Review of Literature

Assessment Measures for English as a Second Language Students in College

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Introduction

With support from the California Community College Chancellor's Office, the MMAP Research Team, a team of The Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges (RP Group) conducted a literature review on various assessment measures used for English as a Second Language (ESL) programs to explore effective assessment methods including guided/directed self-placement, writing samples/essays, various multiple measures, and the validitiy of International Baccalaureate (IB) program transcripts. We examined research on assessment methods for English Language Learner students (ELLs) and investigated whether tests such as the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) exam, writing samples/essays, multiple measures questionaires, and guided self-placement are effective for course placement.

The purpose of this report is to inform the AB 705 ESL Subcommittee of the AB 705 Implementation Team the various assessment methods colleges use nationally for ELL students. The findings will also be useful to California Community Colleges that would like to further their understanding of the various methods used for the assessment of ELL students. With the passage of AB 705, high school transcripts are the primary source of assessment. However, a prior MMAP research brief for ESL (https://bit.ly/2BEmPD1) found that the vast majority (97%) of high school students did not take ESL courses at a community college, but instead enrolled in English for native speakers. Therefore, the ESL population for whom we have high school transcript data is limited. This is coupled with AB 705 limiting the use of assessment tests to only those approved by the Board of Governors, making alternative assessment measures extremely important to this population.

This review of the literature begins with a summary of the main findings followed by a more detailed account of each article then concludes with a list of references. A file containing each full article is accessible here: https://bit.ly/2XE0OxF.

Summary of Findings

In mining the literature to incorporate into this report, the RP Group reviewed and selected 33 scholarly articles addressing placement methods for ELL students. Though this literature review was not exhaustive, key themes include:

1. Assessments Using Writing Samples and Essays
2. Guided/Directed Self-Placement Assessment Methods
3. Assessments Using Multiple Measures Questionaires
4. Assessments Using Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL)
5. International Baccalaureate Program Assessments

Assessments Using Writing Samples and Essays

This section provides a summary of the literature reviewed pertaining to writing samples or essays as a form of assessment for placement.

Research in the area of ELL placement concurs that **a writing sample or essay jointly reviewed with high school data is a better measure of success than a multiple-choice test** (CCCC, 2001; Bunch, Endris, & Panayotova, 2011; Brunk-Chavez & Fredericksen, 2008; Matzen & Hoyt, 2004).

Additionally, the Community College Committee on Second Language Writing (CCCC, 2001) made a statement regarding the placement decisions of ESL writers into writing courses:

> they should be based on students' writing proficiency and rather than solely on the scores from standardized tests of general language or spoken language proficiency. Instead, **scores from the direct assessment of students' writing proficiency should be used**, and multiple writing samples should be consulted whenever possible. They further advocate for the use of directed self-placement as a means of determining the most appropriate placement for second-language writers (CCCC, 2014, paragraph 16).

When a writing sample is used, researchers assert the following considerations:

- To increase the likelihood that test-takers are able to respond to a prompt that they fully understand, they should be able to either review the prompt ahead of time or choose from multiple prompts (Johnson & Riazi, 2017; Marini, Shaw, Young, & Hg, 2008).

- To help ensure test-takers are able to make revisions, an unlimited timeframe for a writing sample is advisable, as ELL students may process English more slowly than their peers who speak English as a first language (Crusan, 2002; Johnson & Riazi, 2017).

- Rater consistency, reliability, and validity were found to be significant issues when the writing sample is human-scored. To mitigate this, research suggests that rater training and norming sessions are an important part of any writing assessment process (Johnson & Riazi, 2017; Karimi & Mehrdad, 2012).

- A decade of research suggests that the costs, resources, and time associated with using a writing sample as a placement measure appear to be a limitation for many colleges (Crusan, 2002; Bunch, Endris, & Panayotova, 2011; Karimi & Mehrdad, 2012).

- Ongoing evaluation, bias testing, and validity testing of writing samples should also be part of the process (Johnson & Riazi, 2017; Karimi & Mehrdad, 2012).

- Flexible re-testing policies should be in place (Bunch, Endris, & Panayotova, 2011).

Guided/Directed Self-Placement Assessment Methods

Robust research exists around directed self-placement (DSP), better known in California as guided self-placement (GSP). Overall, there seems to be consensus that GSP has value in a placement process; **it enables colleges to give students a voice in their placement and results in a valid placement that is helpful to students** (Crusan, 2011; Ferris, Evans, & Kurzer, 2016; Inoue, 2009; LeBlanc & Painchaud, 1985; Royer & Gilles, 2003; Sinha, 2014).

