Community College Spotlight is written by Joanne Jacobs. It provides a forum for discussion and debate about America’s community colleges, which are home to nearly half of all college students in the U.S. Views expressed on the blog are those of Joanne Jacobs and do not necessarily reflect the views or opinions of The Hechinger Report or the Hechinger Institute.

Critics hit remedial ed reforms

States are trying to prevent, accelerate or limit remedial education, reports Stateline. But some say remedial reforms will doom the college hopes of poorly prepared students.

Indiana high schools must provide extra help to students at risk of placing into remedial classes in college.

Florida will let many public college students skip developmental classes and enroll in college-level courses.

Colorado now lets state universities place borderline students in college-level classes, with extra support, instead of sending them to community colleges for remedial classes.

Starting in fall 2014, Connecticut’s public colleges will be required to build remedial education into credit-bearing courses. Students will be allowed only one semester of remediation.

Many of the new remediation models work very well for students who need minimal extra help, said Patti Levine-Brown, president of the National Association for Developmental Education. But for students who need more time to get their skills up to college level, she said, “placing them in courses for which they are not prepared is akin to setting them up for failure.”

“We learned in the 1960s that allowing students to take and fail college level courses and retake those classes did not increase completion rates,” Levine-Brown said. “In fact, it resulted in high withdrawal rates and diminished finances for students.”

Unprepared students will pay a price for skipping remediation, predicts Kenneth Ross, vice president for academic and student services at Polk State College in Florida. “I think they’re going to struggle, and unless we have some other kind of massive tutoring support which they’ve not funded us for, they’re going . . . to struggle and then flunk out.”