

MAP Video Series: ***Understanding Basic Skills and Transitioning to College***  
**Instructional Guide**

Video Title:	<b>Understanding Basic Skills and Transitioning to College</b>
Video Length:	21:24 minutes
Audience:	Basic Studies Students, High School Students
Curriculum Correlation:	Transition Portfolio – Activity 5.c Videos
Summary:	Viewers learn about the benefits gained by transitioning into college programs and tips for making the transition successfully.
Vision Statement:	By watching this video, viewers will...  LEARN about the steps to transition from basic studies to college level courses;  UNDERSTAND the benefits of how education can positively impact their quality of life;  FEEL informed and supported throughout the process.
Learning Objectives:	LISTENING: Viewers will practice discreet listening skills to determine accuracy of written statements.  SPEAKING: Viewers will share and compare information from the video and from personal experience.  READING: Viewers will read sentences from the transcript.  WRITING: Viewers will write predictions as well as a summary paragraph.
Instructional Time:	Pre-Viewing Activity – Discovery: Approximately 30 minutes Pre-Viewing Activity – Vocabulary: Approximately 45 minutes Viewing Activity: Approximately 1 hour Post-Viewing Activity: Approximately 1 hour (additional hour for research)

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Answer Key: Page 4

Video Transcript: Page 9

Instructional Guidelines: Pre-Viewing Activities

- Instructor tells the students that they will be watching a video titled **Understanding Basic Skills and Transitioning to College** and asks them what they think they will learn from the video.
- Instructor distributes Pre-Viewing Activity – Discovery handout and asks students to each write FIVE predictions.
- Class is divided into small pairs to compare predictions.
- Instructor distributes the Pre-Viewing Activity – Vocabulary handout. Students can complete the vocabulary exercise in class or as homework.
- Answers are corrected collectively or collected by the instructor.

Instructional Guidelines: Viewing Activity

- Instructor distributes Viewing Activity handout and plays the video. The video may be played repeatedly until the students have successfully completed the activity.
- Instructor encourages students to compare their notes with a partner between and after video viewings.
- Instructor corrects activity on overhead or computer projection with student input.

Instructional Guidelines: Post-Viewing Activity

- Instructor provides students with Post-Viewing Activity handout. In Part 1, students determine the accuracy of their Pre-Viewing predictions.
- In Part 2, students write three questions about transitioning that they still have and who they can ask to get the information they want.
- In Part 3, students do the research necessary to find the answers to their questions and then write a brief summary paragraph of what they learned.



***Understanding Basic Skills and Transitioning to College***

Pre-Viewing Activity – Discovery

**ANSWER KEY**

**(Reponses will vary.)**

You will be watching a video titled: UNDERSTANDING BASIC SKILLS and TRANSITIONING TO COLLEGE. What kinds of information do you think you will learn from this video? Write four or five predictions below. When you are finished, compare your answers with a classmate.

I think I will learn:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

## Understanding Basic Skills and Transitioning to College

Pre-Viewing Activity – Vocabulary

**ANSWER KEY**

(Answers are actual student responses.)

You will hear or see the following sentences in the video you are about to watch. Please read these sentences with a classmate and write a synonym or short definition for the word in italics. Try to *guess* the meaning of the italicized words without using of a dictionary.

Note: Because these are spoken sentences, you may find some grammar errors or odd constructions.

1. And it is important to start at the level the placement test *indicates*, even if it places you below college level.

*indicates:* **puts you, places you**

2. *Ignoring* the results of the placement test can really set you up for failure before you've even started.

*ignoring:* **Not paying attention, Disregarding**

3. But most students come to realize their placement was *accurate* – that they really weren't ready for a higher level course.

*accurate:* **correct**

4. These courses are much more academic and *rigorous*; students prepare for college level English.

*rigorous:* **hard, difficult**

5. Senait started *pursuing* higher education shortly after arriving in American from Eritrea.

*pursuing:* **going after, following**

6. Some of them are more research oriented, where some others have more *concrete* language skills, like paragraph writing that they work on.

*concrete:* **measurable, basic language skills**



## Understanding Basic Skills and Transitioning to College

Pre-Viewing Activity – Vocabulary

**ANSWER KEY**

7. A lot of our students aren't prepared for the *concept* of you're only in class for three hours a day and that you need to study a certain amount of time for those three hours...