GSP most often involves providing students with ample examples, relevant context, course information, samples of work, and guidance so they may effectively place themselves into a level of course which they feel is best aligned with their learning thus far. GSP typically includes a self-assessment questionnaire along with an overview of the students' course placement options. The "guided" portion of guided self-placement involves the inclusion of many factors that help students determine the best course for them, including past writing experience, confidence/efficacy with respect to writing, and descriptions of the courses themselves.

One strength of GSP is the ability to adapt to the needs of students, programs, and colleges. **Ultimately, GSP has been found to be a valid measure of assessment for ELL students and results in higher levels of success than other measures of assessment** (Royer & Gilles, 2003; Ferris, 2016; NCTE, 2014; Ross, 2008; Inoue, 2009; Tompkins, 2003).

Variations of GSP Models

Colleges take different approaches to GSP, though the variations are not exhaustive, the RP Group selected the following to highlight:

- Course information is provided to students through either an online survey or paper brochures about the possible classes that they can take. (Crusan, 2011).

- Students complete surveys that ask questions about their past and present reading and writing habits and experiences. Questions cover a broad spectrum and may include items such as: "I like using computers to draft and revise writing," "I turn in assignments on time, and no one has to remind me to get the work done," "Generally, I don't read when I don't have to," or "In high school, I wrote several essays per year." (Crusan, 2011)

- Students write an essay which is used to provide them with a real-time experience with which to base their writing self-evaluation (Bedore and Rossen-Knill, 2004).

- Counseling or in-person guidance is provided to help students determine the appropriate class (Bedore & Rossen-Knill, 2004; Crusan, 2011).

Recommendations when Developing a GSP Model

Critical to the effectiveness of GSP, research suggests a number of recommendations for colleges interested in developing a guided self-placement model:

- Confirm the following key stakeholders are involved in the development of a GSP model: 1) faculty and classroom teachers, 2) students who need access to program information, 3) advisors who need to disseminate information and choices to students, and 4) administrators who make financial decisions (Blakesley, 2002).

- Provide information about what will be required of the student within each course, such as writing a research paper or multiple persuasive essays, as well as course expectations and learning outcomes (Sinha, 2014; Crusan, 2011).

- Equip students in advance with information about the GSP process, including sample questions and preparation materials as well as information about a challenge process (Blakesley, 2002; Bunch, Endris, & Panayotova, 2011; Crusan, 2011; Sinha, 2014).

- Ensure information is readily available and consistent across the college. Information delivered in print, online, and verbally may be outdated, thus misdirecting students in their placement decision (Bedore & Rossen-Knill, 2004).

- Make publicly available videos or statements by students who have already completed the courses, offering a student perspective of what is required to successfully complete the course (Sinha, 2014).

- Ensure students are aware of and have access to support services, such as writing centers and tutoring (Sinha, 2014).

- Make GSP available to both international and residential second-language students (Crusan, 2011; NCTE, 2014).

- Develop online versions of GSP to assess international students off-campus using similar instruments, including actual writing samples and surveys about reading and writing habits and experiences (Crusan, 2011).

- Design self-assessments in a way that the content matches the curriculum of the course. In this way, what is expected of students is aligned with what they will learn in the course, which helps them make more of an informed decision about the course to enroll in (Ross, 2008).

- Offer clear and consistent information about the purpose of the GSP process and outcomes. This includes implications and consequences with respect to the college's English and ESL sequences and the length of each sequence (Bedore & Rossen-Knill,

2004; Blakesley, 2002; Bunch, Endris, & Panayotova, 2011; Crusan, 2011; Sinha, 2014).

- Inform students of the advantages and disadvantages of each placement option in order to help them make informed decisions (NCTE, 2014).

- Establish policies that allow flexibility regarding changing a student's initial placement (Bunch, Endris, & Panayotova, 2011).

Assessments Using Multiple Measures Questionnaires

In this section, "multiple measures" refers to a pre-assessment questionnaire used to capture information about students' backgrounds, skills, and abilities, among other things, as part of an assessment process. There is a somewhat limited amount of published literature regarding various types of multiple measures questionnaires used for placement of ELL students. However, the Multiple Measures Assessment Project (MMAP) (https://bit.ly/2EZRyxp) team has collected a number of multiple measures questions used by colleges and archived them (https://bit.ly/2EcBtTH). Further, MMAP has made one potential option for ESL multiple measures available in 10 different languages (https://bit.ly/2Iij8IZ) that are being used and locally validated at several colleges statewide.

