

## AB 705 Guidelines for Puente Practitioners

**Assembly Bill 705 Information & Research** In an effort to increase the number of students who succeed in California's community colleges, AB 705 was signed into law in 2017 and went into effect on January 1, 2018. The law restricts colleges from requiring students to enroll in stand-alone remedial courses, requires the use of high school grades for placement in English and math, and gives students the right to begin in English and math courses that give them the best possible chance of completing transfer-level English and math. As an alternative to traditional remedial prerequisites, the law authorizes colleges to require that students receive additional concurrent support while enrolled in transfer-level courses to increase their likelihood of success. (The California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office)

While these changes impact Puente's traditional course sequence, we have the highest confidence in the cumulative expertise that our 65+ teams bring to the table. Puente educators have always guided their students through their required college courses with intensive support from their peers, instructors, counselors, and community mentors with a focus on completion. We are sure that Puente's core methodology will not only remain intact during these changes but will also provide others with an example of how to support students with a combination of academic rigor and cultural connection.

As placement policies and course sequences shift to allow students equitable access to transfer-level courses, it is essential that we continue to believe in their capacity to succeed, as proven by an extensive body of evidence.

Evidence suggests that:

- Students who enter directly into transfer-level courses, with or without co-requisite support, have higher completion than students taking traditional remedial prerequisites.
- Taking even one pre-transfer-level course significantly lowers student completion.
- Students of Color often see the greatest gains from AB 705 reforms.
- Nationally, states that have moved from prerequisite models to direct-to-transfer-level models show dramatic increases in overall completion rates.

*"At most colleges, access to transfer-level courses is highly restrictive. Across the state, 75 to 80 percent students are placed into remedial courses, despite a growing body of research showing*

*that many of them could be successful if allowed to enroll directly into college-level courses.”*  
(Campaign for College Opportunity)

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Historically, the lower a student began in the prerequisite sequence, the less likely they were to ever complete transfer-level English:

### **Starting Placement in English % Completing Transfer-Level English in 3 Years**

1 Level Below 48%

2 Levels Below 34%

3 or more Levels Below 19%

Basic Skills Cohort Tracker, Statewide, Fall 2009-Spring  
2012

Under AB 705, colleges are prohibited from placing students into a pre-transfer course in mathematics or English unless the following conditions exist: 1. Students must be highly unlikely to succeed in the transfer-level course and 2. Enrollment in the pre-transfer course will improve the students' likelihood of completing the transfer-level course in a one-year time frame. (California Community Colleges 2018)

Current Default Placement Rules for English:

57.7%

**English Composition** Colleges are encouraged to provide additional academic and concurrent support to increase the chance of success (e.g., embedded peer tutors, additional units attached to certain sections of the course)

**High School Performance Metric For English**

**Recommended AB 705 Placement for**

**HS GPA ≥ 2.6**

Success rate =  
78.6%

**Transfer-Level English Composition** Students do not need additional academic or concurrent support

**HS GPA 1.9 - 2.6**

Success rate =

**HS GPA < 1.9**

Success rate =  
42.6%

**English Composition** Colleges are strongly encouraged to provide additional academic and concurrent support to increase the chance of success (e.g., embedded peer tutors, additional corequisite units)

*“Research suggests that when used as the primary criterion for placement, assessment tests tend to under-place students; and a student’s high school performance is a much stronger predictor of success in transfer-level courses rather than standardized placement tests.”* (California Community Colleges)

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**How Does AB 705 Impact the Puente Model?** Puente’s model, which intersects instruction, counseling, and mentoring, remains the same. In fact, our core principles of *familia*, educational equity, providing culturally relevant programming, counseling, and mentoring, have never felt more important as we adapt to changes within the California Community College system. Puente Counselors and English instructors will continue to focus on supporting students new to community college or college English, helping them to develop their skills, toolkits, and overall academic confidence.

**What Changes Might be Necessary for Individual Puente Teams?** The most significant change for Puente teams (who have not yet made the full transition) is that students will now begin directly in freshman composition and complete their required, transfer-level English courses in Phase I and II. Every college is adapting to this change uniquely -- e.g., adjusting placement policies, implementing a corequisite course, integrating peer tutor support -- so changes to each Puente program will likely reflect individual campus practice. However, it is essential that English and Counseling departments work together to determine the multiple measures that will be used to determine placement and seat capacity for each site.

Specific adjustments will likely be necessary in the following areas:

Adjustments in Recruitment As placement policies, course sequences, and unit loads shift, we recommend that teams evaluate past recruitment strategies and materials.

Although Puente was traditionally limited to students who placed one-level-below college English, we have never had a GPA requirement and this should remain true; we are open to all students. Puente sites that are *not* using a corequisite or an increased-unit course model, but instead begin students in standard transfer-level English courses, must ensure that their students

reflect the population Puente has always served. This might mean re-examining criteria used for recruitment in order to uphold the integrity of the program and the students we strive to serve.

Traditionally, Puente recruitment emphasizes:

- Short and long-term benefits of participation in Puente
- Transfer to 4-year universities, with particular exposure to the UC system
- Serving students who are underrepresented in higher education
- Serving all students

Post-AB705 recruitment emphasizes ALL OF THE ABOVE, plus:

- Completion of required, transfer-level English in ONE year
- Support offered to guide students through transfer-level courses
- Time commitment, especially for programs with expanded unit English courses

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Adjustments in Course Sequence

- Phase 1: Students take 1st transfer-level course in the fall semester
- Phase 2: Students take 2nd transfer-level course (critical thinking or literature-focused critical thinking) in the spring semester. Puente sites may choose which transfer-level course will be offered in the second semester.

Adjustments in English Instruction & Support

- Integrate support for transfer-level English courses via corequisites, enhanced unit courses, embedded support, writing center, computer lab, supplemental instruction, etc.
- Evaluate and revise instructional cycle, policies, and methodology for courses to ensure that the course enables them to develop the exit competencies throughout the semester, rather than presuming they will arrive with these already in place.
- Maintain strong connections to academic support services on your campus, especially as many of these services make changes due to AB 705.
- Continue to seek professional development opportunities that support you as you support your students.

### **Adjustments in Counseling Instruction & Support**

- Affirm student capacity as they embark on their journey through Transfer-Level English.
- Evaluate your instructional cycle, policies, and methodology to ensure a strong bridge between Counseling and English courses.
- Consider integrating critical thinking curriculum into PD courses to increase overall preparedness for transfer.
- Continue to seek professional development opportunities that support you as you support your students.
- Continue advocating and motivating students in their English and math journeys by helping them identify and direct them toward support systems to use as necessary (i.e. tutoring, math lab, etc.).

### **Additional Resources for Further Reading & Continued Professional Development**

**What is AB705? CCC Chancellor's Office:**

<https://assessment.cccco.edu/ab-705/> California Acceleration Project:

<https://accelerationproject.org/> Campaign for College Opportunity:

<http://collegecampaign.org/remedial-education-redesign/> Spanning the Divide:

<http://completecollege.org/spanningthedivide/#the-bridge-builders> AB705.org - Student-Centered Know Your Rights Website: <https://ab705.org/>