

Assessment of the Florida College and Career Readiness Initiative

Year 1 Report

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Executive summary

The intent of the Florida College and Career Readiness Initiative (FCCRI) is to help students become college-ready by high school graduation, and subsequently to succeed in obtaining college credentials. This is done by testing college readiness in grade 11 and requiring that students testing below college-ready take college readiness and success (CRS) courses in grade 12.

This report describes findings from the first year of a five-year evaluation of the FCCRI conducted by CNA, funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. One goal of the report is to help Florida educators at all levels to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the FCCRI's design and implementation, as well as describe recommendations from teachers to make the initiative more effective. A second goal is to inform educators in other states and the research community about our work.

The report presents (1) statistics describing the extent to which college readiness testing and CRS course offerings are implemented, (2) results from a statewide survey of teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the FCCRI, and (3) feedback from small group discussions with teachers about impediments to CRS courses and ways to ameliorate them. We conclude by summarizing our findings and describing our efforts to follow up on teachers' recommendations for the most effective ways to improve the FCCRI.

Implementation of the FCCRI

Currently, all Florida high schools are required to give the PERT, Florida's college placement test, to all students in grade 11 who meet high school graduation criteria but are unlikely to meet college readiness criteria. Students who test below "college-ready" on the PERT are required to take CRS courses in grade 12. Student participation was initially voluntary, but testing became mandatory for 11th-graders in school year 2011/12, and CRS course enrollment became mandatory for 12th-graders in 2012/13.

We found that the percentage of students eligible for college readiness testing was approximately 85 percent in math and 55 percent in reading each year since the FCCRI began in 2008/09. This means that most students in the state are targeted for participation in the FCCRI.

Second, we found that in 2008/09, only 13 percent of 11th-graders took the college readiness test. The testing rate was low because high schools had to arrange for state colleges to administer the test, and because taking the test was voluntary for students.

In the first year of mandatory testing (2011/12), the testing rate increased to 60 percent of 11th-graders. Yet, we also found that about 30 percent of targeted students were not tested in each subject (math, reading). This indicates that some schools were not adhering to the state policy.

Third, we found that approximately three-quarters of students scored below college-ready in math and approximately half scored below college-ready in reading in the first year of mandatory testing. This means the majority of students who took the college readiness test should have been required to complete one or more CRS courses.

Fourth, we found that there were some initial delays in offering the CRS courses, with only two-thirds of districts offering courses in 2009/10. District participation increased each year until 2012/13, when offering such courses became mandatory and all districts offered at least one course. Student participation also increased significantly, from only 5,614 in math and 564 in reading in 2009/10 (the first, voluntary year of CRS courses) to more than 50,000 enrollments in CRS courses in 2012/13 (the first mandatory year).

Teachers' perceptions of the FCCRI

In spring 2013 we studied the perceptions of more than 200 teachers of CRS courses using a web-based survey. Key findings are that most teachers support the goals of the FCCRI, believe that their CRS classes are effective in helping student test college-ready, and predict that the effectiveness of the FCCRI will increase in the next school year (2013/14). We also found CRS teachers have stronger credentials and more experience than other teachers.

A particularly important finding is that the more experienced teachers rate the effectiveness of the FCCRI more highly than do less experienced teachers. This is significant because not only do these veteran teachers have greater perspective on the relevance of the initiative, but research often finds experienced teachers to be more skeptical of new reforms than inexperienced teachers (e.g., Spillane, 2004).

Another important finding is that teachers are largely on their own in developing their CRS courses. They would like to receive assistance from other teachers in their own schools and from college staff familiar with syllabi and materials used for related college developmental education and gateway courses. Indeed, CRS teachers with postsecondary teaching experience make extensive use of their state college contacts when developing their CRS courses. Thus, these teachers potentially could serve as valuable “connectors” between the high schools and colleges. They also may be able to help provide students with information about the PERT and the negative consequences of having to take developmental courses in college.

Survey responses also indicated that teachers are able to cope with a wide range of potential classroom impediments (e.g., having disruptive or unengaged students) and still provide effective college preparation for those students who are most likely to attend college.

One interesting and unexpected finding is that teachers indicated that their schools did not give sufficient attention to developing skills that non-college-bound students would find useful in their careers, and they would like to see substantially more attention to this area. Ratings of support for college readiness were slightly higher, but teachers indicated there was still room for improvement, especially in comparison with support given other academic areas such as preventing dropout.

These and other results provide strong indications that there is a great deal of support for the FCCRI among teachers. This increases the likelihood that the mandatory program will achieve its key goals. The findings also suggest that the FCCRI can be even more effective by facilitating opportunities for teachers to work together and with college faculty and staff to share information and resolve problems.

Teachers' feedback for improving the FCCRI

We conducted small group discussions with 63 teachers in eight locations across the state in May 2013. Even though teachers strongly support the goals of the FCCRI and think that the CRS courses are effective for students who are interested in attending college and are near college-ready, they nevertheless identify two major impediments that detract from the FCCRI's effectiveness for this group of students.

The first is that teachers lack information about the skills tested on the PERT. This makes it difficult to structure CRS courses to help students test college-ready. The impediment can be resolved relatively easily, as information about the PERT is available from the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE), and several state colleges have study guides and practice tests for the PERT. Thus, it should be feasible to ameliorate this problem by improving dissemination of these existing resources to CRS teachers and instructional specialists.

The second major impediment is a lack of teaching materials for CRS courses. Teachers think that it would be very useful to have teaching materials from state colleges; they would also like access to other sources of teaching materials, such as pacing guides—as long as exactly how they use the materials is left up to them. The teachers agree that increasing opportunities for them to work together in concert with their districts and local colleges is a key to efficiently acquiring and disseminating resources for CRS courses.

A third impediment, but of lesser importance, is that some teachers struggle to develop a single course that simultaneously meets the needs of students who tested close to college-ready and far below college-ready. Many teachers believe it would be better for all students to place the higher and lower performing ones in separate classes, to the extent that is possible. Teachers point out that Florida's state colleges offer multiple levels of their developmental courses.

Some CRS teachers believe they could better engage students who do not plan to attend college by including more practical applications in their course lessons, and by helping students to understand that some communication and math skills are valuable for careers as well as for college. Teachers also suggest helping students to recognize that access to high-paying jobs is very limited without postsecondary training, and that many students who enter the labor force directly after

high school later enroll in postsecondary training programs. Other teachers, however, especially in rural areas, suggest that students be allowed to opt out of the CSR courses after appropriate counseling.

There was general agreement among teachers that there is no single right answer to dealing with students whose skill levels and interest in college vary. However, there was consensus in favor of teachers and administrators being given the opportunity to work together to consider a range of options and select those that are best suited to the needs of their students and the unique context of their schools.

Conclusions and next steps

It is common to find low levels of implementation, negative evaluations by participants, and many obstacles to improvement in the first year of a new program (e.g., Spillane, 2004). However, we found in the first year of the mandatory FCCRI, almost all districts are offering both college readiness testing and CRS courses, teachers have positive views of the effectiveness of the FCCRI despite identifying several important impediments, and teachers think that the effectiveness will increase further in 2013/14.

The research team, in cooperation with state and college officials, has already taken steps to address two of the greatest impediments to implementation—lack of information on the PERT and lack of teaching materials for CRS courses—by creating an FCCRI group for CRS teachers on the social media site Edmodo.com. From this site group members can access information on the PERT from the FLDOE and PERT test preparation materials from state colleges; it also provides instructional resources (i.e., sample syllabi, worksheets, and practice tests) from state colleges for their developmental education and gateway courses. The online group also creates a virtual community for CRS teachers to collaborate with one another. Within a month of making the site available, more than 300 educators in districts across Florida had joined the Edmodo group.

We plan to continue our feedback activities in year 2 with key goals of determining to what extent improvement efforts have succeeded, what impediments remain, and what the most effective ways to remove remaining impediments would be. We also seek to obtain feedback from a broader range of stakeholders, in addition to CRS teachers, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the FCCRI.

Introduction

Overview

CNA, in collaboration with the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE), has just completed the first year of a five-year study of the Florida College and Career Readiness Initiative (FCCRI), funded by the U.S. Department of Education.¹ This is a statewide initiative that uses college placement testing in grade 11 to identify students who meet high school graduation criteria but are unlikely to meet college readiness criteria. Five college readiness and success (CRS) courses are provided in grade 12 to students who scored below the threshold for “college-ready” on the placement test the year before.²

High schools, community colleges, and the Florida Department of Education have all played a role in the implementation of the FCCRI. High schools are responsible for (1) identifying grade 11 students eligible for the college readiness testing, (2) reviewing test results with the students, (3) counseling students about which postsecondary preparatory courses to take and otherwise influencing senior year course selection to improve college readiness, and (4) providing CRS courses specially designed to build the skills needed to become college-ready. The Florida Department of Education is responsible for overseeing the FCCRI, organizing the testing, and reviewing postsecondary preparatory courses for approval. Up through school year (SY) 2010/11, only community colleges were allowed to administer the college readiness assessment. Starting in SY 2011/12, the state transitioned to a new college readiness test that could be administered directly by the high schools.

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1. See <http://ies.ed.gov/funding/grantsearch/details.asp?ID=1337> for further details of the study.
 2. CRS courses are Math for College Success (state course code 1200410), Math for College Readiness (state course code 1200700), Reading for College Success (state course code 1008350), English IV: College Prep (state course code 1001405), and Writing for College Success (state course code 1009370).

There have been changes to many of the components of the FCCRI over time. When the FCCRI began with the first cohort of students in grade 11 in SY 2008/09, student participation in both the college readiness testing and the CRS courses was voluntary; we refer to that program as the “voluntary” FCCRI. In school year 2011/12, however, participation in the college readiness testing became mandatory for grade 11 students who had mid-level scores in grade 10 on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) and/or the End-of-Course (EOC) assessment.³ In 2012/13, participation in the CRS courses became mandatory, too, for students who had scored below college-ready on the college readiness test the year before. We refer to this current program as the “mandatory” FCCRI.

Table 1 provides a summary of the changes affecting the FCCRI from 2008/09 to 2012/13.

Table 1: Summary of changes affecting the FCCRI from SY 2008/09 to 2012/13

2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
<u>Level on grade 10 test used to target students for the college readiness assessment</u>				
Reading: Levels 2 (contingent upon funding) and 3 on FCAT	Reading: Levels 2 (contingent upon funding) and 3 on FCAT	Reading: Levels 2 (contingent upon funding) and 3 on FCAT	Reading: Levels 2 and 3 on FCAT	Reading: Levels 2 and 3 on FCAT
Math: Levels 2, 3, 4 on FCAT math	Math: Levels 2, 3, 4 on FCAT math	Math: Levels 2, 3, 4 on FCAT math	Math: Levels 2, 3, 4 on Algebra I EOC ¹	Math: Levels 2, 3, 4 on Algebra I EOC ¹
<u>Student participation in the college readiness assessment in grade 11</u>				
Voluntary	Voluntary	Voluntary	Mandatory	Mandatory
<u>Student participation in CRS courses in grade 12</u>				
Voluntary	Voluntary	Voluntary	Voluntary	Mandatory

¹ The Algebra I EOC is administered at the end of an Algebra I course, which can be taken at any grade level. Only students who take Algebra I in grade 10 and are below the cut scores are required by the state to take the college readiness assessment.

3. Students are also required to pass the FCAT and EOC assessments as part of the requirements for high school graduation.

Purpose

This report summarizes the key findings from the first year of the study of both the voluntary and mandatory FCCRI. First, we use administrative records to report on the first four years of the initiative (cohorts of students in grade 11 during school years 2008/09 through 2011/12) on several indicators of the fidelity of implementation, including the extent to which districts offered the college readiness testing and CRS courses and eligible students participated.

Next, we report the findings from a SY 2012/13 survey of CRS course teachers about their perceptions of the early stages of the mandatory FCCRI implementation, the context of their classrooms and schools, and teacher characteristics. Then, we describe findings from a series of small group discussions held in spring 2013 with teachers of CRS courses covering the strengths and weaknesses of the FCCRI, impediments to its implementation, and recommendations for removing these impediments. We conclude with recommendations and next steps.

Below we provide an overview of the research questions, data, and methods for each part of the analysis.

Structure of the section describing the implementation of the FCCRI

The first part of the study, on the implementation of the FCCRI, addresses the following research questions:

- How have student eligibility rates and participation rates (at both the student level and school level) in college readiness testing changed over time?
- What percentage of students score below college-ready on the college placement test in grade 11, and how does that percentage vary by student achievement level on the FCAT?
- How have participation rates (at both the student-level and school-level) in grade 12 college readiness and success courses changed over time?

This part of the study primarily uses student-level data files from the Florida K–20 Data Warehouse. Warehouse data include schools at

tended, student demographics, credential awards, and standardized test scores. There are also student-level transcripts that describe for each course the subject, course level, and grade received. We have obtained data covering four cohorts of 11th-graders from SY 2008/09 through 2011/12.

To supplement the administrative data, we synthesized the information we gathered from teachers at small group discussions conducted throughout the state to collect comments on school and district FCCRI student testing and placement policies. We also examined the attendance logs of CRS course trainings for district leaders held in the state's five education policy regions in spring 2012 to measure district participation in CRS course professional development.

Descriptive statistics derived from the student-level administrative data provided by the K–20 Data Warehouse were the primary means of examining the implementation of the FCCRI. First, we calculated the percentage of students eligible for college readiness testing in each year of the FCCRI. Eligible students are those who in grade 10 score a Level 2 or 3 on the reading portion of the FCAT or a Level 2, 3, or 4 on the FCAT math, on a scale of 1 to 5. We calculated the rate of actual participation in the college placement testing in grade 11 by dividing the number of students tested by the total number of students in each cohort. We also examined how participation rates in college readiness testing differ based on level of performance on the FCAT.

