

Precollege Interventions Help Increase College Readiness, Reduce Remediation

LESSONS LEARNED FROM TENNESSEE SAILS

This alignment policy brief [series](#) is designed to elevate best practices and inform leaders in higher education about emerging collaborations with K–12. Our [first issue](#) focused on the opportunity to leverage rigorous, aligned statewide assessments in high school and use them as early college readiness indicators for placement into credit-bearing courses. Early warnings from rigorous 11th grade assessments can help close the preparation gap before postsecondary enrollment, but only if students are provided targeted supports to meet college-ready benchmarks.

Student supports offered in high school provide opportunities to *speed up* by earning college credit through dual enrollment and *catch up* to fill learning gaps to ensure that students are prepared for credit-bearing coursework when they arrive on campus. This policy brief presents a closer look at one *catch up* model that has shown promising results over the past few years.



How TN SAILS Helps High School Seniors Catch Up

The Seamless Alignment and Integrated Learning Support (SAILS) program, known as TN SAILS, began as a collaborative effort between a single community college and the local high school, designed to increase the number of students who

are college ready in mathematics so that they can enter directly into credit-bearing postsecondary coursework. TN SAILS uses 11th grade assessment results to identify students who have not met college readiness benchmarks. These students are

enrolled in the TN SAILS course, which uses blended learning to embed the college developmental curriculum into the senior year. Students who successfully complete the TN SAILS math program demonstrate mastery of all five Tennessee Board of Regents math competencies

and are eligible to enroll in credit-bearing courses at any Tennessee higher education institution. The TN SAILS math program has been in place at all 13 community colleges across the state since 2013.

The TN SAILS Process

11TH GRADE

Student scores less than college ready on ACT math or English

12TH GRADE

Student participates in TN SAILS to complete all remediation requirements

FRESHMAN YEAR OF COLLEGE

Student enters directly into credit-bearing, nondevelopmental courses without additional placement testing

Overcoming Student Barriers

Tennessee developed and scaled the TN SAILS program as a strategy to improve college readiness and reduce remediation at the postsecondary level. The program breaks down the barriers to success by moving the remedial courses students previously took in college into the senior year of high school to ensure that students are college ready when they graduate. Before TN SAILS:

- Each year, nearly 70 percent of community college freshmen in Tennessee were placed in remedial courses upon enrollment in higher education.
- In 2010, only 27 percent of ACT-tested high school graduates met math readiness benchmarks in Tennessee, compared to 43 percent nationally.

The barriers posed by lack of college readiness and the need for remediation are not isolated to Tennessee. Nationally:

- Low-income students and students of color enroll in remediation at higher rates than their white and higher income peers.
- Students who require remedial coursework are less likely to graduate, with only about 10 percent of remedial students at two-year institutions graduating in three years and a little more than one-third of remedial students graduating from four-year institutions in six years.
- Remedial courses cost students and families across America about \$1.3 billion every year.

Taking TN SAILS to Scale

After successfully using MyMathLab to redesign the remedial math programs at Chattanooga State Community College, faculty and staff sought to bring remediation to a local high school to prepare students for credit-bearing coursework before graduation. In spring 2012, Red Bank High School partnered with Chattanooga State to create a developmental math class for seniors who scored less than a 19 on the math portion of the ACT. Using a blended learning format, a pilot group of 20 students worked to complete interactive exercises targeted to their individual needs, based on the gaps

identified through the ACT. Eighty percent of the students successfully completed the course, and as a result, the TN SAILS pilot program was quickly expanded to three additional community colleges. Chattanooga State and Cleveland State Community Colleges received \$117,000 and \$40,000 grants from Tennessee Board of Regents and the Tennessee College Access and Success Network, respectively, to bring TN SAILS to additional high schools. Of the 500 total students in these pilots, 82 percent would go on to complete the program, enabling them to enter directly into credit-bearing courses.

Chattanooga State then pitched the idea for a formal, statewide pilot to the Tennessee Higher Education Commission. A \$1.12 million grant from the governor’s office for Year 1 extended TN SAILS to 118 high schools and all 13 community colleges, reaching more than 8,000 students. In 2013–14, the first year TN SAILS expanded statewide — and less than 24 months after the initial pilot of 20 students launched — 5,625 (69 percent) of these students successfully completed the course, saving a combined total of almost \$6.3 million in tuition and 11,471 total semesters of math remediation in college. With Year 2 funding increased to \$2.45 million, TN SAILS continued to rapidly scale by adding 61 partner high schools, growing to reach more than 10,000 students in 2014–15 and 14,000 in 2015–16, while boosting completion rates from 69 percent in 2012–13 to 91 percent and 92 percent in 2014–15 and 2015–16, respectively.

With partnerships spanning 281 participating high schools, 17,000 students are expected to enroll in 2016–17 — representing more than half of all the Tennessee students who were identified as not college ready at the end of the 11th grade year. By the end of the 2016–17 school year, TN SAILS will have reached more than 50,000 students in Tennessee.

Evidence of Success

- Since 2012, the number of students who enter community college in need of **math remediation has decreased 15.6 percent**, though there is still work to be done.
- As Tennessee’s **college-going rate jumped from 57 percent to 62.5 percent** between 2012 and 2015, especially spurred by growth at the community college level due to the Tennessee Promise scholarship, increasing college readiness is critical to improving student access and success.
- Statewide access to personalized learning through TN SAILS can help **close opportunity and achievement gaps** for underrepresented students.
- The TN SAILS program, designed to remove barriers to college success, has also been lauded as a **key aspect of Governor Bill Haslam’s Drive to 55**, which seeks to equip 55 percent of Tennesseans with a college degree or certificate by the year 2025.

