

 **AUDIO**
3:06 min

[Full Details and Transcript](#)



The Right Fit for Ninth Graders

Jefferson Davis High School, Texas
April 2011

Topic HELPING STUDENTS NAVIGATE THE PATH TO COLLEGE

Practice ASSESS AND INTERVENE

Highlights

- » Davis High School administrators examine middle school data to create a complete picture of incoming freshmen in order to place students in appropriate courses.
- » Teachers and administrators discuss which students should be moved into honors or pre-Advanced Placement classes.
- » It is important not to assume that a student's placement in eighth grade is the right fit. Staff at Davis make adjustments as soon as possible to ensure that students are prepared for postsecondary education.

About the Site Jefferson Davis High School
Houston, TX

Demographics

- » 89% Hispanic
- » 10% Black
- » 1% White
- » 92% Free or Reduced-Price Lunch
- » 15% Special Education

(Houston Independent School District, District and School Profiles, 2009-10)

Jefferson Davis High School implements multiple strategies to ensure all students graduate fully prepared to pursue their postsecondary goals:

- » Staff use middle school student achievement and nonacademic outcome data to monitor students' progress toward graduation and postsecondary readiness, providing interventions for struggling students and those at risk
- » A ninth-grade mentoring program provides students with supportive adult relationships
- » Students can enroll in programs that provide tutoring, family support, college workshops, counseling, and dropout recovery success
- » To foster a sense of community among students, the school sets high expectations, holds students accountable, and celebrates their successes

Full Transcript



00:04 My name is Ruth Kravetz. I am the Davis High School dean of instruction (I also teach AP Calculus) in Houston Independent School District in Houston, Texas.

00:14 Davis uses middle school data to figure out where middle school students need to go when they come to high school. We want to teach the whole child, so we start with an ethnographic story of each kid as much as is possible when we have 450 to 600 kids coming over to our campus every single year.

00:36 We first try to get to know them as people, so we meet them before we look at their attendance data, and before we look at their Stanford data—those are their norm-referenced test scores, and before we look at their TAKS [Texas Assessment Knowledge and Skills] data, which is a criterion-based test that we give in Texas. And before we

look at their discipline data, we try to get as many of the people at this campus to meet the children over there.

 **01:02** And then we look at the Stanford data, and we rank kids. And then we look for kids whose Stanford data, attendance data, discipline data all correlate, and then we just move them along, hoping to give them great quality instruction while they are here.

 **01:16** We get together in the spring each year. All of the content teams meet twice a week in the morning, and they do lesson planning and they talk about what works best. People sit down and we say, “Okay, all of these kids are in honors classes now, they are ninth graders in algebra, or they are in regular classes in algebra. They came to us from all over the place. And who needs to go into an honors course? Who needs to go into fast track?” At our school fast track means you are going to take Algebra II and Geometry as tenth graders so that they can take calculus as seniors. So that when they start college they aren’t going to be a year behind if they want to be engineering or math majors. So they compile a list on Excel, they talk to each other the first week or two of school, and the big push at the beginning of every year is, “Who do we have? Where are they sitting? And where do we need to move them?”

 **02:02** We look at their data. We don’t know what their faces are. We only see their names and we see their data. And we see that they have been in a regular class since sixth grade and they have a 95% on their Stanford, which means they are doing better than 95% of the people in the country. They have been in regular classes, and we move them into pre-AP classes. And then we follow them because we keep a list of all the kids we moved, and we give them extra help.

 **02:28** When we start assessing where an eighth grader moving into ninth grade needs to fit on the continuum at Davis—whether they need to be in a pre-AP class pushed farther, whether they need to be moved out of an ESL class into a regular English class—we don’t assume that their previous fit is the right fit. If we do it wrong in eighth grade, we