Next, we calculated the percentage of students who scored below college-ready by identifying the grade 11 college readiness test cutoff score for that program year and then calculating the number and percentage of grade 11 students who achieved a score lower than the cutoff. We also examined how the percentage of students scoring below college-ready differed by achievement level on the grade 10 FCAT. Lastly, we summarized participation in CRS courses over time by summing the number of districts offering CRS courses and student enrollment in these courses in each year. We calculated student participation rates by dividing the number of grade 12 students participating in CRS courses by the total number of students in grade 12. We also reviewed district and school policies on retesting students after their completing of CRS courses, as well as district participation in professional development for CRS courses.

Structure of the section describing a survey of teachers' perceptions of the FCCRI

The second part of the study used survey data to examine teachers' perceptions of the FCCRI in order to answer the following research questions:

- How do teachers assess the effectiveness of FCCRI's components?
- What types of changes and sources of support do teachers recommend for improving the effectiveness of the FCCRI?
- How do contextual factors, such as teacher and school characteristics, influence teachers' perceptions of the FCCRI?

This part of the study is based on a comprehensive survey that was administered in spring 2013 to a stratified sample of Florida high school teachers of CRS courses. The characteristics used to define the size and performance strata were total high school enrollment in the district and the percentage of students with scores of Level 1 or Level 2 on the grade 10 FCAT.

Total enrollment is likely to affect FCCRI implementation because larger districts tend to have a greater number of high schools and greater enrollment at each high school. As a result, large districts tend to have more specialized staff at both the district and school levels to help implement a new program. In addition, teachers involved with the new program in a large district will be able to compare their experiences with many more teachers and supervisors at their own school and at other schools in their district with similar assignments, which teachers in smaller districts cannot do.

The percentage of students with low test scores in a high school is likely to strongly affect implementation because schools must devote resources to preparing these students to meet high school graduation requirements before they can focus on helping these students meet more rigorous college-preparatory criteria. Working with these students is one of the most difficult and most resource-intensive tasks confronting high schools. Thus, meeting this long-standing goal is likely to make it especially difficult to find the resources needed to meet the requirements of the FCCRI for other students who pass the

high school exit exam, but test below college-ready on the college readiness assessment. To make the resource crunch even worse, schools with high proportions of students not passing the exit exam are also likely to have high proportions of students testing below college-ready.

Our goal in selecting the strata was to place each high school into a group where outcomes and implementation problems were likely to be similar within the group, but different across groups. This allowed us to understand differences in implementation experiences and to arrive at recommendations for increasing the effectiveness of the FCCRI that would apply to all high schools, as well as recommendations that would apply only to high schools facing particular sorts of implementation challenges.

The survey sample consisted of 225 CRS course teachers in 113 schools spread across 42 of Florida's 67 school districts, and was representative of the larger stratified sample from which it was drawn (see appendix A). Information we collected on the early stages of FCCRI implementation included teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of various FCCRI elements on improving their students' college readiness, the types of changes that could improve the effectiveness of their CRS courses, and the sources and supports they used to prepare their CRS courses. Information on classroom-level factors included teachers' report of the number of students in their CRS course and their perceptions of those students' engagement, behavior, and academic performance.

School-level information included the size and performance of the school's district, teachers' report of the number of other teachers in their school teaching their same CRS course, timing of the college placement test in the school, and teachers' perceptions of their school's priorities regarding student outcomes. Information on teacher characteristics included academic credentials, level and type of teaching experience, and teaching responsibilities and other roles performed within the school.

We report means and frequencies from responses on the survey from teachers of CRS courses. For the majority of the survey items, teacher respondents were asked to focus on the CRS course section they taught that met earliest in the week. For each set of analyses present-

ed, we included only the respondents who answered the particular survey question (these numbers range from 216 to 225 depending on the question). This section of the report highlights teacher responses related to FCCRI implementation and explores how those responses are related to other factors such as teacher, classroom, school, and district characteristics.

Structure of the section describing teachers' feedback from small group discussions for improving the FCCRI

The third part of the study uses teachers' direct feedback from a series of small group discussions to examine three research questions:

- What are the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the FCCRI?
- What are the primary impediments reducing the effectiveness of the FCCRI?
- How can those impediments be removed?

This part of the study uses comments made at a series of small group discussions we had in May 2013 with 63 teachers of CRS courses, plus two small surveys conducted at the start of each of the two halves of the discussion. Only teachers from schools in the stratified random survey sample were invited to participate, and the distribution of schools with participants across strata were similar to the larger sample from which they were drawn (see appendix A). In order to understand how the initiative varies across the state, discussion groups were held in Altamonte Springs, Fort Lauderdale, Gainesville, Jacksonville, Orlando, Miami, Panama City, and St. Petersburg.

The first half of each small group discussion focused on the overall effectiveness of the FCCRI and the effectiveness of the CRS courses, what resources were made available to implement the FCCRI, and how the goals of the FCCRI compared with other priorities at the teachers' schools. The second half discussed more specific questions about the way the FCCRI was implemented and what could be done to improve its effectiveness. In this report, we draw from notes taken during the discussions by note takers and subsequent write-ups created by discussion leaders.

Appendix C presents the results of questionnaires that teachers filled out at the start of each half of the discussion. The first questionnaire asked the teachers to list the things they liked best about the FCCRI and the things they liked least. The second questionnaire asked the teachers to list their recommendations for ways to improve the program.

Their written responses were coded into spreadsheets. Initial coding was done separately by two members of the research team. The coding was then compared for inter-rater reliability and differences were reconciled, to obtain a final set of coded comments.

Findings: Implementation of the FCCRI

Statewide policies define which high school students should take the college readiness test and participate in CRS courses based on their level of performance on state assessments. However, a number of schools and districts throughout the state have modified these policies. Using administrative records and reports from FLDOE, we examined the extent to which schools offered testing and CRS courses, and eligible students participated in the FCCRI under the voluntary program and the mandatory program.

With these data, we examined:

- Student eligibility rates and participation rates in college readiness testing
- Student performance on college readiness assessments in grade 11
- Participation in CRS courses in grade 12

Eligibility and participation in college readiness testing

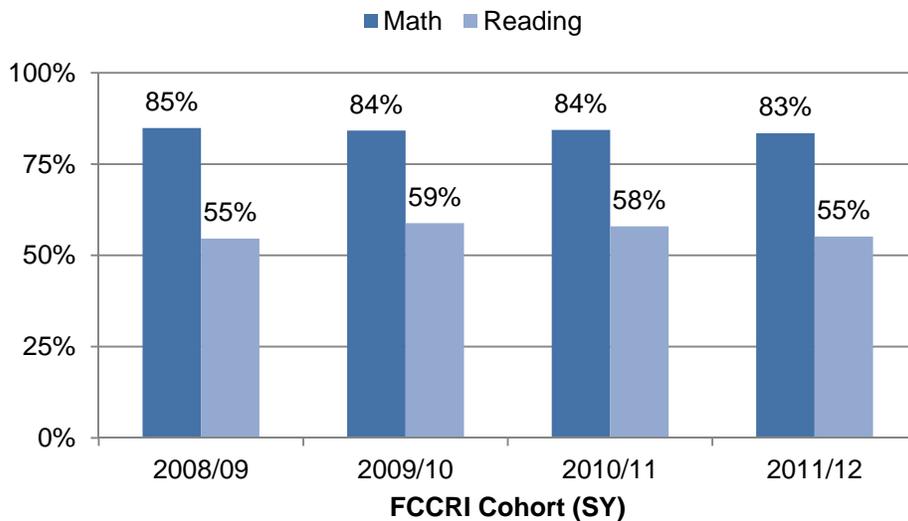
Students scoring in the mid-range of performance on the FCAT in grade 10 are targeted to take the college readiness test in grade 11, but only in the subject area(s) in which they scored below the FCAT threshold. Under Florida's Senate Bill 1908, students are eligible for college readiness testing if they have "scores at Level 2 or Level 3 on the reading portion of the grade 10 FCAT or Level 2, Level 3, or Level 4 on the mathematics assessments" (Florida Statute 1008.30, 2008). However, early guidance from FLDOE recommended that schools limit participation to students with an FCAT Level 3 score (reading and math) or 4 (math), and then expand the program to students with FCAT Level 2 scores if funding was available (Florida Department of Education, 2008).

The testing became mandatory in the 2011/12 school year under Florida House Bill 1255 (Florida Statute 1008.30, 2011). But the criteria for testing remained the same, and the new guidance specified

students with FCAT scores of Level 2 must be tested, dropping the earlier contingency based on the availability of funding.

FCAT math and reading scores for SY 2008/09 through SY 2011/12 indicate that the majority of grade 10 students in Florida were eligible for college readiness testing. As shown in Figure 1, the percentage of grade 10 students eligible for college readiness testing in math was between 83 percent and 85 percent each year. In contrast, just more than half of students were eligible in reading. The percentage of eligible students increased 4 percentage points, from 55 percent to 59 percent, in school years 2008/09 to 2009/10, and then declined slightly in the following two years.

Figure 1. Percentage of students eligible for college readiness testing based on grade 10 FCAT scores, by subject area



Source: Authors' calculations based on student-level FCAT data provided by the Florida Department of Education.

Note: FCAT reading N=626,099. FCAT math N=624,783

In the early years of the initiative, not all high schools offered both college readiness testing and CRS courses as was required. The percentage of districts offering college readiness testing increased from 85 percent in 2008/09 to 97 percent in 2011/12, when testing became mandatory. Grade 10 students' participation rates in the college readiness testing increased from 13 percent of 11th-graders in 2008/09 to nearly 60 percent of 11th-graders in 2011/12.

During the voluntary program, the students took the College Entry-Level Placement Test (CPT) as the college readiness assessment.⁴ Florida later adopted a new college readiness assessment called the Postsecondary Education Readiness Test (PERT), which high schools began to administer in SY 2011/12, the first year of mandatory testing.

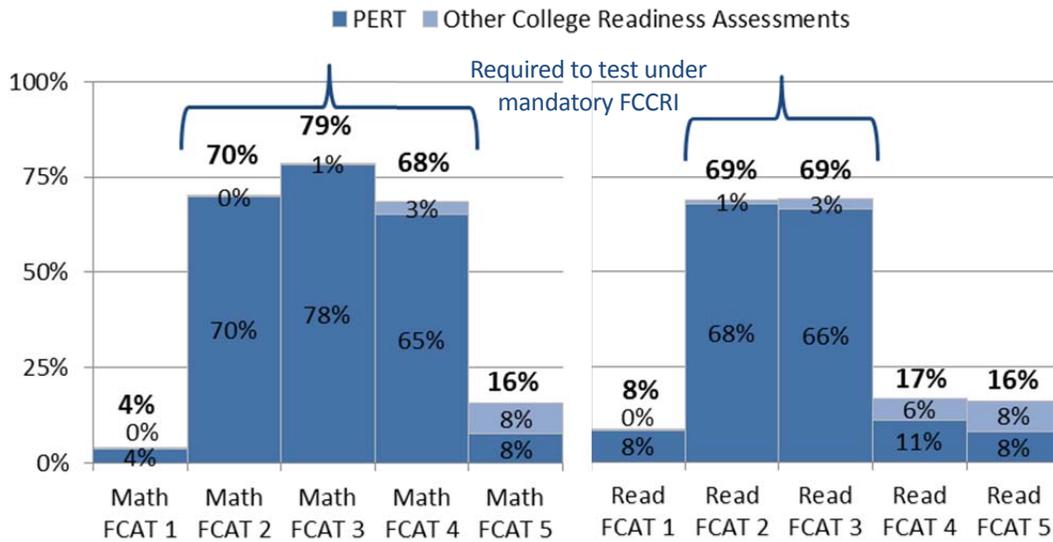
Students also have the option to take another state-approved college readiness assessment instead, such as the ACT or SAT. However, there are higher testing fees for these alternate assessments, and most districts do not pay for students to take them. Further, the data used in our analyses may underestimate participation rates for those other college readiness assessments because the database includes only the highest score received on them, regardless of the grade level when the test was taken.⁵ Records are also missing for students who pay to take these assessments on their own and do not report their scores to a public college or university in Florida.

Although FCCRI policy specifies that only those students who achieve certain FCAT scores in reading and math are required take a college readiness assessment, in SY 2011/12 some students across all five FCAT levels were tested (figure 2). Between 68 and 79 percent of students required to take the math test based on their FCAT scores (Levels 2, 3, and 4) and 69 percent of students required to take the reading test (Levels 2 and 3) did. This means that approximately 30 percent of students who should have taken the test were not tested in each subject area. Conversely, between 4 and 17 percent of students whose FCAT scores didn't require it were tested anyway.

4. Appendix B contains a glossary describing the assessments referenced in this report.

5. This means that if a student takes the ACT in grade 11 and retests in grade 12 with a higher score, the database includes a record only for the grade 12 score. The student would be incorrectly identified as not taking the ACT in grade 11.

Figure 2. Participation rates for PERT and other college readiness assessments in grade 11 for the 2011/12 cohort, by FCAT level and subject



Source: Authors' calculations based on student-level FCAT data provided by the Florida Department of Education.

Note: For FCAT math: N=11,146 Level 1; N=30,405 Level 2; N=46,985 Level 3; N=55,719 Level 4; and N=15,284 Level 5. For FCAT reading: N=35,376 Level 1; N=56,124 Level 2; N=32,003 Level 3; N=13,979 Level 4; and N=22,219 Level 5.