*concept:* **idea**

8. And Sy is one who knows where students run into *stumbling blocks*.

*stumbling blocks:* **problems, obstacles, barriers**

9. One of the main *pitfalls* for our students transitioning from basic skills to college level or vocational/technical program classes is the misunderstanding of the cost of tuition.

*pitfalls:* **problems**

10. It looks like it's a *daunting* process.

*daunting:* **hard, difficult**

11. Something to keep in mind as you are *navigating* these courses: your goal is college.

*navigating:* **making your way through**

12. Requesting help to finance schooling is a common and *acceptable* practice.

*acceptable:* **okay**

13. Once you've done that, once we're *confident* that you are ready to benefit from college level classes, then there actually are quite a lot of really exciting options.

*confident:* **sure**

14. You might be having to *juggle* finances.

*juggle:* **find balance**

15. I think education is probably the most *accessible* way that people can change or alter their life circumstances.

*accessible:* **easy to use, straightforward**



## ***Understanding Basic Skills and Transitioning to College***

Viewing Activity – Vocabulary

**ANSWER KEY**

Read the sentences below before you watch the video. You will hear all of these sentences in the video, but in some of the sentences one or more words have been changed so the information is not correct. As you watch, you will need to listen carefully!

Put an **C** in front of the sentences that you hear that are correct. Put an **X** in front of the sentences that you hear that are not correct. Then find and change the word or words in the sentences that are not correct. The first one has been done for you.

- X 1. Starting at a level below your knowledge may lead to ~~confusion~~.  
**boredom**
- C 2. Once you apply to the community college, you will be asked to take a placement test.
- X 3. Starting your college career with pre-college courses is ~~not a good idea~~.  
**a common step**
- C 4. The good news about those programs is that they are very, very low cost.
- X 5. There are ~~three~~ ESL programs.  
**two**
- X 6. GED stands for General Educational Development and there are ~~four~~ tests that you need to pass, and you have to get a certain average.  
**five**
- C 8. If you need help, ask for it.
- C 9. Senait will tell you that if you want help, there are plenty of resources available.
- C 10. Advisor Sy Ear will tell you about a unique tool known as the Transition Portfolio used at South Seattle Community College.
- X 11. Each section includes two to ~~ten~~ different activities that students work on...  
**five**
- C 12. Research the college programs you are interested in, find out the program requirements and pre-requisites, and be sure to start this process early.
- C 13. Another thing to keep in mind: all of these processes you are going through are creating transferrable skills...

***Understanding Basic Skills and Transitioning to College***

Post-Viewing Activity – Vocabulary

**ANSWER KEY**

**(Reponses will vary.)**

Part 1:

Before watching this video, you wrote some predictions about what you would learn. Were your predictions correct? Did you learn what you thought you would learn?

Please review your Pre-Viewing Activity handout. Circle the number of each prediction on your list that actually appeared in the video.

Part 2:

What do you still need to know about transitioning from basic skills to college level classes? Write three questions.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Who can you ask to get this information (counselors, advisors, teachers, family, friends)? Be specific. If possible, use names.

For Question 1: \_\_\_\_\_

For Question 2: \_\_\_\_\_

For Question 3: \_\_\_\_\_

Part 3:

Choose one or two of your questions in Part 2 and talk to the person/people you identified as being able to provide the answers you need.

Write a short paragraph summary that includes your question, the answer, the process you used to find the information you needed, and how you feel about that process.

Narrator:

When applying to community college and taking their placement test, many students find out some of their math and English skills were not quite what they thought. Some students fresh out of high school discover their skill level in math or English, or possibly both, isn't up to college level. Other students are returning to school after a period of time away from education and find that they've forgotten some of their math or English skills because they haven't had to use them for a long time. For other students who have recently arrived in this country, they face not only these concerns, but they must test in English, a language that may be difficult for them.

It is important to pay attention to your placement test results. And it is important to start at the level the placement test indicates, even if it places you below college level. Why? Starting at a higher level will probably put you in a class where instructors are teaching material you won't understand. Starting at a level below your knowledge may lead to boredom. In both cases, students often drop out of these classes and many leave college altogether. Ignoring the results of the placement test can really set you up for failure before you've even started.