In a California Community College study for academic ELL students (or those ELL students with a goal of degree or transfer), results showed that **multiple measures and conversations with counselors were recommended to be a part of an informed placement process**. The multiple measure assessment methods suggested in this study included K-12 assessment scores, classification as an English Learner (EL) or Redesignated Fluent English Proficient (R-FEP), Early Assessment Program (EAP) results, or a writing sample (Bunch, Endris & Panayotova, 2011).

In another California Community College study for academic ELL students, Fagioli (2018) found **four variables that correlated significantly with scores obtained on an ESL multiple measures survey:**

1) English self-rated proficiency (ranging from "proficient" to "low beginner," with examples);
2) The age at which the student started learning English (0-21 years old or 21+);
3) The use of a translation sheet for the survey questions (yes or no); and
4) A student's experience reading books in English (never, yes) (Fagioli, 2018).

Assessments Using TOEFL

The Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) is a standardized assessment test used to measure the English language skills of non-native English speakers (citation). Four-year universities tend to use TOEFL as a form of assessment, and many community colleges have a minimum required score for admittance to international programs, but it is unclear how many use the TOEFL score as a form of course placement. Many colleges have asked the MMAP team about the validity of using TOEFL scores as a way to place ELL students.

Across numerous published studies and one California Community College study, the findings were similar, **TOEFL scores were found to have a low correlation with academic achievement** (Burgess & Greis, 1970; Ferris et al, 2016; Krausz, Schiff, Schiff, & Van Hise, 2005; Moglen, 2015; Newell, 2018; Ng, 2007; Wongtrirat, 2010).

International Baccalaureate Program Assessments

The International Baccalaureate (IB) program offers a uniform and accredited curriculum focused on international education at U.S. high schools or in other countries. Schools must be authorized to teach IB programs. Many California Community Colleges do not currently accept IB transcripts from domestic or international students. Literature pertaining to IB student success at four-year universities overwhelmingly shows IB graduates outperform non-IB students in a multitude of areas while at the university (citation). With this in mind, colleges should strongly consider the use of IB transcripts as a form of assessment.

That said, **IB students in general are just as likely as non-IB students to persist for over two years, earn high GPAs, and earn a college degree (citation).** Further, IB students showed similar levels of metacognitive, cognitive, and college adjustment attitudes and behaviors across all areas assessed.

Qualitative results found that **IB students are more academically ready to successfully respond to the rigor and expectations of college courses than non-IB students**. IB students reported feeling less intimidated by the heavy workload required in college courses, more comfortable having one final exam account for a large portion of their course grade, and more able to manage their time and workload efficiently (Bergeron et al., 2015; Coca et al, 2012; Conley, McGaughy, Davis-Molin, Farkas, & Fukuda, 2014; Halic, 2013).

Detailed Summary of Articles

This section provides a detailed summary of each article reviewed for readers who would like to dig a bit deeper into the findings. A reference to each article is included below for those readers who would like to download the full article.

Articles Pertaining to Assessments Using Writing Samples and Essays

Matzen and Hoyt (2004) argue that within the field of college composition, a timed essay exam is preferred if only one measure of placement into composition courses is used and if the only alternative is a multiple-choice test. Matzen and Hoyt elaborate, however, that timed essays have their own issues such as the reliability of essay scores, biases of essay prompts, and prescribed five-paragraph essay responses. Test anxiety and time limitations may also negatively affect the reliability of timed essay exams. **The authors suggest that combining an essay with the student's high school GPA can be more predictive of final grades in writing courses.**

Within the study by Matzen and Hoyt (2004), 12 English teachers scored 431 timed essays written by incoming college freshmen in developmental English courses at a four-year university during the first week of classes. The freshmen students addressed one of two prompts and were allowed 30 minutes to write an essay. Matzen and Hoyt conclude that if only a single means of placement could be selected, and one had to choose between a reading test, an editing test, or a timed essay, the essay is preferable. Further, **the timed essay shows less of a disparate impact on minority students compared to placement using a multiple-choice test.**

Marini et al. (2018) looked at the relationship between the scores of 4,500 students at 10 four-year universities received on the SAT essay and students first-semester grades in English and writing courses and first-semester GPA. The sample included over 4,500 students at 10 four-year universities. The SAT essay was developed to have a common prompt and SAT form-specific source texts. The same prompt is presented to students in every test, and students can access the prompt ahead of time. **Marini et al. assert that a common prompt has a significant advantage for students** compared to most essay tests because students are able to focus their preparation on developing important reading, analysis, and writing knowledge and skills instead of trying to guess what question will be asked on test day. Students can get right to work instead of spending considerable time trying to form an opinion on a topic they might not have spent much time thinking about. The authors found a positive trend in increasing GPA as scores on all parts of the essay—reading analysis, and writing—increased.