In our small group discussions, teachers explained why their high schools deviated from the testing criteria during the mandatory program, which may also explain variation during the voluntary program. In four districts, some schools administer the PERT to all grade 11 students, regardless of their FCAT achievement. Other high schools in three districts exempt the highest and/or lowest FCAT performers from taking the PERT, although the FCAT cutoff can differ from that defined in Florida Statute 1008.30. For example, at one high school, all students who do not achieve an FCAT Level 5 in reading take the PERT. In contrast, at another high school, the PERT is administered “to all juniors who intend to go into college prep, dual enrollment, or AP (Advanced Placement⁶),” so many of its highest

6. AP courses follow a standardized curriculum developed by the College Board and culminate with course-specific exams. Many colleges grant students credit hours if they achieve a specific score or above on the exams. The College Board offers 34 AP courses and exams in math, science, language arts, foreign language, social studies, and fine arts.

performing students are tested. Another high school specifies that if students score high on the PERT, they are not required to meet the graduation criteria of passing the FCAT. As one English teacher described,

“[The PERT] counts toward their FCAT for reading. They had to get a score of 153 in reading and something else in English and you’d get FCAT reading waived.... This year they said that certain scores on the PERT would take care of FCAT math and reading.”

Receiving a high or low FCAT score is not the only way students can be exempt from taking the PERT at some schools. Teachers from 4 of the 21 districts represented in the small group discussions specified that receiving a concordance score on the ACT/SAT exempted students from taking the PERT. As a teacher from one district explained,

“The district paid for students to take ACT during the school day, and thus every junior took the ACT. This was good for students who did not do well on PERT because they had another opportunity to demonstrate college readiness.”

In some cases, if a student did not meet the PERT college-ready cut-off and was placed in a CRS course, a subsequent high score on the ACT/SAT would result in the student being removed from the course. As one teacher described,

“A lot of seniors had taken SAT or ACT in the summer and they got pulled out of my class because they got the college-ready scores they needed.”

However, the timing of the ACT/SAT administration plays a role in whether students can test out of the CRS course. A teacher explained,

“Some kids don’t take SAT or ACT until January, at which point we can’t remove students from the class.”

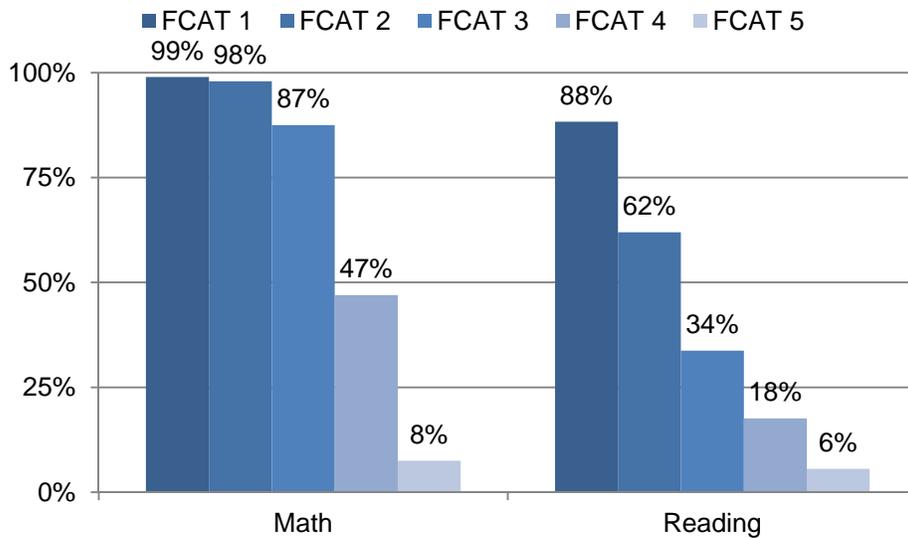
Student performance on the college readiness test

In the first year of the voluntary program (2008/09), approximately 60 percent of students who took the college readiness test in grade 11 scored below college-ready in both reading and math. When testing became mandatory in 2011/12, the percentage of students scoring

below college-ready increased to 73 percent in math, but decreased to 51 percent in reading.

It is these students not college-ready who are targeted for the CRS courses in grade 12. As illustrated in figure 3, nearly all students in 2011/12 who achieved a Level 1 or 2 on the grade 10 FCAT math later scored below college-ready on PERT math in grade 11. Of students who achieved a Level 3 on FCAT math, 87 percent also scored below college-ready on PERT, as did about half of students who achieved a Level 4. Only 8 percent of FCAT math Level 5 students scored below college-ready. In reading, nearly 90 percent of students who achieved a Level 1 FCAT score did not test college-ready on PERT in grade 11. Progressing up the FCAT reading levels, the percentage of students testing below college-ready on PERT steadily decreased, from 62 percent of Level 2 students to 6 percent of Level 5 students.

Figure 3. Percentage of students by FCAT level scoring below college-ready on PERT math and reading for the 2011/12 cohort, by subject



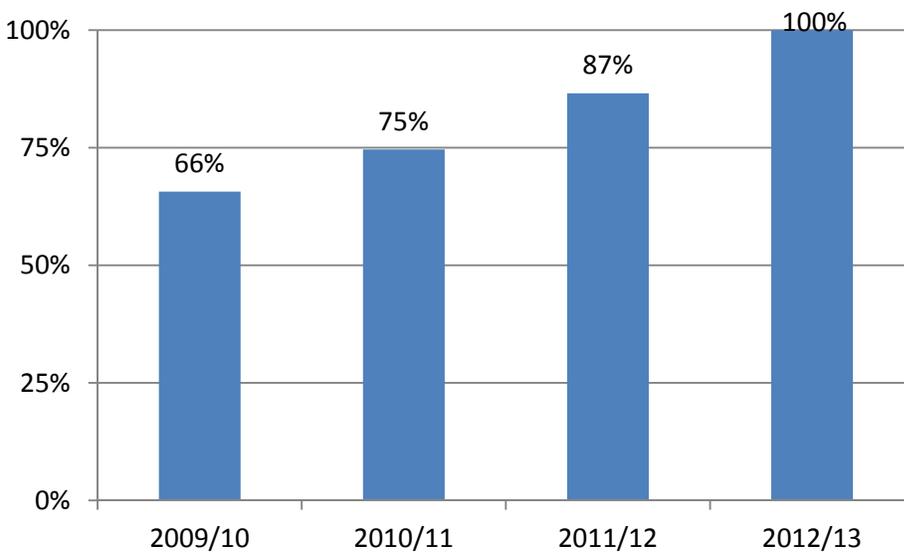
Source: Authors' calculations based on student-level FCAT data provided by the Florida Department of Education.

Note: For FCAT math: N=390 Level 1; N=21,235 Level 2; N=36,719 Level 3; N=36,244 Level 4; and N=1,147 Level 5. For FCAT reading: N=2,959 Level 1; N=38,005 Level 2; N=21,233 Level 3; N=1,531 Level 4; and N=1,758 Level 5.

Participation in college readiness and success courses

There were initial delays in implementation of the five CRS courses, with only two-thirds of districts offering at least one CRS course in SY 2009/10, the first year CRS courses were offered under the voluntary program (figure 4). The number of districts offering these courses increased each year. In 2012/13, when offering courses became mandatory, all districts participated by offering at least one CRS course. However, this does not mean that all five of the CRS courses approved by the state are offered. In three of our small group discussions, several math and English teachers mentioned that their school offered only one CRS course in their subject areas.

Figure 4. Percentage of districts offering at least one college readiness and success course, by year



Source: Authors' calculations based on student-level transcript data provided by the Florida Department of Education.

Note: N=67 districts statewide.

The increase in CRS course offerings was at the expense of existing courses in some districts, particularly in English departments. In our small group discussions, English teachers from some schools in six districts described that with the introduction of the CRS courses, their schools had eliminated the standard-level English IV class. As teachers explained,

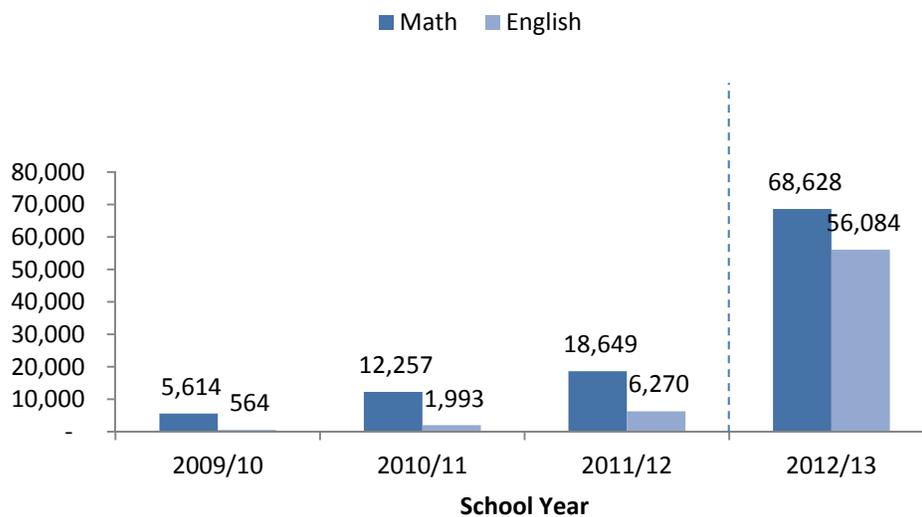
“[In] some schools they took English IV and made it [CSR], without providing an option for a standard-level English IV course.”

“All students not in dual enrollment take the college readiness course.”

Across the small group discussions, eliminating standard-level math classes was mentioned by just three teachers, indicating that perhaps this is not as large an issue as it is for English departments.

Student participation in CRS courses was very low in the early years of the initiative, with statewide enrollments of only 5,614 in math and 564 in English in SY 2009/10 (figure 5). During the voluntary FCCRI, enrollments increased each year until 2011/12, when 18,649 students took courses in math and 6,270 students took courses in English. Participation substantially increased under the mandatory FCCRI program in 2012/13, with more than 50,000 enrollments in each subject.

Figure 5. Number of enrollments in college readiness and success courses, by year



Source: Authors' calculations based on student course records provided by the Florida Department of Education.

However, some students who were enrolled in the CRS courses had not scored below college-ready on the PERT the previous year. Teachers from schools in four districts described that all students who were absent or truant and therefore missed taking the PERT in grade 11 were placed in CRS courses in grade 12. Furthermore, some high-

performing students on the FCAT or PERT chose to enroll in CRS courses even though they were not required to do so. Eliminating standard-level grade 12 English courses in some districts limited students to either taking a challenging honors or AP course or taking the less-challenging CRS course. In four of the eight small group discussions, teachers described that students who performed well on the FCAT but did not want to do the extra work of a higher level English class chose to enroll in the CRS course. For example, one teacher stated,

“Students who had passed the college readiness test were in this class because the district did not allow them to take another English class unless it was AP. Students didn’t want to do the extra work of AP, and there was no other option.”

Another teacher speculated that some students purposefully failed the PERT to avoid taking a higher-level English course.

In some cases, administrators placed students in CRS courses. Teachers from two schools in the same district described that students who were struggling in AP and honors classes were placed into CRS courses. As one teacher explained,

“The administration took some kids out of dual enrollment who weren’t doing well and put them in college prep because there are no other options for standard-level courses.”

One teacher stated the administration placed students in her math CRS course because they needed an additional math credit to achieve the four credits required to graduate. Another teacher noted that administrators also moved students out of the CRS courses if they achieved a concordance score on the ACT/SAT, but,

“They only moved the [students] who knew if they had a concordance score and screamed about it. [Guidance] moved them out mid semester.”

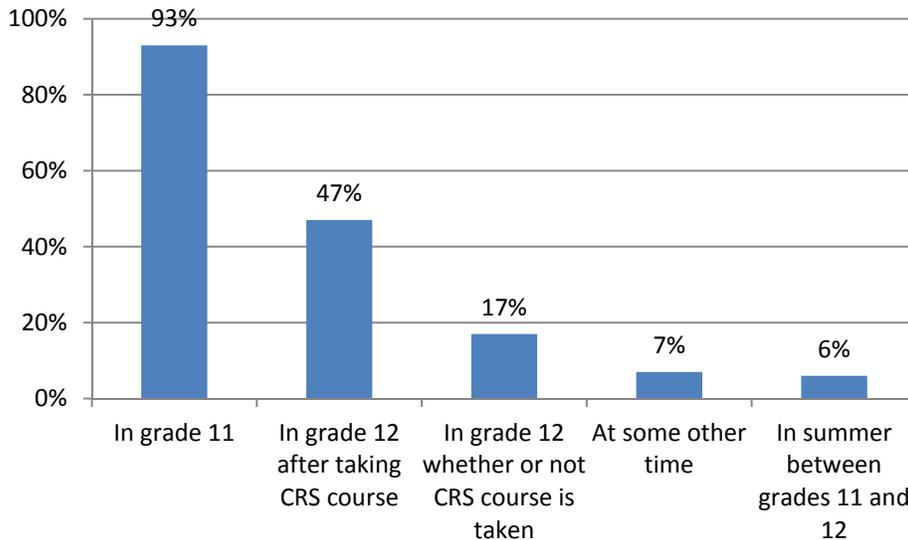
Retesting students in college readiness and success courses

Students who attend a Florida college after graduation must meet the college-ready cut scores on the PERT or the CPT (or pass another college readiness assessment, such as the ACT), in order to enroll in entry-level, credit-bearing college courses in the subject for which they had scored not college-ready (Florida College System, 2012).

They must also pass at least one college-level math and English course to obtain an associate’s degree. Students who are not college-ready must have completed or be enrolled in developmental education courses by the time they have completed 12 credit hours.

The ideal time for retesting students on the PERT is toward the end of their CRS courses in high school. CRS teachers reported in our survey all of the times when PERT testing was conducted at their school. Ninety-three (93) percent of respondents indicated that their school conducted PERT testing in grade 11, and nearly half of respondents indicated that their school conducted PERT testing in grade 12 after students had completed a CRS course (figure 6).