Meet Chandra and Senait. They come from very different backgrounds. But both of them enrolled in these pre-college programs focused on general education subjects, such as math and English. They will also tell you how important they were in setting them up for success, preparing them for their next steps to transition to college programs – both academic and technical.

Chandra Banks (Student):

I'm a single mother of five children; I'm only raising three in my household at this time. I dropped out of school in the seventh grade due to the pregnancy of my first child. I was 14 at the time. I tried to go back to school several times but couldn't find the strength to tough it out.

Senait Tesfahiwot (Student):

It was hard for me when I started since I learned just a little bit of English back home, not like what I'm doing right now. To start with it was kind of confusing – where to start and where to begin.

Narrator:

In fact, for these students, the results from their placement test told them they needed to attend – and pass – Basic Skills, or pre-college courses in Math and English before taking college level math and English courses. And college level math or English courses may be required for the AA degree or certificate they are seeking.

In this video, you will learn about the Basic Skills programs and important steps you can take along the pathway to make a successful transition to college level coursework. For many, traveling this pathway has led to important successes, resulting in even greater achievements in their college level work than the students thought possible. It is a journey that is focused on helping you achieve your goal of succeeding in your pursuit of higher education.

As you travel this path keep in mind that you should plan, ask for help when you need it and learn what resources are available to you. And like many journeys, they begin with a first step. You've taken this first step in making the decision to attend community college.

Once you apply to the community college, you will be asked to take a placement test. This is not a graded test. The results of this test are only used to help determine where you should begin taking math and English classes. While many take the test and begin in college level courses, many students do not. They will be placed in pre-college or Basic Skills courses and, for some students, this may initially feel like a step backward on their path. But most students come to realize their placement was accurate – that they really weren't ready for a higher level course. Starting your college career with pre-college courses is a common step. As Donna Miller-Parker, the Dean for Basic and Transitional Studies at South Seattle Community College, will tell you, there are a variety of starting points to match your skill level through these Basic Skills programs: English as a Second Language, or Basic ESL, Transitional ESL, Adult Basic Education, or ABE, and General Educational Development, or GED.

Donna Miller-Parker (Dean for Basic and Transitional Studies):

You know, sometimes people who want to come to college feel like they're not quite prepared. They've been out of college, or they've been out of school for a long time, or perhaps they're new to this country and they are unfamiliar with our educational system, and so the programs that are right for them in terms of an entry into college might be basic studies or transitional studies. So, you don't receive college credit but you are really preparing, your skills are really building to the point where you can be successful in college. The good news about those programs is that they are very, very low cost. In fact they're free if, for anyone who is unable to pay, so that's a really great way for people to come into the college.

Narrator:

What type of student will you find in Basic Skills or pre-college courses?

Donna Miller-Parker:

You have to be sixteen, so that's one thing that all the students in our program have in common, they're all at least sixteen years old. But there's no upper limit. You can be as old as you are and feel comfortable coming back to school. It's all over the map in terms of countries where people come from. Gosh, I wish I knew the answer to how many because it kind of varies, but at least twenty different countries are represented in our program. So people from many, many different places, people with many different backgrounds. They're parents, or

they're single, or they're not parents.

Narrator:

And even though you do not receive college credit for these pre-college classes, taking and passing these courses are essential to college success. Let's begin with English as a Second Language. Who takes ESL?

Donna Miller-Parker:

So those are for people who are new to this county, immigrants, refugees, people who don't speak English natively, although by the way, you can be a citizen and also be in our program, our ESL program, it's just whether English is your first language or not.

Narrator:

There are two ESL programs. The first is non-credit ESL, which addresses literacy and living in America. The upper levels of this program begin the process of transitioning to college level courses. The second ESL program is Transitional ESL, and focuses on college preparation. These courses are much more academic and rigorous; students prepare for college level English.

Other basic skills programs include Adult Basic Education and General Education Development. Who takes these courses?

Donna Miller-Parker:

For people who are native to this country or whose language skills are almost as strong as those who were born in this country and speak English as their first language. One of them is called Adult Basic Education and that one is to focus on reading and writing, just refreshing some of those skills. And math is a biggie for a lot of people. You can start in Adult Basic Education in math at what students might think is a really basic level.

