

**Santa Ana College
Faculty Opinions of the Reading Proficiency Requirement (RPR)
for the Associate's Degree**

April 2015

The Santa Ana College (SAC) faculty established through the curriculum review process that students should be able to read at a minimum level of proficiency before they have earned an associate's degree. There are a variety of ways in which students can demonstrate this requirement:

1. Satisfactory score on the SAC **Reading Placement Test**, OR
2. Successful completion of any **reading course** at the 100 level or above, OR
3. Satisfactory score on the SAC **Reading Department Test**, OR
4. A "C" grade or better in 9 units of **general education courses** for the Associate Degree, with 3 units in Areas A: Natural Sciences and 3 units in each of the Area B: Social and Behavioral Sciences:
 - A. **Natural Sciences (minimum 3 units):** Anthropology 101, 1011L, Astronomy 109, 110/110H, 140, Biology 109/109H, 109L, 111, 115, 149, 177, 200, 211, 239, 259, Chemistry 109, 119, 209, 210, 219/219H, Earth Science 110/110H, 115, 150/150H, Environmental Studies 140, 200, 259, Geography 101, 101L, Geology 101, 101L, 140, 150/150H, 201, Physical Science 117, 118, Physics 109, 210, 217, 279, Science 200
 - B. **Social and Behavioral Sciences (minimum 6 units):** 1. *American Institutions (minimum 3 units):* History 118, 120 or 120H, 121/121H, 122, Political Science 101/101H. 2. *Social Science Elective (minimum 3 units:)* Anthropology 100/100H, Criminal Justice 101 Economics 120, 121, Geography 100/100H, 102 /102H, History 101/101H, 102/102H, Human Development 107, 110, Political Science 101/101H, Psychology 100/100H, Sociology 100/100H, OR
5. Completion of all requirements in the California State University General Education Breadth (CSU GE) plan or the Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum (IGETC) plan, OR
6. Transcripts showing successful completion of a qualifying reading course/placement test, a bachelor's degree, an Associate of Arts or Associate of Science degree from a regionally accredited California institution within a ten-year period of finishing major requirements at the college.

To assess faculty's awareness of this reading proficiency requirement, 101 faculty who has taught at least one of the general education courses listed above were invited to participate in an online survey. In addition, faculty were asked whether they know the reading level of their textbooks/students, whether they assign reading assessments and/or offer any instruction in reading strategies.

Twenty-three instructors completed the survey (23% participation rate), representing the many different subjects in the natural sciences, social and behavioral sciences. About three-fifths of the responding faculty are aware of the existence of a Reading Proficiency Requirement at SAC. And more than half of the respondents (58%) agreed with option #4, in that a student can fulfill his reading proficiency with successful completion of nine units in Area A and Area B.

Though there were few respondents, many did share additional thoughts regarding the need to require reading classes to help students improve their writing and comprehension. Staff are encouraged to read these comments as they may be useful in the discussions and planning of programs and services for students. Additional findings include:

Findings:

- More than half (57%) of the faculty-respondents stated they are aware of the reading level of their textbooks. Of those, 77% indicated their textbooks to be at 12th grade or higher reading level, 8% at 10th-11th grade level, and 5% at 8th - 9th grade level reading.
- On the other hand, only one-tenth of the respondents reported knowing the reading level of their students.
- Less than half (43%) of the respondents stated they assigned reading to assess their students' reading levels. Sample assessments used by respondents include: read textbook/articles and answer questions, department test, review maps and related handouts, online discussion board with critical analysis, handout where students count the number of words in each sentence of a long paragraph and divide the numbers to reach a level, etc.
- More than half of the survey participants (57%) reported that they offered instruction in reading strategies, including: SQ3R KWL, main idea, inference, supporting details, critical reading; review of how book is organized, the topics, etc.; have students read in class and query them on which sentences are most important, and ask what those sentences reveal specific topic; ask students to take notes as they read and highlight words/ideas they do not understand; teach students how to read a scientific text and use the structure of the text to help them with the material; reading apprenticeship principles, talking to the text, doing evidence/interpretation charts, etc. and teach them not to repeat/restate what they read but express their feelings/opinions instead.
- Nearly half (48%) of the faculty-participants require 75%-100% of reading for the completion of their course's assignments, 29% indicated 25-50%, 19% indicated 25-50% and 5% indicated 0-25%
- More than half of the respondents (57%) reported that over half of their students can understand the textbook independently of their lecture.
- Most of the respondents (86%) agreed that a specific reading level ensures successful completion of their course. Thirty-one percent of the faculty-participants indicated 12th grade and above, 63% at 10th - 11th grade, and 5% at 8th - 9th grade level reading.

Opinions/Suggestions Regarding Option #4 of the RPR:

- Students should earn a B or higher in order to fulfill the reading proficiency requirement.
- The variable is the requirements of the instructor in each class, regardless of the textbook readability level. The textbook does not teach reading. Learning to read is a guided process that requires direct instruction. A general reading assessment should be required upon enrollment just like the CSU system requires a minimum reading and math ability, then mandatory English or Math classes. Students should receive their scores, receive an explanation of the how that forecasts their success in college and then, be given support resources available at SAC along with remedial classes. There are many laudable efforts to help students bridge foundational academic gaps. Writing is also a very important area that follows the reading deficits we see in the classroom. If a student cannot read at the level of the text, they will also have difficulty understanding the professional language being used in class, AND will not be able to write at that level either. Writing is a HUGE area of concern. In summary, unless the instructors for the option #4 classes are also teaching reading with their subject content, then passing three classes does not guarantee improvement in reading, comprehension of reading or writing. Also, the grade for passing these three classes does not clearly indicate a passing grade in reading. Isn't the grade a reflection of passing the content? This is a very worthy survey and I am very glad these questions are being asked. Bravo to our college!
- Students are not achieving reading levels by passing three classes. They are not successful in transfer classes because of reading deficiencies.
- Requiring students to complete a Reading Proficiency Requirement is very necessary. Some students have never been exposed to reading skills.
- Must have a better reading assessment because many come to English Composition and history courses unprepared.
- Many students do not seem well prepared to take college level courses. Passing a reading class could only help, can't it?
- Instructors often adapt to the lack of reading skills allowing students to pass without reading skills being present
- The History Department STRONGLY agrees that students MUST have good reading skills to take our courses. Students benefit from a reading class no matter disciplines.
- Students will find other ways to be successful in a science course regardless of their reading proficiency.
- Basic comprehension is considered adequate for a grade of "C", which does demonstrate a basic level of proficiency. However, a higher level of proficiency would be necessary when transferring to four-year institutions.
- In college, students primarily learn through reading and other types of learning. Reading is the key. As such, they need to have a minimum reading level that is commensurate to college level instruction. Students need to be able to read, comprehend and cognitively retain written materials in order to build a foundation of understanding to be further developed with classroom facilitated group discussions and lectures.
- There are eight ways for Cypress College students to demonstrate proficiency in reading.
- Each HBU student is expected to complete competencies in written and oral communication, computer literacy, mathematics, and reading. Each proficiency must be completed **before reach 64 credits and is mandatory for graduation.**
- Able to read a minimum level of proficiency before they have earned an associate's degree. There are a variety of ways in which students can demonstrate this requirement, including a satisfactory score on the English placement test, a passing grade in a variety of English courses, or by passing a rigorous reading proficiency test.