Figure 6. Timing of PERT testing at respondent’s school



Source: Responses from spring 2013 CRS course teacher survey.

Note: N=225 teachers.

Our small group discussions indicated that most schools administer a retest of the PERT to grade 12 students enrolled in CRS courses just prior to the end of the school year. However, at one school, seniors were required to retake the PERT multiple times until they passed it; and at another high school, seniors had the opportunity to take the PERT at the beginning and end of grade 11 (“so they had a chance to try again if they didn’t pass it the first time”). In a few instances, teachers counted students’ scores on the PERT retests toward their

CRS course grades. Whether the retest factored in the CRS course grade appeared to be the decision of the teacher and not a specific school or district policy.

District leader participation in college readiness and success course professional development

The last area of CRS course participation that we examined was district staff participation in state-led CRS course professional development. In April and May 2012, the Florida Department of Education organized day-long college readiness and success workshops for district and college representatives. A total of 10 workshops were conducted, 5 in math and 5 in English/Language Arts (ELA), across Florida's five educational policy regions. A total of 142 district representatives attended the workshops, along with 17 representatives from Florida state colleges.

The workshops followed a train-the-trainer model, meaning that district representatives who participated in the professional development were supposed to return and present the information to CRS course teachers at the schools in their district. Data are not available on the extent to which this information was disseminated to CRS teachers.

Attending the ELA workshops were 77 district leaders (from 47 districts) and 10 college representatives; 27 districts were not represented, which could mean that CRS teachers in ELA in more than one-third (36 percent) of Florida's school districts did not receive information from the regional trainings.

Attending the math workshops were 72 district leaders (from 51 districts) and 7 college representatives; 24 districts, representing nearly one-third (32 percent) of all Florida districts, were not represented, which again could mean that math CRS course in those districts did not receive information from the regional trainings.

Findings: Teachers' perceptions of the FCCRI

CRS teachers provide a unique perspective on FCCRI's implementation and effectiveness and they are well positioned to provide information about ways to improve the initiative. While our small group discussions provided nuanced information about teachers' opinions, the data from our CRS teacher survey can illustrate the frequency of phenomena among a larger sample, look at variation in teacher experiences, and discover how those experiences are associated with other factors. Indeed, the survey findings often echoed and extended our understanding of themes from the small group discussions.

In this section we highlight teacher survey findings related to FCCRI implementation and explore how teachers' perceptions of FCCRI's effectiveness are related to other factors such as teacher, classroom, school, and district characteristics. We present key findings related to effectiveness, preparation sources, teachers' suggestions for improving effectiveness, and how these are related to other factors. We have also included comments that teachers provided in answer to the open-ended survey questions, to highlight particular findings.

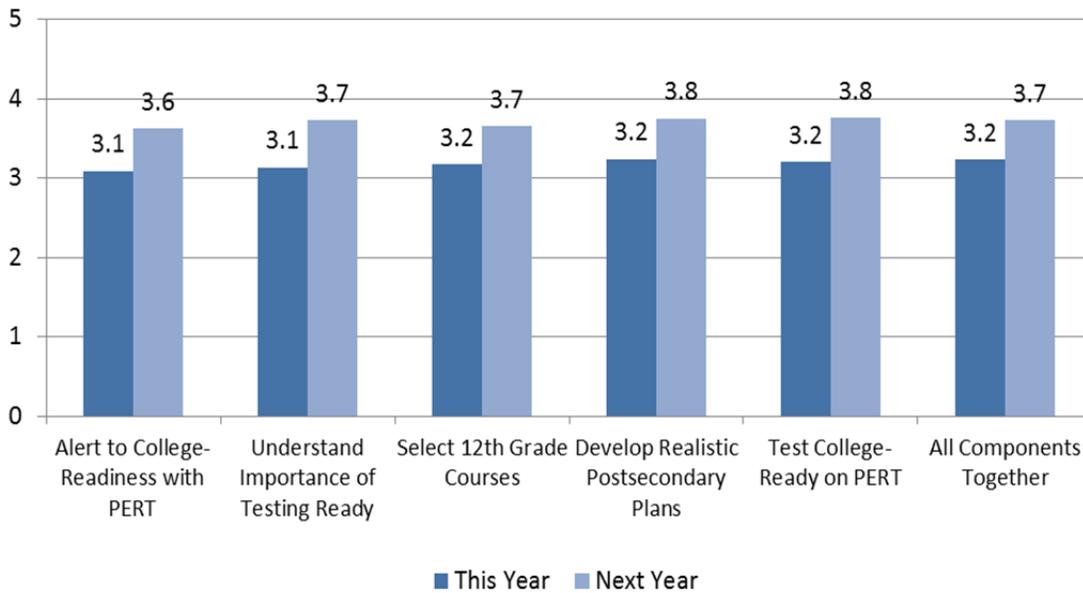
The sample consisted of 225 CRS teachers in 113 schools in 42 districts, surveyed in the spring semester of the 2012/13 school year. For each set of analyses presented here, we include only the respondents who answered those particular survey questions (ranging from N=216 to N=225).

Most teachers believe FCCRI implementation has been effective, and they expect it to improve next year.

CRS teachers largely believe FCCRI to be effective at increasing students' college readiness. More than two-thirds of teachers believe that in SY 2012/13 the FCCRI was moderately to extremely effective in increasing students' college readiness, and there is only slight variation in their perceptions of its various components. In addition, most teachers believe that FCCRI components will become more effective in increasing students' college readiness by the end of school year 2013/14.

Figure 7 illustrates the mean scores of FCCRI effectiveness on a 5-point scale (with 1 being “not at all effective” and 5 being “extremely effective”) for each of FCCRI’s six stated student outcome goals.

Figure 7. Mean scores of teacher assessments of FCCRI effectiveness on student outcome goals, this year and next year



Note: Scale ranges from 1=“not at all effective” to 5 “extremely effective.” N=217.

As with any large statewide initiative, implementation is a complex endeavor and it takes time to work out the most effective mechanisms for translating ideas into actions. That the mean rating for the effectiveness of each FCCRI component on each student outcome goal increased when teachers were asked to estimate the initiative’s future effectiveness suggests they expect implementation issues to be worked out and for FCCRI’s effectiveness to improve over time. Responding to open-ended questions, teachers noted several implementation issues: lack of preparation time for these new courses, lack of adequate course materials and the inability of school and district leaders to provide funds for adequate materials or textbook, variations or lack of clarity in criteria used to place students in CRS courses, and ambiguity regarding the content and goals of the courses.

Interestingly, we asked teachers to estimate the percentage of students who would be able to test college-ready at the end of their

course, but found these percentages were not closely related to their overall ratings of FCCRI effectiveness. This might indicate that teachers judged effectiveness based on the level of improvements to students' college readiness and there was a lot of variation across schools in initial PERT scores. Alternatively, perhaps teachers considered other factors when rating effectiveness.

CRS teachers have strong credentials and experience.

In line with the initiative's design, schools seem to be assigning teachers with strong credentials to CRS courses. All respondents reported having at least a bachelor's degree, and more than half reported having a higher credential: 48 percent a master's degree, 3 percent a specialized degree, and 2 percent a doctorate. In comparison, only 39 percent of all teachers statewide in Florida have graduate degrees, according to a report by the National Center for Education Statistics (U.S. Department of Education, 2009).

In addition, most CRS teachers are experienced: two-thirds reported having taught at their current school for 4 or more years, and one-quarter (26 percent) reported having taught more than 10 years there. About one-third reported prior teaching experience at the postsecondary level, at state colleges or universities.

Teachers with experience teaching at the postsecondary level and teachers with more years of experience in high school rated FCCRI's effectiveness highly.

Teachers with four or more years of high school teaching experience (N = 45) rated FCCRI's effectiveness in alerting students to whether they are college-ready more highly than did newer high school teachers (N = 171). Moreover, teachers with postsecondary teaching experience (N = 66) rated FCCRI's future effectiveness (by the end of SY 2013/14) in helping students develop realistic post-high school plans more highly than did respondents without (N = 150). That teachers with more experience rate FCCRI's effectiveness highly is significant. Not only do these teachers have greater perspective on the relevance of the initiative, but research often finds experienced teachers to be more skeptical of new reforms than are inexperienced teachers (e.g., Spillane, 2004). Therefore, positive evaluations from veterans are especially noteworthy. Experienced teachers and teachers with postsecondary experience also have more knowledge and resources on

which to draw for making the program effective. If similar access to resources could be made available to the other teachers, such as information about the PERT and college developmental education courses, it might improve the effectiveness of the initiative.

Teachers with postsecondary teaching experience may serve as connectors to colleges.

CRS teachers with postsecondary teaching experience are a potentially valuable resource for the FCCRI—as “connectors” from the high schools to colleges. Not only might these teachers have greater access to college course materials than teachers who have not taught at the postsecondary level, but by using these teachers’ existing relationships with the colleges, FCCRI may be able to foster stronger institutional connections. CRS teachers with postsecondary teaching experience could also help colleges communicate to high school students about the PERT, consequences of developmental education, and postsecondary educational pathways that lead to careers, even for those students who did not plan to attend college.

Teachers’ perceptions of FCCRI vary by subject area along a number of dimensions.

In general, teachers of math CRS courses judged the effectiveness of FCCRI’s components more positively than did English CRS teachers. On the other hand, English CRS teachers were more optimistic about the likelihood of FCCRI’s components becoming more effective next year school year.

Teachers also rated the degree to which changes in nine different types and sources of support would improve their effectiveness in teaching their courses (on a 4-point scale, with 1 being “would not make a difference” and 4 being “would make a large difference”). English teachers rated each support as having more potential than did math teachers, except the two changes related to class composition (homogeneity and fewer disruptive students). Statistically significant differences in ratings are related to having better descriptions of course standards and increased teacher prep time, both prior to and during the school year. Table 2 illustrates these differences.

There are also differences between math and English CRS teachers’ ratings of various sources of support for improving their effectiveness.

These differences are statistically significant for sources outside of the school. Making connections with college remedial instructors and other college staff may be especially important to improving the effectiveness of English CRS courses, enabling teachers to align their courses and student assessments to college requirements. Table 3 illustrates the mean ratings for each source of support by subject area on the same 4-point scale.

Table 2: Differences in mean ratings of potential improvements on CRS teacher effectiveness, by subject area of CRS course taught

	Math CRS teachers (N = 103)	English CRS teachers (N = 115)	Difference	Significance
	Mean	Mean		
Better diagnostic tools	3.1	3.4	- 0.3	ns
Textbook/materials	3.2	3.3	- 0.1	ns
More information about PERT	3.0	3.3	- 0.3	ns
Better description of course standards	2.8	3.0	- 0.2	**
More prep time – prior to school year	2.8	3.4	- 0.6	**
More prep time – during school year	2.9	3.3	- 0.4	**
More professional development	2.6	2.8	- 0.2	ns
More homogeneous student group	3.0	2.9	0.1	ns
Fewer disruptive students	2.6	2.4	0.2	ns

Notes: Scale ranges from 1="would not make a difference" to 4="would make a large difference." Significance was calculated using the Mann-Whitney U test, which compares median differences between two independent groups. **=difference is statistically significant at the .05 level. ns=difference is not statistically significant.

Table 3: Differences in mean ratings of potential help on CRS teacher effectiveness, by subject area of CRS course taught

	Math CRS teachers (N = 103)	English CRS teachers (N = 115)	Difference	Significance
	Mean	Mean		
Help from other teachers	2.2	2.3	- 0.1	ns
Help from school administrators	2.1	2.3	- 0.2	ns
Help from district staff	1.9	2.3	- 0.4	**
Help from college remedial instructors	2.7	3.1	- 0.4	**
Help from other college instructors or staff	2.5	2.8	- 0.3	**

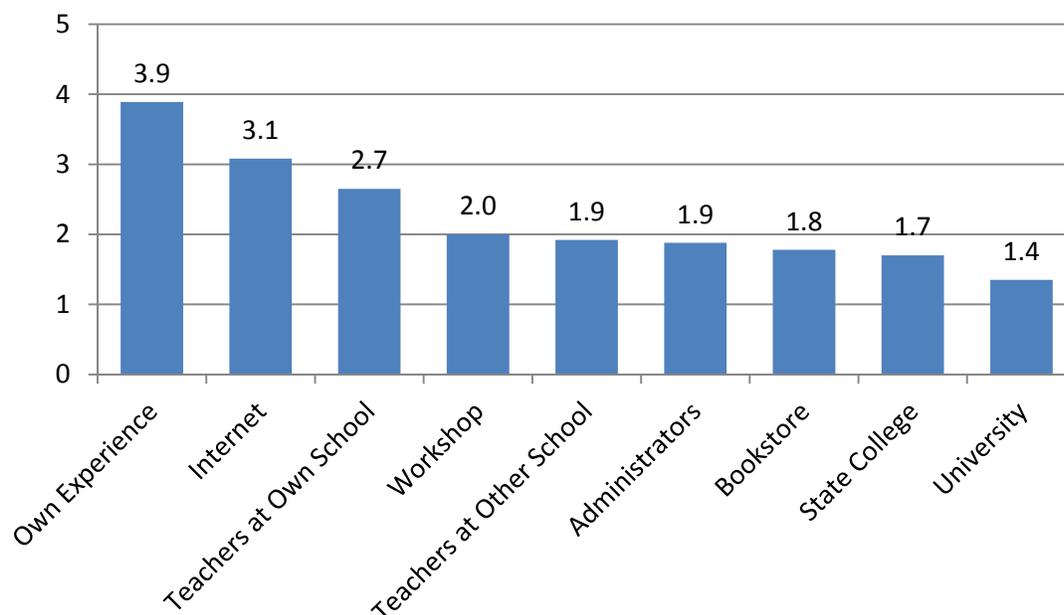
Notes: Scale ranges from 1="would not make a difference" to 4="would make a large difference." Significance was calculated using the Mann-Whitney U test, which compares median differences between two independent groups. **=difference is statistically significant at the .05 level. ns=difference is not statistically significant.

