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From: Radu Toma [radutoma@yahoo.com]

Sent: Mon 4/18/2005 8:24 PM

To: Lapuz, Raymond

Cc: Perez, Rosa; McBride, Marilyn

Subject: Re: Math Mtg Reminder and New Topic: FW: Math Self-placement

Attachments:

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Ray,

self assessment may be worth a try. It's hard to speculate if it would work unless we try it for a couple of years and compare the results with the present situation.

In the evening classes that I teach I invariably find every semester a number of students who enroll in the course, or are trying to add it the first day of school, without having taken the placement test. Then, there are others who took the test, but anxious to meet their transfer or degree requirements disregard the result and attempt to skip a course or two in the hope that they'll make it anyway.

As a consequence, the first day of class I always give as a diagnostic the UC-Cal State Readiness Test at the appropriate level. While the 70% cutoff scores the universities suggest would leave us with less than 5 students per class on an average, I found that students who score 50% or higher on the test usually have no problem being successful in the course as long as they attend class regularly and do their homework. For the ones between 40% and 50%, it could go either way. The ones scoring below 40% rarely make it. I explain the reasoning behind a readiness test to the class and give students the number of scores within each bracket in their class, so that they know where they're starting and have realistic expectations from themselves and me.

This fall was the first time in the eight years I've now taught here when a student who felt insulted by my straight-forwardness complained to the dean about it. I found it a small price to pay considering the alternative: having students who are not ready for the class attend for 5-6 weeks until they end up dropping discouraged or mad at both themselves and me.

Cheers,  
Radu