Karimi and Mehrdad (2012) conducted a study of essays used for placement in a language department of Islamic Azad University of Hamedan where they reviewed 112 different essay tests. Karimi and Mehrdad provided suggestions to improve future essay tests. The main objective of the study was to **suggest that teachers and other test-makers be cautious while designing tests and make themselves more knowledgeable about testing by studying the related literature**. Authors further draw attention to the **economy and administration in scoring the test, including cost per test. Essentially, authors convey, increased required personnel escalates the cost of the process.**

Brunk-Chavez and Fredericksen's (2008) study looked at the reliability of the English ACCUPLACER multiple-choice test and holistically graded diagnostic essays at a four-year university. The results show that both are reliable predictors of success, but that two measures together make for an even more reliable predictor. The authors propose the use of an impromptu essay administered in 40 minutes of classroom time in the first week, which enables faculty to use the scores to quickly identify and support students in need of help. The college in which the study was conducted offers an English course with a corequisite lab for students who need additional support, and the one-unit lab is a mandatory class for students who perform poorly on the in-class diagnostic. The authors reference Matzen and Hoyt (2004), who indicate that when composition teachers **score or rate timed essays, scores have been found to have a predictive relationship with final grades and to be more indicative of students' writing abilities compared to multiple-choice test scores** for the same students.

Crusan (2002) performed an in-depth review of the literature pertaining to the assessment of ELL students at four-year universities. While most of the literature agrees that an indirect

assessment, such as multiple-choice tests, marginalize many ELL students, direct assessment of writing ability via an essay is a valid option, though it still poses challenges. One challenge Crusan raises is that **with timed essays, second-language writers are unsure of the structures of the language and have difficulty producing fluent written discourse, especially in timed situations.** Thus, timed writings may impose a disadvantage on many ELL students. Another issue is that **timed writing tests are often given in artificial conditions under which students must compose based on an assigned topic and are unable to use reference materials, making it difficult to write "cold" on a topic they might never have seen before or know nothing about.**

Furthermore, Crusan (2002) notes that there is little revision in a timed setting. The author references the California Community College Committee on Second Language Writing, which remarks in its Statement on Second-Language Writing and Writers,

> Decisions regarding the placement of second-language writers into writing courses should be based on students' writing proficiency and not based solely on the scores from standardized tests of general language proficiency or of spoken language proficiency. Instead, scores from the direct assessment of students' writing proficiency should be used, and multiple writing samples should be consulted whenever possible. (2001)

The Johnson and Riazi (2017) study intended to validate a locally created and rated writing test into college level English courses for English Foreign Language (EFL) students that resulted in robust findings for the institution, helping them improve their internal processes. Prior to the study, instructors who were involved in the development and evaluation of the assessment believed that the assessment overlapped the skills required in English classes and contributed to beneficial decision-making when placing students. However, the validation process made stakeholders aware that their perceptions were false; fortunately, it also provided a roadmap for how to improve the process.

A significant proportion of test-takers reported difficulties understanding the instructions, prompts, and tasks, which led instructors to consider piloting future materials with current students and gathering insights via post-assessment questionnaires and/or focus groups. **Presenting multiple prompts from which the test-takers may choose could increase the likelihood that applicants have the opportunity to respond to a prompt they clearly understand** and allow more control over the topic and content of their writing (Johnson & Riazi, 2017).

Johnson and Riazi (2017) also found rater consistency to be an issue, and suggested that **rater training and norming sessions be held** in the future. The rubric was also problematic in that it was rather complicated and difficult to use. Additionally, **although the test did not have a time limit, many test-takers reported perceiving time limits and feeling they were too short.** Johnson and Riazi advise that prior to taking the test, all students should understand the purposes, possible outcomes, and processes involved in the placement testing system. The

study provides a viable validity framework that could be used by other colleges to implement ongoing evaluation and validity testing of essay assessments.

Bunch, Endris, and Panayotova (2011) argue that even though almost half of California's K-12 students grew up in homes in which languages other than English were spoken, there is little awareness of this population within the community college system and little agreement regarding their characteristics and needs. To investigate, the authors conducted 51 telephone and in-person interviews with faculty and staff at 10 colleges representing different sizes, geographical areas, and student demographics. Bunch, Endris, and Panayotova reviewed college websites, policies, and practices related to testing and placement and examined the ways in which those policies and practices are communicated to students.