Teachers largely rely on their own experience in developing their CRS courses.

The majority of respondents indicated that they relied heavily on their own experience to develop their CRS courses (84 percent). Almost half reported relying heavily also on the Internet and almost one-quarter on fellow teachers at their own school. Fewer than 10 percent of respondents reported relying heavily on administrators, teachers at other schools, or college sources. Figure 8 illustrates teachers' ratings of the degree to which they used various sources to prepare their CRS course, on a 5-point scale (with 1 being "not at all" and 5 being "exclusively").

Instead of teachers searching on their own, the FCCRI could benefit from having a centralized website that contains accurate and easily accessible information related to FCCRI, the PERT, and college remedial practices, with links to CRS course curricular materials. Online discussion forums may also be a low-cost way of sharing and disseminating important information.

Figure 8. Degree to which teachers relied on each source to prepare their CRS courses



Notes: Scale ranges from 1="not at all" to 5 "exclusively." N=218.

Many CRS teachers have other roles and responsibilities that could be leveraged to increase FCCRI's effectiveness.

Of the 224 teachers responding, 90 percent reported also teaching at least one non-CRS class in their school. Also among respondents, 2 percent reported also serving as a school counselor, 16 percent as department head or assistant department head, 22 percent as a coach; 41 percent reported also leading an extracurricular activity.

CRS teachers who also serve as department heads or coaches or who lead extracurricular activities rated more preparation time as having greater potential to increase their effectiveness than did other teachers. CRS teachers who also serve as coaches rated better descriptions of course standards and better textbook/materials as having greater potential to increase their effectiveness than did other teachers. CRS teachers who also lead extracurricular activities used the Internet, teachers from other schools, and state college instructors or staff at higher rates than did other teachers; they also rated help from district staff and college sources as having greater potential to increase their effectiveness than did other teachers.

Teachers may be able to use their other roles within the school to reinforce FCCRI's components and goals within their own department and through extracurricular activities they lead. For example, teachers with other departmental responsibilities may be in a position to disseminate information related to the PERT (what academic content is tested, the consequences of not passing) throughout other classes in their department, or they could try to coordinate opportunities for common planning time with fellow CRS teachers. Teachers who also serve as coaches and lead extracurricular activities are well positioned to explain directly to students the consequences of not testing college-ready on the PERT in informal ways during nonacademic activities; they also are a potential source of cross-school and district-level information sharing because they probably have more interaction with other teachers and staff as a concomitant with their other duties.

Classroom characteristics matter, but disruptive students are not driving teachers' perceptions of FCCRI's effectiveness.

Of survey respondents, 90 teach in schools in large districts (40 percent), 77 teach in schools in medium districts (34 percent), and 58

teach in schools in small districts (26 percent). A statistically significant association exists between district size and district-level student performance: the larger the district, the more likely it is to be low performing (based on student scores on the grade 10 FCAT).

In addition to having more students needing to take CRS courses, schools in larger districts are also likely to offer a greater range of CRS courses. However, classroom overcrowding is not a major issue. Only 7 percent of CRS teachers reported having more than 30 students in their classes, and about one-third reported having more than 20 students. Neither is classroom size significantly associated with teachers' assessment of FCCRI's effectiveness, although teachers with large classes (more than 20 students) were more likely to note that an increase in student homogeneity or fewer disruptive students would improve their teaching effectiveness.

We found that teachers face a variety of challenges with the students in their classrooms: About 10 percent have serious problems with large proportions of disruptive students in class; and many feel that their CRS classrooms are too diverse, making targeting lessons at students' needs difficult. Indeed, having more homogeneous student groupings in CRS courses was rated as having a higher impact on their effectiveness than was having fewer disruptive students in class. Creating more homogenous groupings was suggested in both open-ended and closed-ended survey questions. Since some schools admit students into CRS courses who score below the eligibility criteria on the FCAT outlined in the state policy, these teachers were endorsing compliance with the initiative's rules.

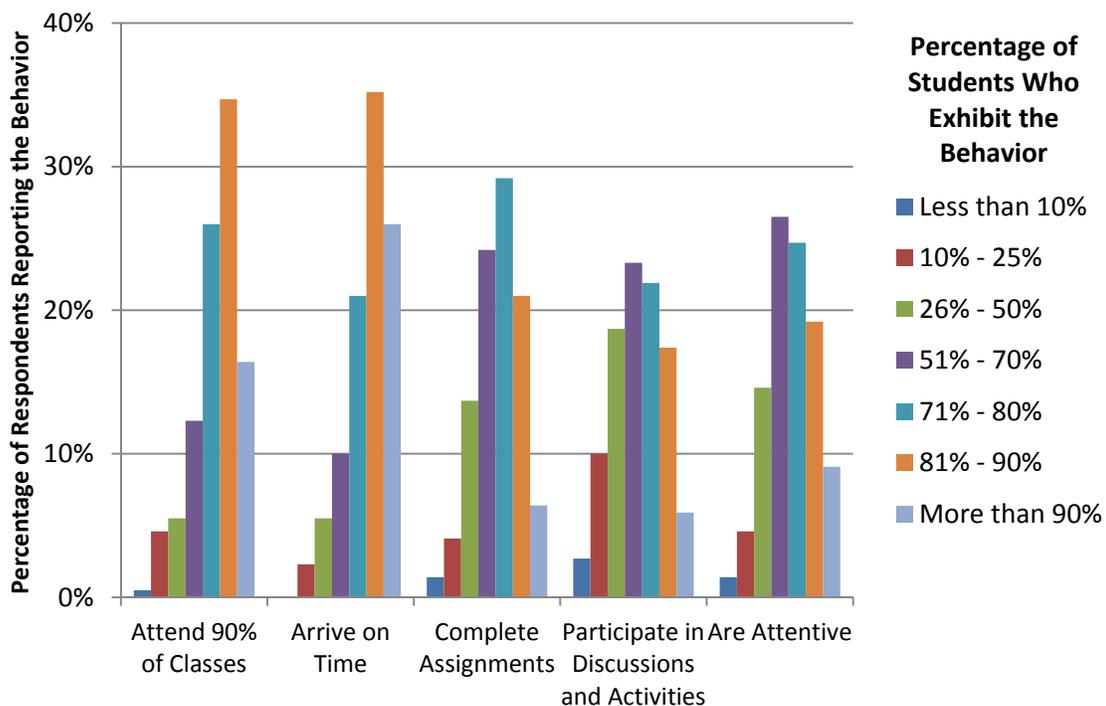
Variation in student mix and number, however, did not greatly affect their evaluation of the effectiveness of this initiative overall, and most teachers remain positive regardless of the range of students' performance or the number of students in the class. This could reflect the teachers' belief in the FCCRI's intent despite struggles with implementation.

Not surprisingly, respondents who reported that most students in their CRS courses exhibit positive behaviors also rated FCCRI to be more effective than did other teachers. Figure 9 illustrates the variation reported by teachers in students' positive classroom behaviors, defined as attending more than 90 percent of classes, arriving on

time, completing assignments on time, eagerly participating in class discussions and activities, and being attentive.

While most respondents reported that the majority of students in their CRS courses exhibit most of these positive behaviors, very few reported that more than 90 percent of students did (e.g., less than 10 percent of teachers reported that students were attentive more than 90 percent of the time). These findings indicate the large within-classroom variation in student behaviors. Moreover, there is a striking difference in the distributions between behaviors that involve students “being present” versus “being engaged.” For example, the rates of showing up (attending 90 percent of classes, arriving on time) are about double the rates for behaviors that require engagement in the course material (eagerly participating, being attentive). While the majority of students comply with required behaviors, the much lower levels of engagement suggest that many students are not motivated. This is consistent with reports from many teachers that they have difficulty motivating students who aren’t planning to attend college.

Figure 9. Distribution of the percentage of students exhibiting positive behaviors in CRS classes

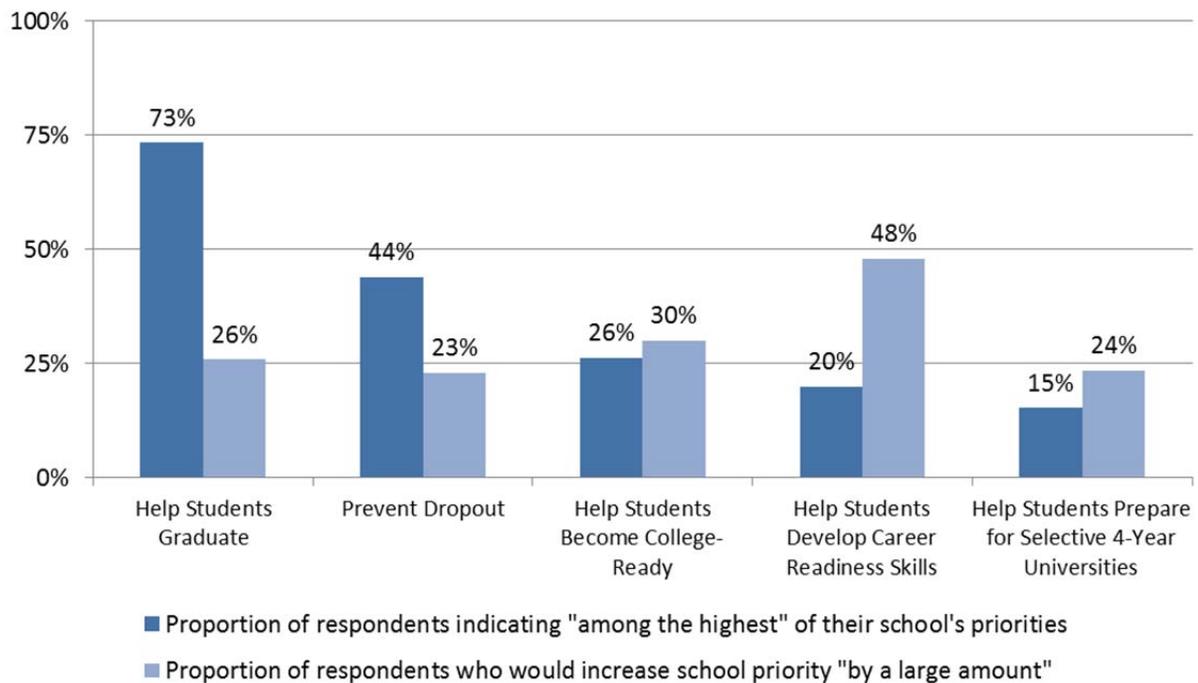


Note: N=219.

School climate influences teachers' perceptions of FCCRI effectiveness.

Respondents rated their school's prioritizing of high school outcomes (preventing high school dropout, helping students graduate) and preparing students for college and career (helping students become college-ready, helping students develop career readiness skills, helping students prepare for selective four-year universities) on a 5-point scale (with 1 being "among the lowest of all priorities" and 5 being "among the highest priorities"). Respondents also indicated whether they thought their school should change the priority of each goal, also on a 5-point scale (with 1 being "decrease the priority by a large amount" and 5 being "increase the priority by a large amount"). Figure 10 illustrates the proportions of respondents indicating that a priority was among their school's highest and that their school should increase a priority by a large amount.

Figure 10. Teachers' perceptions of and wishes for their school's top priorities



Notes: Scale for the school's current priorities ranges from 1="among the lowest of all priorities" to 5="among the highest priorities." Scale for how the school should change its priorities ranges from 1="decrease the priority by a large amount" to 5="increase the priority by a large amount." N=217.

The goal of helping students graduate from high school was among the top priorities at schools for almost three-quarters of respondents; far fewer respondents indicated that helping students become college-ready, helping students develop career readiness skills, and helping students prepare for selective four-year universities were.

Respondents teaching in high-performing districts (based on grade 10 FCAT scores) rated their school's prioritizing of the goal of preparing students for selective four-year universities higher than did respondents teaching in medium- and low-performing districts. In addition, respondents teaching in schools in low-performing districts rated their school's prioritizing of the goal of helping students become college-ready lower than did respondents teaching in schools in medium- and high-performing districts. This suggests that schools align their goals with the performance and interests of their students when it comes to preparation for life after high school, and this may influence how FCCRI is prioritized and implemented within the school.

The most striking finding is that almost half of the respondents would greatly increase their school's emphasis on career readiness skills. While only 20 percent of respondents indicated that helping students develop career readiness skills is among their school's top priorities, 48 percent believed their school should greatly increase its priority. Even though these are teachers of academic subjects, they feel that their classes should emphasize career preparation more, in keeping with "college *and* career readiness" in the initiative's title.

In our small group discussions, some teachers said that career readiness should be an important goal of the FCCRI, but that it was poorly incorporated into the initiative. They noted that increasing the focus on career readiness might better motivate students in the CRS courses who were not planning on attending college. This suggests that a large proportion of CRS teachers have a positive view of having a dual focus on college and careers, and want their school to better align its goals with that duality, especially in those schools where student motivation to engage academically is low.

We find statistically significant differences on all FCCRI effectiveness ratings based on respondents' rating of their school's level of priority for college and career readiness goals. Respondents who reported

that helping students become college-ready, helping students prepare for selective four-year universities, or helping students develop career readiness skills are among their school's top priorities assessed FCCRI's effectiveness higher than did other respondents. The same relationship holds true when it comes to respondents' rating of the contributions of their school counselor. Respondents who believed their school highly values college and career readiness goals, and that their school counselor makes a large contribution toward FCCRI's goals, rated FCCRI's effectiveness higher than did other respondents.

