

How to Provide Academic Supports to Increase Postsecondary Readiness

Definition

- **What:** “Providing academic supports to increase postsecondary readiness” means providing students with genuinely challenging academic instruction so that they are prepared for success at the college level; providing extra help and acceleration to those who enter middle or high school already behind grade level in key academic areas, particularly English and math; and supporting less well-prepared students to succeed in “advanced” college prep classes beginning in the middle grades.
- **Why:** Data indicate that more than two thirds of students entering two-year colleges, and one in five of those entering four-year colleges, are required to take remedial courses in math and/or English because they have not acquired the skills needed for success in college-level coursework. The burden falls most heavily on disadvantaged and minority students. Remedial courses do not provide credits toward a bachelor’s or associate degree, yet in most cases cost as much credit-bearing courses. Many students are required to take multiple remedial courses, with no guarantee of success. These hurdles are a major factor in many students’ decision to drop out of college. The basic math and communication skills needed for college success are also the competencies sought by employers in the workforce.
- **How:** Ideally, providing academic supports for postsecondary success begins in the middle grades if not elementary school. However, many districts are also embracing “pre-remedial” twelfth grade classes designed to enable less well-prepared students to enroll directly in college courses upon graduation.
 - At middle school and early high school level, provide challenging content to all students in heterogeneous groups, eliminating academic tracking.
 - Offer extra-help support classes to enable less well-prepared students succeed in accelerated courses.
 - Consider innovative, intensive school-wide academic programs to address the needs of student populations with particular needs (e.g., ELLs or disadvantaged students; see examples below).
 - Implement policies that allow students to make up missed assignments or those that do not meet standards; communicate the need to make up work promptly to students.
 - Improve communications to parents on students’ academic status and work required.

- Give teachers regularly scheduled time to meet in grade level and content teams, and professional development on culturally responsive teaching and instructional strategies.
- Implement cooperative learning strategies that require students to read, write, and calculate individually at their instructional level; lead students in reading and analyzing instructional-level informational text in content areas (e.g., science and social studies).

Exemplars in Practice:

- **Schools to Learn From: How Six High Schools Graduate English Language Learners College and Career Ready**
Carnegie Corp. of NY, December 2015
Detailed study of academic and SEL supports that six successful high schools provide ELL students for postsecondary success, with many examples of effective school-wide policies, programs, and challenging instructional practices.
<http://ell.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/Schools%20to%20Learn%20From%20.pdf>
- **Aligning Competencies to Rigorous Standards for Off-Track Youth**
Jobs for the Future, December 2012
In-depth report on Boston Day & Evening Academy's successful program to enable off-track youth achieve Common Core required competencies.
<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED539877.pdf>
- **How five states are boosting college readiness in twelfth grade**
Thomas Fordham Institute, December 2015
Brief report on "pre-remedial" 12th grade math and/or ELA courses to help less well-prepared students enter college without remediation in five states (California, Delaware, Hawaii, Washington, and West Virginia).
<https://edexcellence.net/articles/how-five-states-are-boosting-college-readiness-in-twelfth-grade>
- **The Science of Summit**
Summit Public Schools, 2017
Overview of research base and policy/practice choices within Summit Public Schools, a charter EMO with schools in Washington state and California. Focus on four key areas: Cognitive skills, content knowledge, habits of success, and sense of purpose.
https://cdn.summitlearning.org/assets/marketing/The-Science-of-Summit-by-Summit-Public-Schools_08072017.pdf

- **Uncommon Schools: Against Common Schools of Thought, a Focus on GPA, SAT Scores, and One ‘Dirty Little Secret’ Boosts Network’s College Success Rates to 50%**

The 74 Million, July 2017

Charter school serving disadvantage urban students saw college persistence improve dramatically by helping students maintain a 3.0 GPA, attain SAT scores of at least 1000, and increase science lab competency.

<http://thealumni.the74million.org/uncommon-schools-against-common-schools-of-thought-a-focus-on-gpa-sat-scores-and-one-dirty-little-secret-boosts-networks-college-success-rates-to-50/>

Research Foundations:

- **Accelerating mathematics achievement using heterogeneous grouping**

Carol Corbett Burris, Jay P. Heubert, and Henry M. Levin. *American Educational Research Journal*, March 2006

Longitudinal study showing middle grade heterogeneous grouping and extra-help workshops improved high school math achievement for lower-performing students, without detriment to high

achievers. <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.3102/00028312043001105>

- **What We Know About Transition Courses**

Community College Resource Center, January 2016

“What we know, what we need to know” on the effectiveness of 12th grade transition or “pre-remedial” courses.

<http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/what-we-know-about-transition-courses.pdf>