Bunch, Endris, and Panayotova (2011) suggest that multiple measures coupled with conversations with counselors be a part of an informed placement process. Authors suggest the following should be included as a multiple measure include: K-12 assessment scores, classification as an ELL or Redesignated Fluent English Proficient (R-FEP) status, or Early Assessment Program (EAP) results. They also suggest the use of a writing sample in the placement process, though they note the expense and resources this requires. Bunch, Endris, and Panayotova further **recommend liberal retesting policies for this population, as well as providing students with information about the testing process, sample test questions, test preparation materials, and information about a challenge process.** The authors also argue that colleges should provide clear and consistent information about the purposes of the assessment and the outcomes **as well as the implications and consequences of the English and ESL sequence and the length of each sequence.** Lastly, the authors note that directed self-placement could be less expensive than using commercially developed placement tests and at one college in the sample, such placement for ESL students had proven to be as valid as the test formerly used by the college.

Articles Pertaining to Guided/Directed Self-Placement

Much of the literature pertaining to guided self-placement, as it is known in California, is referred to as directed self-placement (DSP) in much of the rest of the country (Ferris et al., 2016). **DSP typically includes a self-assessment questionnaire along with an overview of students' course placement options.** In some cases, students are asked to write a timed essay as well, but **DSP is used mostly to provide students with a real-time experience with writing on which to base their own self-evaluation.** According to Ferris et al., depending on the institution, students might meet with an advisor to discuss their choices, be allowed to enroll in the course they have selected after completing the directed self-placement instrument, or override an assessment provided to them via self-assessment. The "directed" portion of directed self-placement involves the inclusion of many factors that help the student determine the best courses for enrollment, including past writing experience and confidence/efficacy at writing, as well as descriptions of the courses themselves, expectations, learning outcomes, and experiences of past students.

Ferris et al. (2016) emphasizes that while there are different approaches to DSP, there are also similarities. For example, **information is provided about the possible classes students can take, and then students are asked to determine which is best aligned to their prior learning** either through an online survey or paper brochures. Some colleges have students take a placement or diagnostic test and provide a recommendation based on performance, but students may override the test results. Other institutions **provide counseling or other in-person guidance to students to help them determine the appropriate classes.** Research shows that DSP's ability to adapt to the needs of the students, programs, and colleges is its strength (Ferris et al.).

As demonstrated in the following excerpt, it is important to acknowledge students' potential anxiety and fears around using DSP or GSP for assessment (Ferris et al., 2016). Additionally, it is critical to acknowledge the risk that many instructors face:

> If students who are not fully aware (because of their differing cultural and educational experiences) of what language/writing proficiency entails, particularly in a demanding L2 academic environment, they might be more likely to aggressively place themselves so that they can make rapid progress through their degree requirements. Conversely, other students may lack confidence in their own abilities and place themselves lower than required. Not only can misplacement harm individual students themselves, but it can also make instructors' jobs much more difficult (if they have students with widely varying abilities in the same writing class) and lead to broader programmatic problems (such as difficulties in administering end-of-course assessments and high failure rates) (p. 2).

The authors conclude that DSP has value in the placement process and enables colleges to give students a voice in their own placement.

As far back as 1985, LeBlanc and Painchaud discussed the use of self-assessment to place adult ELL learners. They argued that **when adult students play a role in deciding their course enrollment, the experience yields an understanding of why they are entering a certain course and what they should expect from it.** The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) published a position statement in 2014 for the Conference on College Composition and Communication. In Part Three: Guidelines for Writing Programs, First-Year Composition Placement, the organization asserts:

> …scores from the direct assessment of students' writing proficiency should be used, and multiple writing samples should be consulted whenever possible. Writing programs should work toward making a wide variety of placement options available—including mainstreaming, basic writing, and second language writing as well as courses that systematically integrate native and nonnative speakers of English, such as cross-cultural composition courses.

> Placing residential second language students in appropriate college writing courses can be especially challenging because not all students self-identify as "ESL," "multilingual" or "second language" students. Some students may welcome the opportunity to enroll in a writing course designated for second language writers for the additional language

support while others may prefer to enroll in a mainstream first-year composition course. Due to these considerations, **we advocate Directed Self-Placement as a means of determining the most appropriate placement for second language writers** (for more information on Directed Self-Placement and a list of questions used, see Royer and Gilles, 1998). **Writing programs should inform students of the advantages and disadvantages of each placement option so that students can make informed decisions, and should make this opportunity available to both international and residential second language students (NCTE, 2014).**

Royer and Gilles (2003) claim that **directed self-placement promotes democracy in students' education that results in agency, choice, and self-determination, factors that encourage students to feel invested in their education** (Ferris et al. 2017, p. 4). Further, when students place themselves using DSP, they tend to have higher course success rates because they now feel the need to prove something.