These findings suggest that fostering a school climate that gives attention both to college and career preparation and to school counseling may improve FCCRI effectiveness—and post-high school student outcomes.

Improving counselor effectiveness may increase FCCRI's effectiveness when it comes to helping students understand the importance of testing college-ready on the PERT. Only 18 percent of respondents rated their school counselor's contribution to FCCRI's effectiveness in this area as "highly positive," yet counseling is an area that could be improved with a small investment in training about the consequences of developmental education in college and to improve the counselor's ability to communicate this type of information to students.

In our open-ended survey questions, some teachers commented on how issues of school culture are related to the initiative's goals, including these English IV: College Prep teachers:

"I would like to see more help from the district in the following areas: higher education alternatives and career development ... Students are leaving high school with a plan to go to a community college—and most, unfortunately, drop out. They need more options. Most cannot attend a university due to finances and grade-point issues. I understand the point of the class is to make them "college-ready" and I can do that ... however, they could use more direction, I believe. The counselors do not give them the attention they need, and they often do not have parents who are able to actively participate."

"I would like to see Guidance Counselors, including our college specialist, and the administrators in the classroom more, talking to students about future plans, academic goals, etc."

Findings: Teachers' feedback for improving the FCCRI

The final part of our year 1 study activities consisted of eight small group discussions with teachers of math and reading CRS courses in Fort Lauderdale, Gainesville, Jacksonville, Miami, Orlando (two locations), Panama City, and St. Petersburg. One goal of the discussions was to identify the impediments that reduce the effectiveness of the FCCRI and the seriousness of each. A second goal was to identify the most effective and most feasible ways to ameliorate each impediment. The key findings are reported in this chapter, while more detailed tables of recommendations are provided in Appendix C.

Primary suggestions: Disseminating information on PERT and teaching materials

In all discussions, the teachers overwhelmingly supported the goals and design of the FCCRI for students who intend to go to college and score just below college-ready on the PERT. They also agreed that their courses were highly successful in helping this group of students test college-ready and succeed in college. As several participants stated,

“I agree that the idea behind the PERT is good—I want to help kids avoid taking remediation in college.”

“I’m filling in gaps. There are some things [students need to be successful in college that] they didn’t get that I can fill in for them.”

At the same time, most of the teachers agreed that the CRS courses are less effective for students who are interested in attending college but test far below college-ready. These courses are also far less effective in imparting career-oriented or life skills to students who are not interested in attending college. In the words of one teacher,

“If I have a class of 75 students, 70 will have to work after high school to support family. College is the last thing on their mind. I don’t think it’s helping them at all.”

Two easy-to-remove impediments had the greatest adverse effect on achieving the goals of the FCCRI.

Even though teachers strongly support the goals of the FCCRI and think that the CRS courses are effective for students who are interested in attending college and are near college-ready, they nevertheless identified two major impediments that detracted from the FCCRI’s effectiveness in helping this group of students.

Lack of information about skills tested on the PERT

The impediment that had the greatest negative effect on this group was lack of information about the skills needed in order to test college-ready on the PERT. There was close to unanimous agreement that testing college-ready would be of enormous value in removing a major stumbling block that prevents students from obtaining credentials, giving them the skills needed to succeed in college, and increasing their self-confidence. But there was equally strong agreement that not knowing precisely what topics were covered on the PERT greatly inhibited teachers’ ability to develop a curriculum that would impart the needed skills, especially in math, which requires knowledge of a large number of disparate skills.

One of the most striking elements of the discussions was that many math teachers told us that they included topics in their courses on the mistaken impression they would be covered in the PERT. Typical comments were these:

“Teachers [like me] don’t know what’s on the PERT, so I don’t know what to teach.”

“If I know what the target is, I have a better chance of hitting it, rather than aimlessly guessing. I’d like some sort of guidance.”

Most teachers acknowledged that their lack of information about the skills tested on the PERT substantially reduced the effectiveness of their CRS courses. However, it turns out that it is easy to solve this problem: A thorough description of what topics are on the PERT and the weight given each topic is available on the state website, but very

difficult to locate. Thus, all that was necessary to solve this problem was to improve dissemination of this information.

In consultation with state officials, we placed this information on a website we created as part of this project (discussed in the Conclusion) and sent out notices to CRS teachers about where to find it. State officials also disseminated this information to district curriculum specialists, who further publicized the ready availability of this critically important information.

Lack of teaching materials

Lack of relevant teaching materials was the second greatest impediment to structuring the CRS courses so that they imparted college readiness skills to students who are interested in attending college and are near college-ready. Even teachers who knew what skills were needed to test college-ready had a great deal of difficulty finding instructional materials that covered those skills. In particular, teachers felt that they did not have access to exercises and practice tests needed to help students master the material and to assess students' progress.

However, most of the teachers also made it clear that while they often struggled to find relevant materials, they had the expertise to develop an effective curriculum as long as they understood the objectives of the course and the skills students required to test college-ready. In the words of one teacher:

“If we know what [college-ready] means and what colleges want, we'll get [students] ready for it. We always make the bar; but [the skills needed to test college-ready are] too obscure.”

Teaching materials from state colleges. A major part of each discussion was reviewing the effectiveness and feasibility of alternative ways to obtain teaching materials. The consensus that developed in every discussion was that it would be very useful to have access to teaching materials used at Florida's state colleges in developmental and gateway courses.

The one or two teachers in each session who also taught at a state college or were otherwise familiar college programs noted that CRS courses and college developmental courses share the same goal: help-

ing students to test college-ready on the PERT (or its predecessor, the CPT) and to acquire other skills needed to succeed in college. The key difference was that the college developmental courses had been taught for many years, while the CRS courses were being taught for the first time at many high schools. Thus, the college courses could provide a ready source of needed syllabi and materials. As one teacher noted,

“Because I taught at a community college, I developed the [CRS] lesson plans/curriculum based exactly on the remedial courses I taught.”

Unfortunately, CRS teachers who had not worked at a college rarely, if ever, used colleges as a source of syllabi and materials. Thus, as with the PERT, most teachers did not recognize that relevant materials had already been prepared. All that was needed was to make the material easier for the CRS teachers to find. In collaboration with state officials, our research team obtained materials from state colleges, put them on the website where we had posted the PERT information, and publicized their availability. In some cases, the material consisted of packets of exercises and such; in others, related to specific sections of textbooks.

Other teaching materials, such as pacing guides. One resource that most CRS teachers said they would welcome is a pacing guide that suggested the order of topics and time to allocate to each over the school year for each course. A few teachers noted that their districts provided such guides and that it greatly reduced their uncertainty about what topics to cover, as well as provided an excellent basis for developing their lesson plans.

Opportunities to work together, in concert with their districts and local colleges, are key to efficiently acquiring and disseminating CRS resources.

A recurring theme in the discussions was that it was difficult to acquire all the information needed to develop effective CRS courses because 2012/13 was the first school year the CRS courses were being widely offered, and too little attention was given to assembling and disseminating information and materials. Most discussion groups reached consensus that CRS teachers in each high school should pool their course resources and materials and work together to fill in

gaps. They thought it would be much more efficient for the CRS teachers in the same subject area within a school to work together than to work independently.

Similarly, they recommended that it would be useful to have a district-level meeting to exchange information about syllabi and materials prior to the start of each semester. They also suggested that it would be especially efficient to obtain relevant materials from college developmental and gateway courses by forming a small committee of CRS teachers from different high schools who were most familiar with these courses, and then arrange to share what they found with the others.

The teachers recognized that because curriculum specialists in their schools and districts had so many other responsibilities, it was unlikely they would have the time. However, they thought that it would be beneficial for the state and districts to acknowledge the critical nature of this task, help organize exchange efforts, provide some funds to acquire the materials, and offer professional development credit for those creating the exchanges.

Grouping students by level of college readiness and interest in attending college might benefit all students.

A third impediment to teachers' structuring their courses effectively was having students interested in college and who tested close to college-ready in the same class with students who tested far below college-ready and were not interested in attending college.

The intent of the legislation establishing FCCRI was to target students in the mid-range of performance on the grade 10 FCAT. The lowest performing students on the FCAT were supposed, instead, to take intensive courses to prepare for high school graduation, and the highest performing students on the FCAT were exempted from the PERT and CRS courses.

In some discussion groups, however, teachers expressed concern that their CRS courses included students from a wide range of performance levels, making it difficult for them to develop lessons that would meet all the students' needs. Many teachers at our discussions noted that they had FCAT Level 1 and Level 5 students in the same classes, and that basic remediation should be handled separately

from college prep. Most teachers believed that separate classes would be better for all students because students in the lower performing group need to first master basic topics. They argued that having such a wide range creates problems with student engagement, as the higher performing students are bored and the lower performing students are overwhelmed. As one teacher rhetorically asked,

“When you’re dealing with kids who can’t read English, what are they doing in college readiness?”

It is worth noting that the Florida Department of Education offers state course codes for two different CRS courses in math and two in reading. One course in each subject is one semester long and targets the lowest performing students on the PERT (PERT scores of 96–112 in math and 84–103 in reading); the other course is two semesters and targets students who are closer to the college-ready cut scores (PERT scores of 113–122 in math and 104–150 in reading).

In practice, students are very rarely grouped into CSR courses in this way—although a few teachers in one school reported positive results when teachers prevailed on administrators to try this grouping. One of the limitations of this scheme, however, is that it is possible only if the school is large enough to offer multiple CRS course sections in each subject. Even if the school does offer multiple sections, scheduling challenges may prevent assigning students with similar skills to the same course section at the same time. Furthermore, one-semester CSR courses are rarely offered, because many students need the two-semester courses to satisfy graduation requirements. Most schools offer only one course in each subject area.

On the other hand, teachers told us that they are used to structuring courses to help students at different levels, and they recognize that it may not be possible to assign students to sections based on their initial skill level. The teachers also acknowledged that in some cases lower performing students benefit from having higher performing students in the same classroom. Math teachers more often mentioned the difficulty of structuring classes to meet the needs of students with different skill levels; language arts teachers believed that most of their students could benefit from reading the same material if asked questions requiring different levels of skill to answer.

Thus, having students with different performance levels in the same classroom made finding relevant materials for different groups of students challenging. But it was not nearly as challenging as was the lack of information about what topics to cover to prepare students for the PERT or not having high-quality curricular materials.

Teachers' views were more divided about forcing students not intending to immediately enroll in college to take their CRS course. Some teachers believed they were teaching career and life skills that would be useful regardless, and that they could engage the interest of those students by using more practical examples and teaching a broader range of skills than those required to test college-ready. For example, one language arts teacher had college-bound students prepare college applications and the other students in the class prepare resumes and letters to employers. Other teachers believed that the students not college bound would be better off taking a different course that would focus on practical math and applied communications. However, offering a new course might require legislative action and approval of new courses by the state.

One possible constructive step noted by several teachers to help students with different skill levels would be to find ways to use differentiated instruction to build on the foundation students had previously acquired, rather than having the single goal of testing college-ready on the PERT. For example, some math teachers suggested that the goals of the course should be to help students starting out at different levels to prepare for different college math courses:

- Very low-performing students to succeed in Developmental Mathematics I (MAT0024)
- Low-performing students to succeed in Developmental Mathematics II (MAT0028)
- Mid-range-performing student to succeed in the gateway math course Intermediate Algebra (MAT 1033)
- High-performing students to succeed in College Algebra (MAC1105) or other courses offering math credit required for obtaining a degree

Secondary suggestions: PERT testing procedures and CRS course content

Several additional constructive suggestions were made that had considerable potential to improve the effectiveness of the FCCRI, even if the expected effects were considerably smaller than for the three key topics already discussed: information about the PERT, course prep materials, and classroom heterogeneity.

Improving PERT testing and retesting procedures

Teachers often expressed concerns about the PERT testing procedures applied to 11th-graders. One key complaint was that students were not properly counseled about the consequence of testing below college-ready. As a result, some students did not do their best.

Another complaint was that many students who scored several points below the math cutoff could have tested college-ready with a little extra assistance, such as a self-study guide. There was consensus that many of the math concepts on the PERT had been covered years earlier, so even students who had mastered the material then could not remember how to solve those problems on the test. Teachers also questioned why students could not use their own calculators, since they had learned to solve certain types of problems using them; they also believed the calculators imbedded in the test were very difficult to use and directly led to difficulties answering problems correctly.

Teachers expressed some of the same concerns about PERT retesting in grade 12, plus several additional concerns. The main one was that they were not given sufficient warning of retesting; and even when they were, the tests were given too early or too late in the school year and not given to all students in a given class at the same time.

Teachers agreed that it would be best if they could know exactly when the test would be given, so they could develop lesson plans and review sessions to cover as much material as possible before the test date. They also agreed that maximizing teaching time was tricky because it was hard to schedule use of the computer rooms to accommodate all of the end-of-year testing at the required times. Scheduling the PERT too late in the school year, however, was counterproductive, because many students had already mentally “checked out” by that point.

Some teachers also commented that they would like students to be able to retake the PERT at the end of the first semester of two-semester classes, because some students needed only a modest refresher to test college-ready. Better yet, teachers believed that retests should be allowed in grade 11 and a modest amount of review provided to help students test college-ready and therefore take more appropriate courses in grade 12.

Some of the participants at the small group discussions indicated that steps have been taken to improve counseling about the consequences of not testing college-ready, and that retesting schedules have been improved in their high schools. However, it would be worthwhile to have teachers and administrators consider the benefits and feasibility of acting on several of the other suggestions, particularly permitting retesting in grade 11 and providing study guides and limited teacher-guided reviews.

