Curriculum Alignment

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Content consistently builds

Expectations are clear and consistent

Entry-Level College

Feedback
The Old Pipeline
Challenges

- Historically, secondary and postsecondary educational systems have operated independently, creating gaps and misalignment between the two systems.

- The proportion of students going on to postsecondary education has steadily increased over the past 100 years and will likely continue to increase.

- Getting more students ready for college means succeeding with an increasingly challenging student population.

- Today’s young people will need to be better educated and prepared as the US continues to move toward a knowledge and information-based economic model.

- Despite recent improvements, there remains an achievement gap among students in Illinois. In 2011, 64% of white students either met or exceeded the reading benchmark on the Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE), while only 25% of African American students and 33% of Hispanic students met or exceeded the target. Likewise in mathematics, 65% of white students either met or exceeded the benchmark level, while only 20.2% of African American students and 35% of Hispanic students did.
The Common Core Lives!
College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards

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- Basically, an anchor standard is an answer to the question, “What should a 21st century diploma holder be able to do in order to flourish?”
Opportunity for Alignment

in ALIGNMENT

out of ALIGNMENT
Two Types of Alignment

- **Horizontal Alignment**: Curricular alignment within a common grade level to ensure students are adequately prepared for the next level as well as grade level assessments. Provides teachers/faculty with a guide and goals for instruction.
  - Common Core – happening now in K-12 with the new Illinois Learning Standards
  - Important to ensure effective vertical alignment.

- **Vertical Alignment**: Cross-institutional; Alignment across different institutions within the entire education system to ensure students transition successfully to the next level.
Vertical Alignment Questions

**Secondary education**
- Does my school have a process to ensure that the content standards addressed in courses each successive year are increasingly challenging cognitively?
- In other words, are students moving from novice to emerging expert levels in terms of their cognitive and learning strategies, or are they remaining novice learners even as they are exposed to more complex content knowledge?
- Does my school have a process to ensure that the content students learn enables them to develop an understanding of the subject matter they are learning in a way that prepares them for entry-level college courses?
- Does this understanding go beyond factual recall of information to deeper awareness of the structure of knowledge in the subject area being studied?

**Postsecondary education**
- Does my institution share information with area high schools that spells out the content and challenge expectations students will encounter in entry-level courses at my institution?
- Does my institution have a review process that examines the relationship between entry-level courses at my institution and exit-level high school standards generally and the Common Core specifically? Does the analysis identify gaps and overlaps in content coverage?
Horizontal Alignment
Questions

- Does my school or institution have a process to ensure that students taking similar courses have the opportunity to learn equivalent content and skills and are graded against comparable expectations?

- Do faculty members at my school or institution share or compare classroom policies and grading expectations with each other, and then make adjustments accordingly?
Alignment Strategies

1. Development of detailed course syllabi.

2. Curriculum mapping

3. College & Career Readiness Assignments

4. Senior Seminars

5. Paired Courses
The Importance of Partnerships

- Vertical partnerships are efforts that enable secondary and postsecondary educators to collaborate.

- These efforts benefit instructors at both levels, and most importantly, they benefit students by creating a deeper understanding of what is expected at both levels.

- As curriculum and expectations become more aligned, more students will arrive prepared to succeed in their postsecondary careers.
Partnership Strategies

• Find a point of contact.
  • Educators at both the secondary and postsecondary levels have initiated successful partnerships. A good point of contact might be the head of a particular department at a college or the dean of curriculum and instruction at a high school.

• Start small.
  • Initial partnership activities might start with small events that are relatively easy to organize such as:
    • Classroom visits and tours
    • Data sharing
    • Joint scoring sessions
    • Quarterly breakfast/dinner meetings
Partnership Strategies

- Establish leadership.
  - Successful partnerships lead to more substantive and deeper relationships. These can be difficult to establish.
  - Avoid the blame game.
  - A skilled college and career readiness partnership leader (or leadership team) can help navigate these conversations and move beyond them to focus productively on the priorities and experiences educators have in common.

- Engage in comprehensive action planning.
  - Illinois’ adoption of the Common Core provides a timely opportunity to establish vertical partnerships to prioritize curriculum alignment and implementation planning.
  - This is even more critical in the context of the PARCC assessment.
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Alignment Goal

• Fully Articulated Curriculum from Secondary to Postsecondary Education and to Career

• Multiple on-ramps and off-ramps
Alignment Resources

• Connecticut College and Career Readiness Toolkit
  (Educational Policy Improvement Center)

• Significant Discussion: A Guide for Secondary and Postsecondary Curriculum Alignment
  (League for Innovation in the Community College)
  www.league.org/significantdiscussions/

• South Carolina on course alignment:
  https://epiconline.org/south_carolina/?q=south_carolina