Ferris et al. (2017) studied directed self-placement of 1,067 ELL students at a public four-year university. As part of the study, students took a self-assessment survey as well as a locally developed placement exam. The results of both were compared to determine the level of alignment between the self-assessment and placement exam in placing students into a four-course writing program.

The authors also conducted an extensive literature review of directed self-placement and noted particular interest in a book chapter in Royer & Gilles (2003) by Tompkins, who compares community college course grades to self-assessment scores and **finds that DSP is just as effective as other forms of placement, with higher grades in a piloted GSP program than those placed from a timed test.**

Ferris et al. (2017) included a majority of international visa-holders (80-85%) as well as U.S. educated multilingual students. The ELL program at the college includes four levels, each one term long. Of the 1,067 students, **most students' (79%) self-placement scores were within one course level of their placement results while only about 20% were two or three course levels off. Over half (57%) did not place themselves at higher levels than the test.** Ferris et al. further found that students at the bottom and top of the placement outcomes were more likely to over- or underrate themselves than the students in the middle. Authors conclude that **program administrators and instructors should not discount ELL writers as unable to provide input regarding their placement outcomes.**

In TESOL Quarterly, Crusan (2011) opines, "The strength of a writing program often lies in its assessment techniques, so I strongly suggest that writing programs consider DSP as one option for placement of second language writers" (p. 2). Likewise, Crusan recognizes that there are factors that may negatively impact students' placement using DSP, such as overconfidence in their skills and abilities, but **when students are correctly informed about course expectations and their responsibilities as a learner in the course they select, misplacement is greatly reduced.** Therefore, it is essential that programs tailor their DSP process to the needs of the college, program, and the students they serve.

Crusan (2011) offers examples of DSP across varied institutions. **DSP may include face-to-face guidance from writing program administrators and teachers, PowerPoint presentations, websites, or brochures outlining the most important information for a student to know. Many colleges use surveys to ask questions about students' past and present reading and writing experiences.** Questions used include: "I like using computers to draft and revise writing," "I turn in assignments on time and no one has to remind me to get the work done," "Generally I don't read when I don't have to," and "In high school, I wrote several essays per year." (Crusan, 2011, p. 778). Some colleges also **use online versions of DSP to assess international students away from the campus using similar instruments. According to Crusan, these include actual writing samples, demographic questionnaires, and surveys about reading and writing habits and experiences.**

Crusan (2011) acknowledges that some TESOL educators may still be weary of DSP and fear that English language learners are not equipped to assess themselves correctly, but with the addition of directing or guiding students through the process, DSP can be a valuable asset to an assessment process for second language writers. She further argues that **DSP sends a message to students that they are important and that colleges value what they have to say, affording them agency in the placement decision.** Crusan concludes that while there may be no right answer to how best to place students, DSP deserves more than a passing glance.

Inoue (2009) performed an interesting assessment of a DSP model used for the English writing program at California State University (CSU), Fresno. While DSP was not used with an ELL population, there were interesting findings regarding DSP for course placement purposes. Inoue posits that **DSP contributes to increased agency and responsibility among students over their educational path.**

In order to assess how well students were self-assessing into writing courses, the faculty in Inoue's (2009) study looked at entry and exit course surveys, portfolio ratings by teachers and peers, and course grades. Upon review of these measures, the faculty felt that **all students had "adequate quality" or better on their final portfolio and found that satisfaction with the course improved from start to finish. Additionally, looking at retention rates, faculty found their program to have a positive effect on student retention, especially for those students who were designated as needing remediation by the university.** Inoue argues that when students do well in this writing program that provides students with agency and choice via the DSP, they stay in the university longer.

Ross (2008) conducted a meta-analysis of self-assessment (SA) as a form of second-language assessment. The author notes that SA has been widely used and researched, though this research has resulted in varied findings. In many articles, SA is considered a viable alternative to formal assessment tests, but in others, SA is found to lack validity. The article summarizes the research literature on 60 correlations reported in the second-language testing literature pertaining to listening, reading, and writing tests.