Balancing test preparation with providing general college readiness skills and improving post-high school plans

Teachers recognized the importance of college-bound students developing the skills required to read, write, and calculate at a grade 12 level. They also believed to varying degrees that testing college-ready on the PERT was a reasonable measure of having mastered those skills. But many teachers believed that giving too much attention to “teaching to the test” was a disservice to their college-bound students. Those teachers used some class time to give students a better understanding of the transition from high school to college and the “soft” skills required to succeed in college. As one teacher put it:

“Teachers need to show students the real-world applications—how to read, write, and think.”

Along these lines, key suggestions were to have students develop portfolios of their work and write essays that are more similar to those required in college. Other teachers noted that students should be told that they will have to be able to act much more independently in college, should not expect teachers to give them as much guidance as in high school, and must obtain relevant materials on their own. As one language arts teacher noted:

“To get them ready, there are some aspects they should be able to do, like note taking and get[ting] skills to work on a bigger paper.”

Also, many teachers want more attention given to the career side of postsecondary programs, by integrating into their lessons the counseling needed to motivate students to acquire more job-related skills before entering the labor force. For example, they would hope to motivate students by helping them understand just how limited their career paths are without some postsecondary training. Or that it is common for students who enter the labor force immediately after high school to attend college later. Some teachers tried to introduce topics into the CRS courses that have practical value in the workplace or at home, such as financial literacy.

As with improving PERT testing, it would be worthwhile to have teachers and administrators consider the benefits and feasibility of acting on several of these suggestions for improving course content. The appropriate context for these discussions would be meetings where teachers and administrators could discuss recommendations together. Such meetings could be held within high schools and at the district level. They also could be held at the state level with representative samples of administrators and teachers. However, care needs to be taken to preserve the ability of each teacher to develop lesson plans and materials that best suit the teacher’s instructional strengths and the students’ needs.

Summary of teachers’ feedback for improving the FCCRI

Our small group discussions identified two main impediments to FCCRI meeting its goal of helping those students near the threshold for college readiness and interested in attending college: (1) lack of information about the PERT and (2) lack of teaching materials. In each case, the problem stemmed from not adequately disseminating information and materials, rather than from them not existing. As a result, both impediments could be resolved relatively easily.

Our research team, in collaboration with state officials as well as college instructors and administrators, made considerable progress over this first study year in obtaining relevant materials, placing them on a social media site we organized, and publicizing their availability. (A more detailed description is provided in the Conclusion section that

follows.) Nevertheless, there is still additional work to be done, collecting additional relevant materials and making the resources collected more widely available. In particular, teachers and administrators could meet together at the school and/or district level to exchange information.

Another impediment commonly raised by teachers was the challenge inherent in the heterogeneous nature of the students enrolled in CRS courses. There was general agreement among teachers that they were used to dealing with classes of diverse skills and interests, and that the negative effects of that diversity would be small on students interested in attending college who tested close to college-ready. However, the negative effect might be greater on students scoring far below college-ready and needing more help with basic academic skills, and on students who do not plan to attend college right after high school. Two factors supporting this view are that (1) college developmental courses are designed to divide students in this way, and (2) several CRS teachers in a school made this change and reported positive results for both student groups.

One of the primary recommendations for removing this impediment was for schools to offer one CSR course for students testing close to college-ready, and a different course for those testing well below college-ready. Nevertheless, some teachers saw advantages in having a mixed class; many believed that it would be very difficult to alter the way students are assigned to their CSR courses. Some small schools offer only one CSR class in each subject, while in larger schools teachers thought that it would be difficult to rearrange schedules to allow such grouping.

Many suggestions were made for ways to meet the diverse needs of a heterogeneous class. Some teachers, especially those in rural areas, advocated allowing students to opt out of the CSR courses after appropriate counseling, as they were convinced that upwards of 75 percent of their students not bound for college were making sound choices to enter family businesses after high school. However, it may take legislative action to allow opting out and state action to approve alternative courses oriented to developing students' career and life skills. In contrast, other teachers, especially those in urban areas, argued that more attention should be given to counseling students about the limited career opportunities they face without postsecond-

ary training, and to including more practical applications of the topics being taught so that students could acquire career-oriented and life skills.

There also was considerable discussion about the best way to integrate teaching of both academic and “soft skills” (e.g., time management, study skills). Several teachers suggested that a portfolio approach would be very useful in helping students recognize how college differs from high school and develop the independence, critical thinking, and research skills required to succeed in college. These teachers often recommended having college-bound students write essays of the type needed for college applications and having non-college-bound students develop resumes and job application letters. However, there was a consensus in favor of not being overly restrictive as to how teachers structured their courses, but rather bringing together teachers and administrators to consider a range of options that might be useful.

Finally, there were several suggestions regarding improving the PERT testing. These included improving counseling, providing study guides, allowing retesting in grade 11; and improving scheduling of retests in grade 12.

Overall, we found that the most severe impediments were information deficits naturally associated with any major new educational undertaking; these would likely diminish over time. Other impediments were less severe and represented perennial problems commonly faced by schools, including the best way to assign students to classes, the most appropriate topics to cover in a given class, and the best ways to motivate students. For these latter, discussions among teachers and administrators are likely to generate solutions that are well suited to the strengths and weaknesses of each high school’s students and teachers.

Conclusions

Early in the life cycle of any new required program, one often finds low levels of implementation, negative evaluations by participants, and many obstacles to improvement (e.g., Spillane, 2004). However, in our first year of evaluating the Florida College and Career Readiness Initiative, we found that almost all districts are currently offering both college readiness testing and CRS courses, teachers tend to have positive opinions of the effectiveness of the FCCRI, and teachers have many actionable recommendations for improving the initiative.

Most teachers agreed that the FCCRI is effective, or has the potential to be effective, for students who plan to go to college but whose academic knowledge and skills (as measured on the PERT) are just below college-ready. The most experienced teachers rated FCCRI's effectiveness the highest, and they were most optimistic about the potential for improving the FCCRI over SY 2013/14. Even the teachers who complained about insufficient time to prepare often reported that they expected to do better next year.

Yet teachers also expressed concern that the FCCRI is less effective for students who are not interested in college or whose academic skills are far below college-ready. These students tend to be less engaged in CRS courses, and teachers face difficulty addressing their needs while also meeting the needs of students who are just below college-ready and plan to attend college.

Teachers indicated that placing a more equal focus on the *career* part of college and career readiness could substantially increase the engagement of many students who currently have low interest in the course. Recommendations from teachers included changing the eligibility criteria for participation in college readiness testing and CRS courses, offering separate career readiness courses for students who plan to enter the workforce rather than enter college after graduation, and integrating more career-relevant content into the curriculum of CRS courses. They also indicated that grouping CRS students in CRS courses more homogenously by interest in attending college

and by academic performance level might benefit all students and substantially increase engagement.

Many teachers reported a lack of adequate instructional materials (texts, exercises, and practice tests) for the CRS courses, especially in math. An important exception was teachers who had access to the syllabi and materials used in developmental courses at local state colleges. Teachers are also concerned that they lack information about the alignment of topics covered by the PERT and the knowledge and skills students need to succeed in college-level courses, and about how well the PERT measures students' college readiness. Recommendations from teachers included disseminating more information about the PERT and more CRS courses resources (such as exercises, pacing guides, and workbooks, especially from college developmental courses), offering professional development for CRS teachers, and providing more opportunities for CRS teachers to interact.

Steps taken

In light of teachers' reported needs, the CNA research team examined what kind of information and materials are available to teachers of CRS courses. Having the benefit of what we learned from state officials, teacher surveys, and teacher discussion groups, we were able to use our research staff to develop a plan for obtaining and disseminating much of the information that teachers had been lacking.

Finding information about the PERT

CRS teachers had expressed concern that they lacked information about what topics are covered on the PERT, to what depth each topic should be covered in preparing student to take the test, and how well the PERT aligns with the knowledge and skills students need in order to succeed in college. Fortunately, information about the PERT is available from the Florida Department of Education, and several state colleges already have study guides and practices tests for the PERT. Comprehensive information about the PERT existed, but needed to be readily available in one place.

Finding instructional materials

Throughout the FCCRI evaluation, one central issue that came out of our surveys and small group discussions with teachers was a lack of

teaching materials and exercises available for the development of CRS courses. Finding relevant teaching materials for CRS courses is challenging, however, because those materials must cover a large number of topics. One potential source is state colleges that have been teaching developmental and gateway courses with goals similar to those of the FCCRI, but CRS teachers often lacked personal contacts at the colleges who could help them obtain materials.

Disseminating information and fostering communication

Lastly, CRS teachers had expressed an interest in being able to exchange information and advice with other high school teachers and with college teachers of developmental and introductory math and English courses.

One solution is an online (virtual) community where teachers can post comments about the usefulness and accuracy of instructional materials, make suggestions about ways to obtain additional information, and pose questions that other teachers, members of the research team, or state, district, and school officials could answer.

Launching the Edmodo group for FCCRI

To meet all three needs, the CNA research team decided to develop an FCCRI group on Edmodo.com, a social networking site designed specifically for teachers, which many Florida educators already use to interact and easily share instructional materials.

The CNA research team collected PERT resources, including practice exams and study guides from state colleges, as well as resources provided by FLDOE.

The team also searched the websites of all 27 of Florida's state colleges, looking for syllabi, handouts, practice tests, and other instructional materials used in their developmental and introductory math and English courses. The team contacted instructors or department chairs at every college to get permission to post its relevant resources on Edmodo and to ask whether there were any additional relevant resources that they would be willing to provide. (As of September 23, 2013, CNA had been given permission by 17 of the colleges to post at least one resource for a course; more than 70 instructional resources had been posted.)

On July 31, 2013, the CNA research team piloted the Edmodo group with teachers who had participated in our study's small group discussions. While only several teachers provided feedback, it was all highly positive. Since there were no technical issues, the team prepared the site for broader distribution. (Teachers access the FCCRI group by completing Edmodo's free online registration process and entering a code that identifies the group; see table 4 for instructions.)

The FCCRI Edmodo group officially launched on August 12, 2013, so that its materials would be accessible to teachers at the beginning of the 2013/14 school year. To promote the Edmodo group, the research team directly emailed approximately 400 teachers in Florida schools that had agreed to participate in the FCCRI study and had provided email addresses for their CRS teachers. The team also contacted district instructional specialists across the state, to inform them of the group and ask that they pass the information along to teachers in their district. Staff at FLDOE also forwarded the information about the site to some of its contacts.

Table 4: How to join the FCCRI Edmodo group

The FCCRI Edmodo group is open to any interested teacher looking for resources to develop CRS courses.

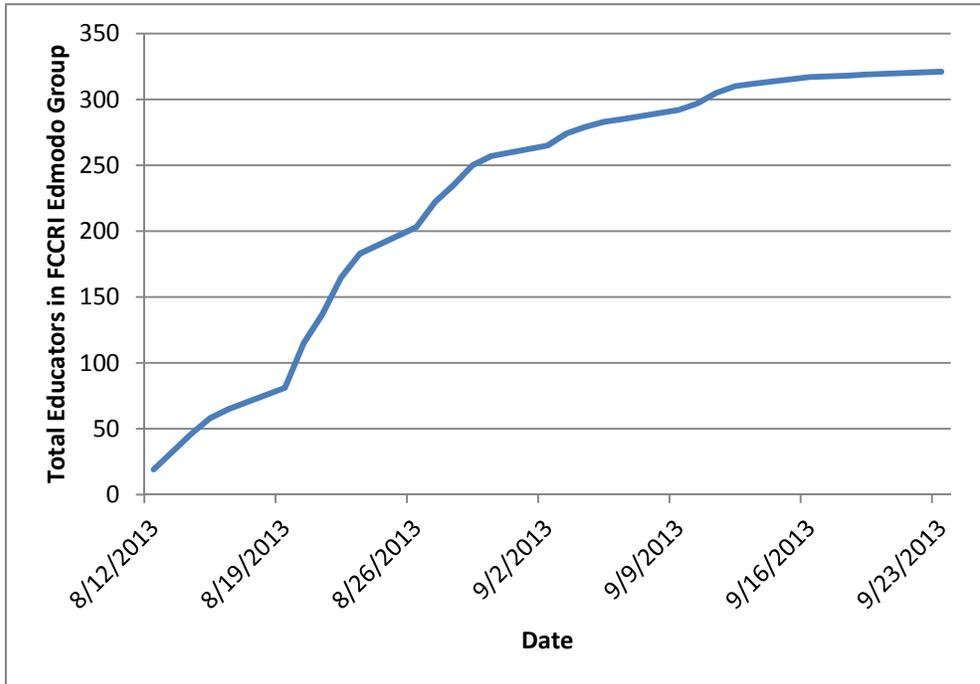
1. If you are not already a part of Edmodo, you will need to set up a teacher account before you can join the FCCRI group. Registration is free and can be done directly from the Edmodo website: <http://www.edmodo.com>
2. If you are new to Edmodo, please make sure you set your school during the registration process. Edmodo will not allow you to join groups until you do so.
3. Once logged into the Edmodo site, follow the link edmo.do/j/ufvvtx to request to join the FCCRI group.
4. Once your request is received, you will be added to the FCCRI group and be able to access the posted resources and interact with other teachers around these topics.

If you have any questions or need assistance with the group, email: fccri@cna.org

In the first six weeks after the launch, 321 teachers and instructional specialists from across Florida joined the FCCRI group. More than 80 percent of teachers who joined the group had not been directly contacted by the research team, so much of the growth has occurred from schools and districts sharing the information with others. In addition, almost 60 percent of all teachers in the group had not been Edmodo users prior to the launch. Presumably, these teachers joined

Edmodo specially to access the FCCRI group materials. Figure 11 provides a graph of the growth in the number of teachers and instructional specialists who joined the group since the launch.

