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EFP Takeaways

A Switch in Time: The Academic Effects of Shifting Math Remediation from College to High School

Background

Students often receive high-school level remediation courses once enrolled in a postsecondary institution. However, this may be too late to correct for the academic unpreparedness. One program in Tennessee, The Seamless Alignment and Integrated Learning Support (SAILS) program, offers math remediation in a student's senior year of high school. Angela Boatman and Christopher Bennett consider the effects on student outcomes of moving college math remediation from college to high school. Their work is published in vol. 16 issue 3 of *EFP*.

The Study

Boatman and Bennett use differences in students' eligibility for SAILS based on ACT math scores, SAILS availability at their high school, and the timing of their senior year in high school. The authors track the students for up to three years into college to understand how participation in SAILS, and therefore exemption from remediation courses in college, affects students' college academic outcomes.

For more details:

- View the [full issue](#).
- See the [full article in *Education Finance and Policy*](#).
- [Sign up here to receive future *EFP Takeaways*](#).
- Summary of:
Boatman, A. & Bennett, C. (2021). A Switch in Time: The Academic Effects of Shifting Math Remediation from College to High School. *Education Finance and Policy*, 16 (3): 464-492.

Findings

The authors find SAILS-eligible students in the first full cohort of the program were significantly less likely to enroll in remedial math courses once in college, a pattern that holds across sex, race, and high school urbanicity. SAILS-eligible students were also more likely to enroll in college-level math, and more likely to pass college-level math overall.

Additionally, the authors find evidence that SAILS-eligible students earned significantly more credits within two years of high school, with magnitudes comparable to their elevated rates of taking and passing math overall.

For SAILS participants who enrolled in a Tennessee community college, these effects equated to a 72 percentage point decline in remedial course-taking, a 51 percentage point increase in taking college-level math, and a 28 percentage point increase in passing college-level math within one year after graduating high school.

Taken together, these findings suggest that the SAILS program generally led to improvements on dimensions more immediately tied to the program design (e.g., reductions in math remediation, increases in taking and passing college-level math overall, increases in credits), with no detectable effects evident for measures less directly linked to math course-taking patterns (e.g., high school graduation, college enrollment, and associate's degree completion). As states and districts continue to grapple with academic preparation and the responsibility of college readiness, the SAILS model holds promise in getting more students into and through college-level math, a critical early step toward degree attainment.