Ross (2008) points to the need to **design self-assessments in a way that the content of the self-assessment items match the criterion skills, thus designing the self-assessment of language**

learning achievement according to specific curricular content. If the content validity requirement is met, the author argues that there is clear potential for predictive accuracy of criterion skills based on self-assessment measures. However, when there is a mismatch between the content of the self-assessment items and criterion skills, the self-assessment items contributed very little to achievement test variance. Bunch, Endris, and Panayotova (2011) recommend that **directed self-placement could be less expensive than using commercially developed placement tests and note that at one college in the sample, such placement for ESL has proven to be as valid as the test formerly used by the college.** They also suggest liberal retesting policies for this population as well as providing students with information about the testing process, sample test questions, test preparation materials, and information about a challenge process.

Extending the DSP approach, Bedore and Rossen-Knill (2004) expound upon the Informed Self Placement (ISP) model employed at the University of Rochester (UR). While UR's ISP model is for placement into English courses (transfer-level or transfer-level with a support lab attached), and the institution is rather small with 950 new students each fall, it has found success by engaging faculty in ISP. The model requires that students write an essay that is then read by a faculty member, and a placement is given. The student can request to speak to a faculty member about their placement and discuss the work together to make an informed choice. The student can ultimately override the faculty member's placement decision, resulting in an informed self-placement. Should a student seek additional consultation regarding their placement, Bedore and Rossen-Knill include guidelines for faculty.

While this type of DSP is labor-intensive and may only work at a small institution, the study provides some important findings. Bedore and Rossen-Knill (2004) note that they set out to determine whether students could responsibly determine their writing placement levels, recognizing that students might lack necessary information to make this choice or could make a mistake in the process. Their assessment results showed that when they provided a great deal of information to students, students made the choice and students judged that choice to be appropriate to their knowledge level once enrolled in the course. Lastly, they learned that the choices students make are only as good as the information provided to them. Therefore, **colleges must ensure that information is readily available and consistent across the college. The authors found that outdated information in print, online, and from people who are unaware of recent changes produce misinformation that must be addressed.**

Blakesley (2002) acknowledges the challenges that faculty and staff at most universities face when implementing a DSP model. The author asserts that **universities must relinquish power and give it to the students.** Blakesley, Harvey and Reynolds (2003) identify four major groups of stakeholders they believe should be included in the process and convinced of the importance and value of DSP in order for it to function well: **1) students who need access to program information, 2) student advisors who need to disseminate information and choices to students, 3) administrators who make financial decisions, and 4) teachers in the classroom.**

Sinha (2014) studied DSP within the California State University system. The author observes that DSP allows students an educational choice of two or more courses, usually the writing

course or the writing course as a stretch (two-term) course, and helps them make that decision based on their own assessment of their writing abilities. Thus, it is important that all students have access to support services such as writing help. Moreover, **students should have information regarding course expectations, learning outcomes, and assignments, such as writing a research paper or multiple persuasive essays. Providing examples of each different type of assignment as well as statements or information provided by students who already completed the course is another option.**

Sinha (2014) also describes advantages and disadvantages of using DSP. In terms of advantages, Sinha posits that DSP gives students a fair chance to prove their abilities and offers students the agency to choose their own courses. Moreover, **DSP is locally situated and allows colleges the opportunity to ensure placement is transparent, meaningful, and context-specific.** With respect to disadvantages, Sinha notes that some students will make wrong decisions for themselves; therefore, teachers and administrators need to participate in the decision-making process to ensure students have as much information as possible to facilitate effective course selection. In addition, DSP requires more planning and preparedness than standard assessment tests.

Articles Pertaining to Multiple Measures Questionaires

In 2018, Fagioli et al. developed a survey at Irvine Valley College to use as potential multiple measures for ELL students without high school transcript data. Researchers recruited four other community colleges to also administer the survey to their potential ELL student populations for a total sample of 4,099 students. They obtained the survey results as well as course enrollment and success data. Out of 15 questions on the survey, they found four to be correlated with ESL placement level (1-6 levels below transfer-level):

1) **English self-rated proficiency (ranging from "proficient" to "low beginner," with examples);**
1) **The age at which the student started learning English (0-21 years old or 21+);**
2) **The use of a translation sheet for the survey questions (yes or no); and**
3) **A student's experience reading books in English (never, yes) (Fagioli, 2018).**

Students who placed one level below transfer-level had a self-rated proficiency of low advanced, advanced or proficient, had learned English prior to age 21 and did not use a translation sheet.