Figure 11. Growth in the number of members of the FCCRI Edmodo group over time

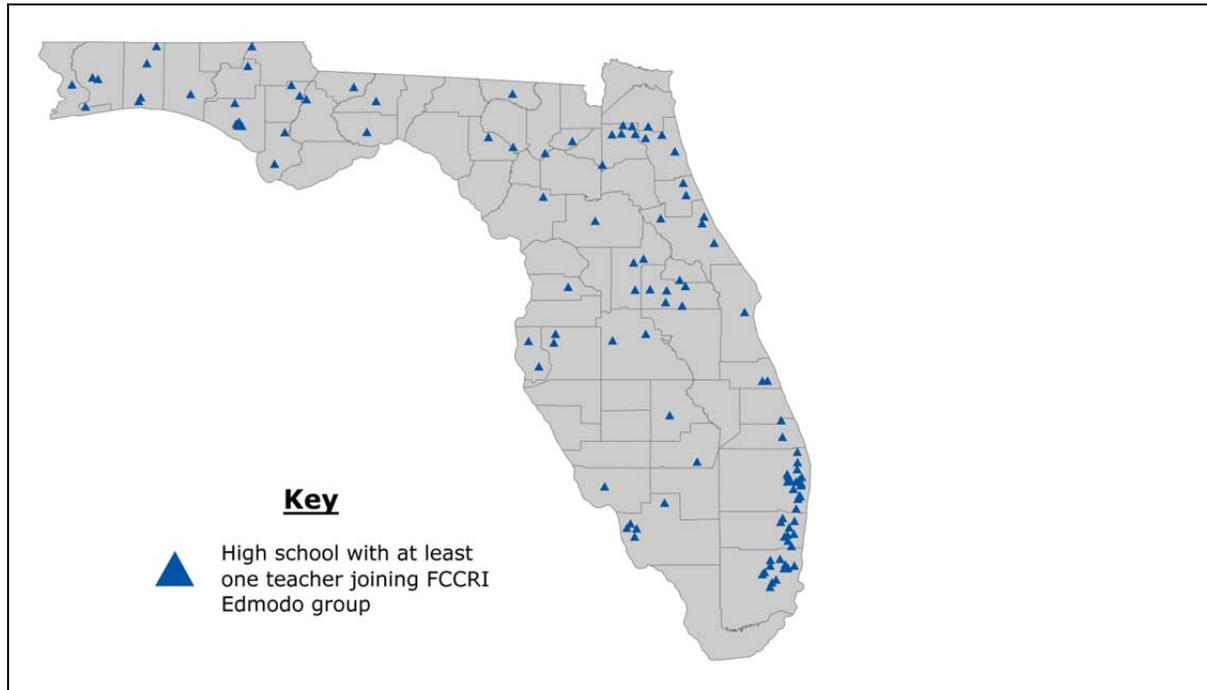


Membership in the FCCRI group is widely dispersed throughout the state, rather than concentrated in a few districts. Figure 12 provides a map of those schools with at least one teacher who joined. Of the 167 schools represented on the map, 32 percent have two or more teachers who are members of the Edmodo group. The map illustrates the geographic diversity of the group's membership, with noticeable concentrations of schools in the Fort Lauderdale, Miami, and West Palm Beach areas. Nearly three-quarters of the state's 67 county-based districts have at least one teacher who has joined the site.

The rapid growth of the Edmodo group indicates that there is a strong demand for instructional resources for CRS courses. As the FCCRI continues to mature, teachers will inevitably search for and create their own resources to teach these courses. In the interim, however, having resources from these reputable sources to draw from

in a single place, such as this Edmodo site, could help reduce the uncertainty many teachers have about how to implement these courses.

Figure 12. Geographic distribution of schools with at least one teacher who joined the Edmodo FCCRI group



Upcoming activities for the research team

In year 2 of our study, the research team will be conducting a statistical analysis to examine the impact of the voluntary FCCRI program on short-term student outcomes, including enrollment in a two-year or four-year college, completion of three or more for-credit college courses, completion of the first college-level course in a subject area in which the student did not meet the college readiness benchmarks, and college persistence.

The research team also will be obtaining additional feedback by re-surveying high school CRS course teachers who previously participated in the surveys. Instead of small group discussions with CRS course teachers, we are planning to interview high school administrators and CRS course teachers; district officials including curriculum specialists; and college counselors and instructors involved with developmental

and gateway courses. While the discussions will be held with about the same number of educators in total, there will be many more individuals interviewed at each location. As a result, we plan to limit the discussions to three to six districts.

We are also considering assembling advisory panels of educators in and near Jacksonville, Miami, and Tallahassee. Anyone interested in serving on these panels or wishing to provide suggestions for obtaining feedback on the FCCRI should contact Dr. Christine Mokher, Principal Investigator, at mokherc@cna.org.

Appendix A. Characteristics of school samples

Table A1. Distribution of strata for the sampled schools.

Strata	Schools in the initial stratified sample (n=190)	Schools that provided teacher names (n=108)	Schools with survey respondents (n=97)	Schools with teachers who participated in a small group discussion (n=39)
1: Large district, high student performance	11%	8%	7%	8%
2: Large district, moderate student performance	15%	15%	17%	23%
3: Large district, low student performance	13%	13%	14%	15%
4: Medium district, high student performance	12%	7%	8%	8%
5: Medium district, moderate student performance	15%	18%	17%	28%
6: Medium district, low student performance	11%	8%	9%	8%
7: Small district, high student performance	5%	7%	7%	3%
8: Small district, moderate student performance	12%	18%	16%	8%
9: Small district, low student performance	6%	7%	5%	0%

Table A2. Characteristics of the sampled schools.

Characteristics of the sample	Schools in the initial stratified sample (n=190)	Schools that provided teacher names (n=108)	Schools with survey respondents (n=97)	Schools with teachers in small group discussions (n=39)
School characteristics				
Districts represented	57	41	38	17
Average high school enrollment	1,482	1,411	1,456	1,546
Total high school enrollment	281,563	152,346	141,277	39,101
Schools in large districts	39%	36%	38%	46%
Schools in medium districts	37%	33%	34%	44%
Schools in small districts	24%	31%	28%	10%
Magnet schools	23%	24%	26%	28%
Charter schools	8%	5%	5%	10%
Student characteristics				
African-American	21%	23%	23%	21%
Hispanic	21%	17%	18%	21%
Minority	47%	45%	46%	47%
Received free/reduced-price lunch	47%	49%	49%	48%
Student academic performance				
Scored Level 1 or 2, FCAT reading	49%	50%	51%	52%
Scored Level 1 or 2, FCAT math	14%	15%	15%	15%
Scored Level 1 or 2, math EOC winter	26%	29%	29%	30%
Scored Level 1 or 2, math EOC spring	25%	25%	26%	26%
Took CPT	31%	33%	33%	30%
Enrolled in courses that satisfy university admission requirements	59%	57%	57%	59%
Graduated high school	78%	76%	76%	77%

Appendix B. Glossary of assessments

College Entry-Level Placement Test (CPT)

Common college readiness assessment used by all Florida public colleges statewide from 1995 to 2010 to determine course placement and establish the minimum scores for college readiness in entry-level courses. High schools were required to begin offering the PERT to 11th-graders beginning in the 2008/09 school year. The CPT was replaced by the PERT in 2011.

End-of-Course (EOC) Assessment

Statewide assessments in the Florida accountability system that students take at the end of a specific course rather than a particular grade level. EOCs for high school students include Algebra I (first offered in 2010/11), Biology I and Geometry (first offered in 2011/12), and U.S. History and Civics (currently under development).

Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT)

Criterion-referenced tests in math, reading, science, and writing for students statewide in grades 3–11 under Florida’s accountability system. Students are targeted to take the college readiness assessment based on their scores on the FCAT in grade 10.

Postsecondary Education Readiness Test (PERT)

Common college readiness assessment used by all Florida public colleges statewide since 2011 to determine course placement and establish the minimum scores for college readiness in entry-level courses. High schools are also required to administer the PERT in grade 11 to students targeted based on their scores on the FCAT in grade 10. The PERT replaced the CPT, which had been used from 1995 to 2010.

Appendix C. Teacher recommendations for removing impediments to FCCRI’s effectiveness

The body of the report summarizes the primary impediments to FCCRI’s effectiveness as identified by teachers and the most feasible recommendations to ameliorate each. The tables in this Appendix provide additional information on the impediments and the complete lists of recommendations. These recommendations vary in level of difficulty to implement and the level of support among teachers. It would be worthwhile to have teachers and administrators consider the benefits and feasibility of acting on them.

Table C1. Recommendations for removing the impediment of lack of information about skills tested on the PERT

Responsible entity	Recommendations from CRS teachers
State, CNA Research Team	Improve dissemination of information on topics tested on the PERT and the weight given to each topic.
State	Provide more practice tests and materials for preparing students for the PERT.

Table C2. Recommendations for removing the impediment of lack of teaching materials for CRS courses

Responsible entity	Recommendations from CRS teachers
CNA Research Team	Access instructional materials used by state colleges for developmental and gateway courses; post materials to Edmodo site.
State, Districts	Provide funding for teachers to acquire course materials used by state colleges.
State, Districts	Provide teachers with professional development or training on what the CRS courses should entail.
Districts	Provide teachers with access to more curricular resources and instructional resources (such as pacing guides) at the beginning of the school year.
Districts	Organize a district-level meeting for CRS teachers to exchange information about syllabi and materials prior to the start of each semester.
Districts, Teachers	Form small committees of CRS teachers to collect resources from local colleges and share this information with other CRS teachers. District can provide professional development credit for teachers serving on these committees.
Schools	Provide teachers with more time to develop lesson plans for CRS courses.

Table C3. Recommendations for removing the impediment of challenges supporting students whose academic skills are far below college-ready and students who are near college-ready in the same class

Responsible entity	Recommendations from CRS teachers
State	Consider allowing students required to participate in the FCCRI an option between CRS courses and separate courses for career readiness. Approve new courses for career readiness.
State	Add the term “career” to CRS course names and modify the course standards to include more applied topics.
Schools	Offer separate classes for those close to testing college-ready and those far from testing college-ready.
Schools	Offer other standard-level courses for seniors in math and English for students not required to take CRS courses.
Schools	Ensure that staff members responsible for scheduling are given adequate information about the purpose/content of the CRS courses.
Schools, Teachers	Ensure that information about the goals of the FCCRI is communicated clearly to students.
Teachers	Find ways to use differentiated instruction to build on the foundation students previously acquired, rather than having the single goal of testing college-ready on the PERT.
Teachers	Help students recognize just how limited their career paths are without some postsecondary training, and that it is common for students who enter the labor force immediately after high school to attend college later.
Teachers	Introduce topics into the CRS courses that have practical value in the work place or home, such as financial literacy.

Table C4. Recommendations for removing the impediment of concerns about PERT testing and retesting procedures.

Responsible entity	Recommendations from CRS teachers
Districts	Make sure that schools are aware of the format of the PERT and testing procedures, such as when calculators are permitted on the PERT math test.
Districts	Provide clear information at the beginning of the year about when the PERT will be administered and who will be tested.
Districts	Schedule the PERT retests toward the end of the semester (but not too late), and ensure that all students in the CRS course can retest at the same time.
Districts	Provide teachers with data on their students' performance on the PERT and other assessments such as FCAT.
Schools	Improve counseling to ensure students understand the consequences of testing below college-ready on the PERT.
Schools	Allow students to retake the PERT at the end of the first semester of two-semester classes, because some students need only a modest refresher to test college-ready.
Schools	Offer short "refresher" courses for students scoring just below college-ready on the PERT in grade 11, and allow them to retake the PERT before enrolling in a CRS course.
Schools	Allow students the opportunity to take a PERT retest at the end of the CRS courses in grade 12.

Table C5. Recommendations for removing the impediment of concerns about the CRS course content

Responsible entity	Recommendations from CRS teachers
Districts	Review the content of the curriculum for the CRS courses and consider teacher recommendations for modifying it. Several math teachers suggested there should be more of a focus on financial and practical math (e.g., budgeting, how to write a check). In English, various teachers made suggestions to place more emphasis on subjects including British literature and literary analysis, vocabulary building, grammar, and writing.
Districts, Schools	Provide diagnostic tools to assess student performance at multiple times during the CRS course, so teachers can individualize course content to student needs.
Districts, Schools	Consider requiring students in CRS course to create college portfolios that contain writing samples such as resumes and sample college essays. Comments were mixed, as some teachers agreed that portfolios should be included in the CRS courses and others thought that time could be better spent covering other material.
Schools	Provide more access to computers for CRS courses. Students benefit from computer-based assignments because they will be expected to complete similar work in college-level courses, and students need practice doing questions on the computer because the PERT assessment is computer based.
Schools	Provide access to online programs that facilitate individualized instruction in the classroom. Examples of these include ALEKS™ (Assessment and Learning in Knowledge Spaces), a web-based assessment and learning system that is used in the developmental education courses at some Florida colleges, and COMPASS™, an online course offered by Longsdale Publishing.
Teachers	Spend time giving students a better understanding of the transition from high school to college and the “soft” skills required to succeed in college.
Teachers	Integrate practical applications of the skills needed to test college-ready. For example, some teachers suggested requiring students to develop portfolios of their work and write essays that are more similar to those required in college.

Glossary

ALEKS™	Assessment and Learning in Knowledge Spaces
AP	Advanced Placement
CPT	College Entry-Level Placement Test
CRS	college readiness and success
ELA	English/Language Arts
EOC	End-of-Course assessment
FCAT	Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test
FCCRI	Florida College and Career Readiness Initiative
FLDOE	Florida Department of Education
PERT	Postsecondary Education Readiness Test
SY	school year

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