



GUEST COLUMN: Make the Accuplacer available to all high school students

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State Sen. Keith King, who also serves as the Administrator of my high school, Colorado Springs Early Colleges, has proposed replacing Colorado's mandatory tenth grade CSAP with another standardized test, the Accuplacer.

Upon learning that the Accuplacer would not satisfy federal requirements, Sen. King is proposing a new bill for next year which would make the Accuplacer available to, though not mandatory for, all high schools in Colorado.

The Accuplacer is an assessment test which measures a student's status in relation to college readiness. The Accuplacer is used by Pikes Peak Community College to assess their students' readiness to take college courses, and has been implemented in Colorado Springs Early Colleges to help jump start kids by assessing what needs to be done to prep them for college. At my school, the Accuplacer also allows students who are accelerated in their studies to advance into college classes if they are ready. This enables students to skip semesters or, in some cases, years of remedial classes they don't need, and consequently, they graduate high school with a significant amount of college credit already accumulated.

As a high school student who has taken both tests, I believe that more academic success could be achieved through the Accuplacer, because the Accuplacer gives insight as to where students are standing in relation to postsecondary readiness, while the CSAP does not. Even for those schools that aren't structured in such a way that allows students to advance into higher level classes, the Accuplacer would still be the superior choice.

The Accuplacer offers several advantages over the CSAP:

First, parents and students will find the Accuplacer scoring easier to understand. You get an immediate assessment sheet about where your student stands in terms of college standards. With the CSAP, you get a mysterious number that your teacher proceeds to file. Weeks later your results come; however, by that time, you don't even remember what they mean.

Second, The Accuplacer is a more accurate assessment. Being web-based, the test automatically tailors its questions depending on how the participant is answering. If they are answering all questions correctly, it gets progressively harder; if the answers are incorrect, the questions get easier. That sort of skills adjustment is not possible with the CSAP, which is on paper.

Third, it is more difficult to cheat or "game" the Accuplacer. With a web-based test adjusting questions to a student's skill level, the chances of two tests being alike is nearly zero. Thinking of copying or sharing an answer? Think again. The CSAPs, on the other hand, are all the same, making it easy to copy your neighbor's answers.

Narrissa Campuzano, a student at CSEC who has taken both tests, also sees the advantages of the Accuplacer over the CSAP. Narrissa said, "The CSAP score is very unclear ... with the Accuplacer I was told immediately where I stood in relation to where I needed to be."

Narrissa has successfully tested out of three courses in mathematics, and says that she appreciates the

intellectual challenge. Instead of going over the same material again and again, she is able to learn and grow. "I feel I was meant to be at this level," Narrissa said. It is easy to see she is happy about the new material and progressing well in college classes.

"Remediation" is defined as the correction of something bad or defective, and for high school students it is a boulder on the promised smooth path from schooling to career. The ability to accelerate high school students into classes reflecting their ability, and the possibility of graduating with a good number of college classes already accumulated, provides an inspiring opportunity that is not currently available to many students. Accuplacer testing is a valuable tool that can help students understand where they stand and then plan more effectively for where they want to go.

Asher Petering is a senior at Colorado Springs Early Colleges, a tuition-free charter school that also offers college-level classes in conjunction with Colorado Technical University.

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