

High School-College Partnerships: How to Create Them

Terri Ward, Ph.D.
Senior Researcher
Center for Educational Policy
Research, University of Oregon

Why should we create such partnerships?

- Isn't HS curriculum aligned with our state standards good enough to prepare students for college?
 - Not necessarily. State standards weren't designed to align with college readiness.
 - State standards are set at the 10th grade level
 - College courses require more sophisticated thinking skills
 - If students are placed in remedial coursework, they are much less likely to graduate, or to graduate on time

What do the partnerships look like?

- The best ones involve faculty from a region's high schools, community colleges and universities in a specific content area, who share many of the same students as the move from high school to college
- These faculty members share can pool their collective knowledge of their students to create a more seamless set of expectations for students as they move across educational institutions

Step-by-Step

1. Invite institutions with natural connections
 - Colleges that receive large numbers of students from specific high schools paired with those high schools
2. Identify faculty with common interests in making connections across institutional lines
 - Solicit volunteers
 - Gather data on how well students make the transitions to motivate more participation
3. Pick a topic that will engage all participants
 - Start with one subject
 - Example: student writing

Step-by-Step (cont')

4. Create an atmosphere of trust and openness to develop better shared understandings of acceptable student work
 - No blaming
5. As trust builds, create activities that allow discussion of actual student work and course syllabi and assignments
 - Example: Agree to assign the same topic for students to complete at both high school and college
 - Score the papers together

Step-by-Step (cont')

6. Work to identify a core group that will sustain the work beyond one or two meetings
7. Build upon small successes toward larger projects
 - Example: After grading papers jointly, work to develop and implement common scoring criteria for student writing

Step-by-Step (cont')

8. Involve administrators early on and keep them informed
9. Work toward closer coordination around placement procedures
 - What can high schools do to prepare students better for placement?
 - What can colleges do to get better data for placement decisions?

Conclusions

- In Tyrone, PA, the high school calculus course was initially team-taught with Penn State University faculty and a high school math teacher--Second year HS teacher only
- Building partnerships promotes:
 - Student success between high school and higher education
 - A renewed interest in teaching when paired with faculty from neighboring educational institutions

Terri Ward

Center for Educational Policy Research
University of Oregon
720 E. 13th Ave. Suite 202
Eugene, OR 97401

Toll-free: 877-766-2279
Email: terri_ward@s4s.org
URL: <http://cepr.uoregon.edu>