the second semester. The final visit should be close to the end of the second semester. The NMRP director will also make visits to each school and correspond with them. The purposes of visiting partner high schools are to be a visible presence of the project and to aid students, teachers, and administrators throughout the year.

Throughout the entire project, liaisons will be granted instructor privileges to the MyLabsPlus software. High school teachers may refer to the liaisons for instructional or technical questions. If administrative access is required to fix an issue in the MyLabsPlus software, the project director will be able to help.

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