Many people want, they didn't finish high school, they don't have that credential. Sometimes people have a high school diploma in another country, but they can't get to their paperwork, they really have no way of proving that they have that, and so those people might also be interested in a GED. So, a GED is a high school equivalency certificate. It's not a diploma, but it's compared to a high school diploma.

Narrator:

It may seem basic, but gaining this foundational knowledge is important. Jon Nachman, an instructor of both Adult Basic Education and GED courses, says understanding at this level will lead to future success in these subjects.

Jon Nachman (ABE and GED Instructor):

GED stands for General Educational Development and there are five tests that you need to pass and you have to get a certain average. 450 is the average right now. And those tests are

Language Arts Reading, Language Arts Writing, Science, Social Studies and Math.

Donna Miller-Parker:

You get your GED by taking a test. You don't get your GED by sitting through classes. That's kind of the difference between the certificate and a diploma. A high school diploma is one that you get by taking classes. And in our GED classes you take practice tests, and the teacher will kind of reassure you about when you're ready to go in and take the test.

Narrator:

Chandra Banks is a student who has faced many struggles...

Chandra Banks:

I feel like if I had somebody in my life at that age, 14, 15, that would have told me that education is important, and this is what I need to do to succeed, I think that I would have chosen a different path.

Narrator:

... Pre-college courses offered her a chance to return to education.

Chandra Banks:

Winter of '09 I joined the GED program here at South Seattle and completed my GED in one quarter.

Narrator:

A piece of advice from Chandra...

Chandra Banks:

It took a lot of studying, one on one time, by yourself, books, just you and the books. And then also, talking to your instructor was very important, getting in touch with your instructor. If you're having an issue, ask for help.

Narrator:

You'll hear that advice over and over again. If you need help, ask for it.

Senait Tesfahiwot:

First of all, what we have to know is that nobody will come in and ask you if you need help. You have to go and ask where to go and where to start. So first, don't be shy to anything and its up to you if you want or not. First you have to ask friends or advisor or instructor, your teacher.

They are here to help.

Narrator:

Senait will tell you that if you want help, there are plenty of resources available. You'll find advisors, counselors, instructors and other college resources ready to help you as soon as you ask. And in some community colleges, connecting you with that help is part of Basic Skills.

Advisor Sy Ear will tell you about a unique tool known as the Transition Portfolio used at South Seattle Community College. It plays a significant role in helping students focus on their goals such as deciding on a career and making plans to transition from basic skills to college coursework.

Sy Ear (Advisor):

I see you brought yours, and I have one here also. Let's take a look at that. Have you had a chance to take a look at this?

Senait Tesfahiwot:

Not all.

Sy Ear:

Not all? Okay.

Narrator:

Senait started pursuing higher education shortly after arriving in America from Eritrea.

Senait Tesfahiwot:

It was a guide. It helps me a lot. It has all the information that I needed. Like educational plan, career, financial plan, like how to get financial aid, applying for a scholarship, to find your career. It has all of this information that I got from that. I used it when I was in level 5, before I transferred to the traditional classes.

Sy Ear:

One of the great benefits of the Transition Portfolio is it will start the ball rolling about students thinking about their educational planning, financial planning and also the testing process. Those are important steps to enrolling to campus here. And a lot of times students don't realize what it takes for educational planning, whether how long a two-year degree takes, how long a four-year degree takes, how long a vocational/technical program takes. And it starts the ball rolling on financial planning, applying for financial aid, applying for scholarships, etc. And also, it also prepares them to think about taking their placement test, the ESL COMPASS or the COMPASS.

Narrator:

And instructors at Sy's community college agree that the Transition Portfolio is a key to success.

Kris Lysaker (ESL Instructor):

The first thing that the students in the higher intermediate ESL levels work on ABE, GED is the Transitional Portfolio, which has various sections like College Readiness, Educational Planning, Financial Planning. Each section includes two to five different activities that students work on that help prepare them for their college experience, whether or not it's preparing their schedule, preparing their finances, getting ready for their workplace. Some of them are more research oriented, where some others have more concrete language skills, like paragraph writing, that they work on. After they complete each one, the teacher signs off on it.