Key Ingredients for Successful Scaling

Proven Track Record: The TN SAILS pilots demonstrated real results for student success. These improved outcomes made a strong case for continued scaling and implementation statewide to achieve the vision of every student being college ready by the time they graduate high school.

Compelling Financial Case: By showing a clear return on investment to state policymakers, scaling the TN SAILS program represented a promising use of state resources.

Scalable Infrastructure: A modular, self-paced, online curriculum delivers the benefits of multimedia and digital content through a recognized software vendor in combination with face-to-face instruction and support from an expert teacher. Regional field coordinators serve as liaisons between community colleges and high schools to provide comprehensive technical, content, and logistical supports.

Strong Partnerships: Frequently cited as the most critical element, high school and community college partnerships are the backbone of the initiative. The TN SAILS curriculum was co-designed by K–12 and Chattanooga State Community College educators to embed Tennessee Board of Regents Learning Support competencies into the high school senior year math and English courses, ensuring alignment.

Closing Gaps in High School with TN SAILS Saves Money



Collective savings for students in 2014–15 from TN SAILS

Source: Tatter, Grace. “Leaders highlight K-12 schools’ role in ‘Drive to 55.’” *Chalkbeat*, Sept. 21, 2015.

Rapid Expansion of TN SAILS

SPRING 2012



TN SAILS piloted at **1 high school** and **1 community college**

2012–13



TN SAILS available at **20 high schools** and **4 community colleges**

2013–14



TN SAILS available statewide at **all 13 community colleges**
Drive to 55 announced

2014–15



More than 10,000 students enrolled in TN SAILS at **nearly 180 high schools**, with a 91 percent completion rate

Spring 2015: **100+ students** pilot **TN SAILS English** through Chattanooga State

2015–16



Completion rate

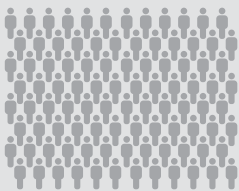
92%

Fall 2015: Inaugural cohort of TN Promise students

TN SAILS expands to **nearly 250 high schools**

TN SAILS English pilot expands to **19 high schools** across Chattanooga State and Roane State Community College service areas

2016–17



By the end of 2016–17, SAILS will have reached **more than 50,000 students** since the initial pilot

The Future of TN SAILS

Expanding to English

Based on the success in reducing remediation in math, Tennessee is piloting a TN SAILS English module. Through collaboration between K–12 and higher education content experts, the program aligns K–12 standards and higher education competencies to allow students to complete college-level remedial coursework and gain credit for both high school and college-level English and writing while still in high school. More than 100 students at five high schools participated in the pilot TN SAILS English program in 2015–16, with 98 percent of students successfully completing it. In 2016–17, the TN SAILS English pilot expanded to 424 students at 19 high schools in the Chattanooga State and Roane State Community College service areas.

Adult learners

Community colleges serve a diverse student body, including many first-time and returning adult students. Tennessee Reconnect, the adult-focused efforts of Drive to 55, works to engage the more than 900,000 Tennessee adults over the age of 25 who have some college but have not completed their degree and the 1.4 million Tennesseans over 25 who have only a high school degree. Currently, 75 percent of first-time adult students require remediation when they enroll in community college; even though they have graduated high school, these students can benefit from additional supports to succeed in credit-bearing coursework.

Bottom Line

Precollege interventions developed through partnerships between higher education and K–12 work. They dramatically improve college readiness for all students — helping meet state goals for student success — and can be brought to scale rapidly while streamlining practices across the education system, saving students and taxpayers time and money.

Opportunities Going Forward in Your State

The federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) provides new opportunities for educators, institutional leaders, and policymakers to work together to develop and scale speed up and catch up interventions like TN SAILS to ensure successful transitions between K–12 and postsecondary education:

- **Available funding:** ESSA creates a new Direct Student Services program that allows states to reserve money under Title I to support student access to advanced courses (i.e., Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, dual enrollment) and academic acceleration courses for struggling students.

- **Statewide attainment goals:** Aligning policies and programs across K–12 and postsecondary to statewide goals, like Tennessee’s Drive to 55, creates a “north star” to ensure that all efforts are in sync and maximize impact.

For more about the opportunities ESSA provides for higher education and K–12 collaboration, check out Higher Ed for Higher Standards’ [Leveraging ESSA](#) series, with materials around aligned attainment goals to be released in early 2017.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [Core Principles for Transforming Remediation within a Comprehensive Student Success Strategy](#)
- [Corequisite Remediation: Spanning the Completion Divide](#)
- [Hot Topics in Higher Education: Reforming Remedial Education](#)
- [Leveraging ESSA](#)
- [Mapping College Readiness](#)
- [Out of Pocket: The High Cost of Inadequate High Schools and High School Student Achievement on College Affordability](#)
- [Remedial Education: The Cost of Catching Up](#)
- [Seizing the Moment: Community Colleges Collaborating with K–12 to Improve Student Success](#)

More about TN SAILS

- [The Architecture of Innovation: System-Level Course Redesign in Tennessee](#)
- [Case Study by Pearson](#)
- [Chattanooga State Website](#)
- [Letter of Support from Tennessee Department of Education](#)
- [Program Description](#)
- [Tennessee Higher Education Commission Fact Book](#)
- [THEC Seamless Alignment and Integrated Learning Support: Program Overview and Update](#)

Are you interested in piloting a similar initiative in your state or at your institution?

We want to help support those who are advancing this agenda. Click [here](#) to let us know you’re interested in this emerging work.

To view this brief online, go to www.higheredforhigherstandards.org.