

DOINGWHATWORKS



Presentation

FULL DETAILS AND TRANSCRIPT

Academic Preparation for College

May 2010

Topic: Helping Students Navigate the Path to College
Practice: Prepare Students Academically

Highlights

- This multimedia overview presents key concepts and implementation strategies for the research-based recommended practice: Prepare Students Academically.
- Three key points are made: Schools must provide a rigorous, college-ready curriculum; inform families about what a college-preparatory curriculum entails; and help students plan a course of study.
- Specific suggestions for the numbers and types of courses that a student should take are offered, along with practical ideas for how schools can support students' access to, and success in, rigorous courses.

Full Transcript

Slide 1: Welcome

Welcome to the overview on Academic Preparation for College.

Slide 2: Difficult transitions

A large number of college students today arrive on campus without the academic grounding needed for success and with little understanding of how unprepared they are.

Low-income students, especially those who are the first in their families to attend college, may have the greatest difficulty transitioning to postsecondary education. This is often a direct result of not having had access to a rigorous, college-ready curriculum or lacking adequate guidance and information on how to plan their high school coursework so they are college-ready.

Slide 3: Preparing throughout high school

The courses students take in high school impact whether or not they will be accepted to college and their ability to succeed once there. It is therefore essential for schools to provide a rigorous, college-ready curriculum; ensure that students are well informed of what constitutes a college-preparatory curriculum; and, starting in ninth grade, provide individual guidance to students so they can plan their own four-year course of study.

Slide 4: Offer a college-ready curriculum

High schools should prepare all students for college.

Students should take courses that cover all major subject areas, as well as those with rigorous academic standards, such as AP, honors, or college-level classes.

More specifically, a typical college-ready course plan should include:

- Four years of English,
- At least three years of math,
- Two to three years of science and social studies, and
- One to two years of a foreign language.

Experts recommend that all students should, at a minimum, pass Algebra I by the end of their ninth-grade year.

Currently, Twenty-one states and the District of Columbia have implemented college-ready curricula that

students must complete in order to graduate.

Slide 5: Resources

Maintaining such high standards and providing more rigorous course offerings can tax some schools' resources. However, there are a number of ways to supplement course offerings while keeping additional costs to a minimum.

Schools can partner with nearby colleges for tutors and classes, apply for state or federal AP incentive grants, or take advantage of online education programs.

Schools can also work with their districts to provide teachers with professional development that prepares them to teach advanced courses and raise the bar for academic excellence in regular classes.

Slide 6: Informing students and families

Too often, students and families are unaware of the courses required for college acceptance and continued academic success. Middle and high schools are responsible for clearly communicating this information so students can start preparing for college even before ninth grade.

For example, students need to take the following course trajectories, beginning in ninth grade:

- Algebra, geometry, trigonometry, advanced math
- American history, world history, civics
- Earth/physical science, biology, chemistry, physics

Slide 7: Ways to communicate

Schools can communicate with students and their families in many ways such as through mailings that detail course recommendations and college requirements or by providing drop-in hours with counselors, teachers, or academic advisors.

All staff can receive training on college-preparatory requirements so every adult on campus can serve as a resource for students.

Slide 8: Developing course trajectories

Information needs to be put into action to be useful. And beginning in ninth grade, school counselors need to work with each individual student on their plans to complete appropriate college-preparation courses during high school.

Effective planning requires that schools and counselors know a student's history and current level of academic achievement. Administrators can coordinate with middle schools to obtain transcripts, academic records, and other resources to develop a profile for each incoming student. This information can be used to help counselors work with students to select appropriate courses and plan their time in high school.

Slide 9: Support through the entire community

It is essential that the entire school is on board with supporting all students as they prepare for college. This requires more than offering some new advanced courses, peer-tutoring, and drop-in support classes, although such services are essential. For all students to stay on track for college acceptance and success, high schools must develop a culture of academic achievement and support that permeates the entire school community.

Slide 10: Learn more

To learn more about Academic Preparation for College, please explore the additional resources on the Doing What Works website.