Alex Abeyta (ABE/COMPASS Instructor):

A big thing for what I know of ABE/GED is that they aren't aware of the expectations of college. This portfolio prepares them for those expectations ... lays it out for them, it tells them what expectations, and helps them understand before they get there that this is what you need to expect, and I think that gives them just another tool to put in their pocket to make them more aware and more able to be successful that first quarter.

A lot of our students aren't prepared for the concept of you're only in class for three hours a day and that you need to study a certain amount of time for those three hours, about how to juggle work life, as Kris was saying, and family life and to go to school and just what your teachers expect from you.

Sy Ear:

Okay, so I see that you're interested in Health Care, right? Are you looking...what are your long term goals in healthcare? Are you looking to become a doctor? Are you looking to become a nurse? Are you looking to other healthcare parts of the profession?

Senait Tesfahiwot:

Well, my plan is to go step by step. I'm planning to do the nursing program now and still continue the medical school at the same time.

Narrator:

And Sy is one who knows where students run into stumbling blocks.

Sy Ear:

One of the main pitfalls for our students transitioning from basic skills to college level or vocational/technical program classes is the misunderstanding of the cost of tuition. In Basic Skills it's usually at a reduced cost or at minimal cost to students, and sometimes at no cost in different parts of the country. So when students transition, it's a big shocker to them that there is a tuition charge for that, and I usually work with students to work on how to meet those tuition costs with financial aid, with scholarships and with other outside agencies.

Let's go to the second section, which is called financial planning.

Narrator:

But Sy is quick with words of encouragement and mentions the availability of resources such as tutoring centers and caring staff and faculty.

Sy Ear:

So, one of the advice that I always give students is to take it one step at a time. It looks like it's a daunting process. And for students to, there's resources all across campus, including myself, including faculty. I work very close with faculty and all the other student resources around.

Narrator:

Something to keep in mind as you are navigating these courses: your goal is college. You need to begin preparing for college during this period of time.

How are you going to pay for college? Be sure to look into applying for scholarships and financial aid. Requesting help to finance schooling is a common and acceptable practice. Because this is a regular part of the college application process, there will be deadlines for those applications. Be sure to apply early. In fact, apply before transitioning into other courses. You don't want to miss those deadlines.

Research the college programs you are interested in, find out the program requirements and pre-requisites, and be sure to start this process early.

Be sure to use the resources available to you to prepare for your transition. This includes seeing your advisor often. Be sure to use the tools provided for your success in transitioning to college, like the Transition Portfolio.

Another thing to keep in mind: all of these processes you are going through are creating transferrable skills – doing research and completing applications for transition are skills you'll use over and over. They can be applied to other life purposes such as getting loans for a car or house, transferring to a university or four-year college or finding a job.

And once you've completed the pre-college course work and passed the tests, it's time to take that college placement test once again, with a goal of college level placement.

Donna Miller-Parker:

Once you've done that, once we're really confident that you are ready to benefit from college level classes, then there actually are quite a lot of really exciting options.

Narrator:

Those options include enrolling in a short term training program, taking classes for a certificated program or attending community college and transferring on to a four-year

institution after earning a two-year degree. For students needing the Basic Skills coursework, the preparation truly sets up the student for success.

Kris Lysaker:

You have to learn organizational skills. You learn a lot of life skills, from organizational skills to time management. You might be having to juggle finances. Prioritizing – you have to prioritize your time. You make an enormous number of friends and contacts. Your social network becomes much, much larger. And there is, of course, the obvious benefit of opening up a career path for yourself through school.

Narrator:

You may ask yourself: Is it worth all this time and expense to prepare for and go to college?

Statistics show that every year you attend college translates into better jobs, better pay and better family life. You are accomplishing the American Dream.

You just have to be realistic and understand that it takes time and investment in yourself to improve your life, your salary.

Alex Abeyta:

I think education is probably the most accessible way that people can change or alter their life circumstances. Very few of us are ever going to win the lottery and have that situation where we can just do what we want. But, having that education is very accessible, something that you can do, something that will improve not only your life but your family's life, your community's life. That's the one thing that I love about education is how it has the potential to create such huge changes in people's lives.

Graduation Announcer:

We are so pleased to honor our graduates, the largest graduating GED class in the history of South Seattle Community College.