

In Tennessee, nearly 70% of college freshmen are required to take remedial courses in math, English, or both before they are qualified to take college-level courses. Seamless Alignment and Integrated Support (SAILS) integrates the Tennessee Board of Regents learning support competencies and the Tennessee Department of Education Academic Standards, allowing at-risk high school seniors to complete all remediation requirements while still in high school and begin their college career prepared for credit-bearing coursework. Tennessee SAILS originated out of Chattanooga State Community College, and the SAILS Math program has been in place statewide since 2013. During the 2015-2016 school year, SAILS Math served more than 17,000 students. Also during the 2015-2016 school year, the SAILS English program completed its initial year with five pilot sites. The English program is expanding to 20 sites in the coming 2016-2017 academic year.

BACKGROUND

In the spring of 2015, a committee of college English faculty and high school teachers from various counties in Tennessee came together to create the SAILS English curriculum. The committee needed to create a single curriculum that aligned with the Tennessee Department of Education Standards for high school students, which are heavily focused on reading and responding to literature, and the Tennessee Board of Regents reading and writing competencies, which are heavily focused on reading and responding to informational texts. The committee selected NROC English as a key component of the course. Mollee Shannon, the lead Field Coordinator for the TN SAILS English program, said, “The NROC Developmental English was a clear choice for us because its learning objectives and content require students to read, engage with, and respond to informational texts in a number of ways, which largely satisfied the Tennessee Board of Regents college standards.”

The committee then designed literature assignments that fulfilled the Department of Education Standards and



DETAILS

WHO WAS SERVED: At-risk high school seniors with low ACT English scores

WHEN: 2015-2016 pilot

NUMBER OF STUDENTS: 104

IMPLEMENTATION: Primarily in a class computer lab

RESULTS: 98% of students successfully passed SAILS English

INSTRUCTIONAL APPLICATION: college prep

simultaneously reinforced the reading and writing skills students acquired in NROC English. The resulting course consists of five modules that chronologically span British Literary time periods. Each module begins with two units of NROC English, followed by literature assignments where students can show mastery of their newly acquired reading and writing skills. For example, in Module 1, students complete two units of NROC English followed by daily assignments related to literature from the Anglo-Saxon period. These assignments include reading selections such as Beowulf and “The Seafarer” and focus on some of the concepts from the NROC materials, such as identifying the author’s audience and purpose, identifying supporting details, and annotating a text. In each of the five modules, students also complete a culminating writing assignment that relates to the literature in that module and reinforces what they have learned in the NROC materials.

IMPLEMENTATION

During the 2015-2016 school year, five diverse high schools piloted the English SAILS program: Howard (urban), Hixson (urban), Bledsoe (rural), Rhea (rural), and South Pittsburg (rural). The majority of the students served are considered “at risk” based on low ACT scores, high rates of poverty, and the opportunity to be first generation college students. The curriculum was applied to a variety of different school calendars (semester, year-long, and trimester) and different class run-times (45 minutes or 90 minutes), but all of the classes met every day. The SAILS committee designed a pacing guide for the instructors that recommends that students should learn the majority of the concepts in class, and homework would not be necessary to complete the course.

RESULTS

During the 2015-2016 school year, 104 students participated in the SAILS English program. To be eligible for the program, those students must have scored below 19 on the English portion of the ACT, indicating that they were not ready for college-level English. Students who successfully completed the SAILS English course with a grade of 70% or better became eligible to take freshman-level college English without retesting (ACT, etc.) or taking remedial English. Of the 104 students in the pilot, 98% of them successfully passed SAILS English and do not have to take remedial courses in college.

Shannon commented, “The program results for our pilot year are significant for us in two ways. First, it’s showing us that the program is designed effectively for this educational demographic. Second, it’s proving that with the right type of instructional model, students who have historically struggled with English can be motivated, excited about learning, and successful.”

In addition, 100% of the SAILS English students applied for Tennessee Promise, a scholarship and mentoring program that provides two years of tuition-free attendance to one of the state’s 13 community colleges or 27 colleges of applied technology. Across Tennessee, approximately two-thirds¹ of graduating seniors from 2015 applied for Tennessee Promise. The fact that 100% of the at-risk SAILS students are considering continuing their education beyond high school is a testament to the success of the SAILS program.

WHAT’S NEXT

In the 2016-2017 school year, the SAILS English program expanded to 20 sites in the Chattanooga State service area. The following 2017-2018 school year, SAILS English plans to expand to schools statewide. ” ■

**If a student scores 100 points, he or she has achieved 100% mastery of all of the content in the curriculum for his or her class.*

¹<https://www.tn.gov/governor/news/nearly-60000-high-school-seniors-apply-for-tennessee-promise>