

DOINGWHATWORKS



Presentation

FULL DETAILS AND TRANSCRIPT

Gateways for College Readiness

Dayton Early College Academy, Ohio • March 2010

Topic: Helping Students Navigate the Path to College
Practice: Assess and Intervene

Highlights

- The Dayton Early College Academy (DECA) requires students to pass a series of six gateways in order to graduate high school.
- Each gateway has clearly specified learning objectives that each student must achieve, including completing a college entrance test and college application, completing at least three college courses, writing and presenting an autobiography, and reading and analyzing 21 independent books.
- Teachers use various diagnostic assessments and tools to identify students' proficiency in key content areas and to signal their readiness for college. The results of these assessments are also used to guide and improve daily instruction.
- To close gaps in students' learning, DECA uses a variety of strategies, including increasing the amount of instructional hours in a particular subject, coordinating the content of students' high school coursework with their college coursework, and organizing small-group tutoring sessions.
- For a whole class struggling with a particular skill set, teachers may try reteaching or use modeling strategies.

About the Site

Dayton Early College Academy

Dayton, OH

Demographics

80% Black

13% White

4% Other

53% Free or Reduced-Price Lunch

Dayton Early College Academy is an early college charter high school that offers students a one-of-a-kind opportunity to excel academically and succeed.

- All students complete a single-track rigorous college-preparatory curriculum and matriculate by passing through six “gateways” that have clearly specified learning indicators.
- Teacher-advisors serve as role models and provide students with emotional and academic support to navigate their way to college.
- Students show personal growth and commitment to the community through community service, internships, and job shadows.

Full Transcript

Slide 1: Welcome

Welcome to Gateways for College Readiness.

Slide 2: Introducing Judy Hennessey

I am Judy Hennessey, principal of the Dayton Early College Academy, DECA, located in Dayton, Ohio, on the University of Dayton campus.

Slide 3: Introducing DECA

The Dayton Early College Academy, DECA, was organized as an Early College Academy under the guidance of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. We now have a population of almost 400 students. 87% of our student body will be the first in their families to go to college, 88% of our kids are students of color, and 97% of them are low income.

Slide 4: Gateway process

The gateway process at DECA replaces the traditional Carnegie Unit way to matriculate to high school graduation. Each gateway has a set of very distinct criteria, and the student is clearly aware at the beginning of each gateway what will be expected of him or her. The specific skills that are required or the specific actions of the student are most often conveyed through a paper. We also try to embed the college-going behaviors, for example, college visits; filling out college applications; writing, rewriting, editing, fine-tuning a college essay.

Slide 5: Completions

By the time they have completed Gateway 6, they will have done the five independent studies and then a capstone of a 20-page autobiography. They will have completed, at minimum, three college courses. They will also have completed 21 independent books, the reading of these books, and literary analysis papers. And all the time they have maintained 95% attendance. So the benefit of the gateway process is that there is no social promotion here. The assumption is everybody has to work hard, be diligent and focused on their skills, to be prepared for college.

Slide 6: Assessments

DECA uses a variety of assessments to signal students' readiness for college. We use a diagnostic test called the MAP, which is aligned with our content standards here in Ohio. That gives us an indicator of where the student is within the core content areas. We continue to assess at least twice a year using that particular instrument, which will give us some longitudinal data on the student.

Slide 7: Closing gaps

When we see a student has a gap, we use a variety of strategies to close these gaps. For example, students will have two solid hours of science instruction in the same day. We also coordinate the classes that they take here with us with their college classes. We also try to do a lot of mentoring and small-group tutoring. One of the strongest things that we do at DECA is timely review sessions where students receive the results of an exam; they see what has happened in terms of their measure of understanding and they are immediately encouraged to get back in, relearn the material, and then retest.

Slide 8: Using assessment results

We have a couple of ways to use student assessment results diagnostically. We have a live data tool that teachers use when they assess. We take the Ohio Content Standards, drilled down to the level of what we

call an indicator. When a teacher does an assessment, each student's information is then entered into this live data tool and we are able to aggregate and disaggregate the results for analysis. We can see how many of the students understood a particular concept, or we can track one individual's performance across areas. We are constantly using our assessment data to guide daily instruction and then to give us that long view of where we need to fill in the holes.

Slide 9: Elizabeth Cameron

This is Elizabeth Cameron. I am a teacher at the Dayton Early College Academy. I am also an advisor.

Slide 10: Determining readiness

I determine students' college readiness and any skill gaps that they might have by first looking at their Measures of Academic Progress diagnostics tests. Students' assessments results are shared and discussed with the students themselves so that they are aware of their strengths and weaknesses.

So if there is a significant gap on an individual level, I would work with them one-on-one. For example, I might find a specific weakness with a certain student, let's say it's writing a thesis statement, and as an advisor I could take them through, "okay, what's the problem, let's try to identify the problem," you know, "let's talk about that, let's work on it together." So we try to show them how to use data to close their skill gaps, to use it as a positive thing for self-improvement and for college readiness.

Now if it were the whole class that was struggling with a particular skill set, I would definitely first try reteaching. So for example, many of my students right now are struggling with appropriate research skills. And so what I have tried differently is I have now created a different way of teaching it; I have tried different strategies to try to get them to that particular skill set.

Slide 11: College-going mindset

When we look at how we share assessment results with students and how they take ownership for their test performance, I think the most important and overriding principle for us is that DECA has a college-going mindset. That students who come here know that our vision is always what will they be faced in college and how will they deal with not only the academic challenges but the social and emotional ones.

Slide 12: Learn more

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