Articles Pertaining to the use of the TOEFL Exam for Assessment

As stated earlier, four-year universities tend to use TOEFL as a form of assessment, and many community colleges have a minimum required score for admittance to international programs, but it is unclear how many use the TOEFL score as a form of course placement. The literature reviewed suggests the TOEFL scores have limited value for placement.

Ferris et al. (2016) found in a national investigation of English as second language (ELL) writing placement procedures at private and public U.S. colleges that 26% of colleges responding to the survey used only the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) scores for placement. The authors reported that a "dominant majority" of programs studied used some version of the TOEFL for placement purposes. However, **the authors found TOEFL scores overall, as well as specific writing and speaking scores, to have small correlations with standardized test scores, suggesting they have limited predictive value for placement purposes.**

Moglen (2015) found moderate correlations (0.52) between scores on TOEFL and a local placement exam. However, the author states that in spite of this moderate correlation, there is no evidence that TOEFL scores predict academic achievement. The Education Testing Services (ETS), which owns and administers TOEFL, states on its website **that assessment decisions should not be based solely on the TOEFL score**; rather, the score should be used in conjunction with other criteria.

Research in the field generally corroborates this stance. For example, Wongtrirat (2010) conducted a meta-analysis of the predictive qualities of TOEFL, in particular its ability to predict academic achievement, defined as "GPA, numbers of courses completed, or both" (p. 14). The results of the analysis showed that **TOEFL scores had a low positive correlation with academic achievement**, including findings from Ng (2007), who looked at 433 international students, as well as from Krausz, Schiff, Schiff, and Van Hise (2005) and Zhang (1996).Rarely was a high correlation reported, and when it was, as in the study by Burgess and Greis (1970), the results were not generalizable because of the small sample size. Research based on one California Community College (Newell, 2018) produced similar findings when correlating the local ESL placement test with TOEFL scores as well as correlating TOEFL scores with ESL course success.

Articles Pertaining to the Use of International Baccalaureate Program Transcript Data for Assessment

As stated earlier, the International Baccalaureate (IB) offers international education within the U.S. and worldwide. Schools must be authorized to teach IB programs. Many California Community Colleges do not currently accept IB transcripts from students within the U.S. or internationally. This review of the literature indicates that colleges should strongly consider the use of IB transcripts as a form of assessment as the literature pertaining to IB student success at four-year universities overwhelmingly showed IB graduates outperformed non-IB students in a multitude of areas while at the university.

Conley, McGaughy, Davis-Molin, Farkas, and Fukuda (2014) explored the impact of high school International Baccalaureate Diploma programs on students' preparation for college by looking at both academic and non-academic factors among University of Oregon students, some of whom had completed high school IB programs and some who had not. The authors examined students' academic, social, and emotional adjustment and the factors that helped transition both groups from high school to college. The results suggest that **IB students in general are just as likely to persist for over two years, earn high GPAs, and earn a college degree compared to**

non-IB students. Further, IB students showed similar levels of metacognitive, cognitive, and college adjustment attitudes and behaviors across all areas assessed.

The qualitative results found that IB students are more academically ready for the rigor and expectations of college courses than non-IB students. IB students reported feeling less intimidated by the heavy workload required in college courses, more comfortable having one final exam account for a large portion of their course grades, and better able to manage their time and workload efficiently. Overall, this study found that **IB students were better prepared for college in terms of both academic and non-academic factors, and no differences were detected in the GPAs between groups.** Additionally, **IB students who completed four years of high school were more likely to complete college than non-IB students.**

Halic (2013) conducted a longitudinal study of over 11,000 IB graduates over six years, examining postsecondary enrollment, retention, and graduation. The author used National Student Clearinghouse data for graduates who sat for the IB exam in 2005, which resulted in a match of 9,654 students included in the analysis. Of all graduates of IB programs in 2005, 92% enrolled at a postsecondary institution, with 10% (872) enrolling in California. Almost three-quarters (74%) graduated within four years, compared to the national average of 38%. **Overall, the longitudinal study found higher persistence, retention, and graduation rates for students who graduated from an IB program when compared to national rates.**

Coca et al. (2012) examined the impact of Chicago's neighborhood IB programs on postsecondary outcomes of graduates between 2003 and 2007. The authors used propensity matching and student interviews to investigate student experiences. Overall, they found that **IB students were 40% more likely to attend a postsecondary institution and persisted to graduation at a higher rate than non-IB students.** When in college, **IB students reported feeling prepared to succeed and excel in coursework.** Bergeron et al. (2015) also found similar results looking at IB graduates between 2008 and 2014.

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