

## IN-SCHOOL SUPPORT

### INTRODUCTION

In the context of multiple pathways implementation, student success is defined as students graduating from high school well equipped to take advantage of the full range of ongoing educational opportunities and moving into the world of work, without needing of remediation. Many factors contribute to student success, but this chapter focuses on in-school supports provided to students—the fourth core component of multiple pathways approaches.

### EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

Research studies on improving low-performing high schools, suggest the following five key effective practices that districts and schools should address in reforming high schools (Fleischman & Heppen, 2009):

- A personalized and orderly learning environment
- Support for students who enter high school with poor academic skills
- Improved instructional content and practice
- Preparing students for the world beyond high school
- Helping staff to use data effectively

Sacramento City Unified School District's (SCUSD) system-wide high school redesign efforts, begun in 2000, reflect these five effective practices. The effort is known as *e21: Education for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, and it is built on essential elements that align and extend the five effective practices described above:

- Small, caring personalized learning communities
- Student-centered systems with student supports and safety nets
- Student pathways to the world of work and postsecondary education
- Rigorous, relevant, standards-driven teaching and learning
- Culture of continuous learning
- Collective responsibility
- Home-school-community alliances

SCUSD students and parents can choose from 36 smaller learning communities (SLCs) that are largely career-themed at the comprehensive high schools, and six small theme-based high schools. While SCUSD continues to work on improvement, the graduation rate district-wide has increased, and these graduates have completed an increased number of graduation requirements, including the a-g requirements. Achievement scores have improved; dropout rates have decreased; students report feeling more connected to adults; and although the district is experiencing declining enrollment, the number of high school students has increased.

Luther Burbank High School in SCUSD has a diverse population of 2064 students and provides programs that range from English language development to the International Baccalaureate Diploma. The school has been organized into seven SLCs, each centered on a pathway theme, where students are placed into groups of approximately 300 students and share the same core teachers and a specific geographic area of the school site. The SLCs allow the school to connect to the community and increase instructional relevance. The themes are Medical and Health Science, Legal and Social Justice, Information Technology, Architectural and Industrial Technology, Public Service, Arts and Communication, and International and Environmental Studies.

## **COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL COUNSELING AND SUPPORT PROGRAMS**

The CDE has defined a comprehensive school counseling and student support program as providing guidance, counseling, and student support in the academic, career, and personal/social domains. The academic domain focuses on helping students to experience academic success, produce high-quality work, and prepare them for a full range of options after high school. Academic development includes acquiring decision-making, problem solving, and goal setting skills (CDE, 2007).

The career domain addresses helping students to develop skills, attitudes, and knowledge that facilitate the transition from school to the world of work and from various jobs across the career span in today's workforce. Students may explore career interests and options, participate in service-learning projects, perform apprenticeships, and plan and pursue postsecondary study (CDE, 2007).

The personal/social domain addresses the personal and social development of students as they progress through school and into adulthood. It helps students to understand themselves; respect the rights and needs of others; acquire methods for peacefully resolving differences; and learn how to most appropriately define and display their interests, abilities, and aptitudes (CDE, 2007).

A comprehensive school counseling and student support program has a foundation that connects school counseling and student support to the school's overall mission, a delivery system, a management system, and an accountability system (CDE, 2007). This program should have a guidance curriculum of developmentally appropriate and sequenced lessons. It includes a curriculum that is delivered in classrooms (ideally a collaboration of the school counselor with the classroom teacher), as well as the guidance that provides intensive services to individuals or groups of students who need more support to be academically successful.

Despite recent funding challenges, California has exemplars of comprehensive school counseling and student support programs that align with the CDE's *Guidelines* and the *California Standards for the School Counseling Profession*, developed by the California Association of School Counselors (CASC). These programs include Lodi Unified School District, Yuba City Unified School District, Grossmont Union High School District, Fontana Unified School District, and Paramount School District.

## Academic Counseling and Supports

### Advisories

High-performing schools provide a range of academic supports for all students. These supports are crucial in effective multiple pathways approaches. Advisories provide students opportunities to build relationships with adults in the school, creating more personalized learning environments where each student in a school is well known by at least one adult. All students are assigned a teacher or staff member who assists them in achieving their academic and personal goals. Advisories usually include an advisory class as well as individual support. The Education Alliance at Brown University and Educators for Social Responsibility (ESR) are two groups that have extensive resources on establishing advisories.

### AVID

Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) (<http://www.avidonline.org>) was developed in response to San Diego Unified School District's court-ordered integration of the city's schools. AVID provides a college preparatory program for students who are often economically disadvantaged and underachieving. It enables disadvantaged secondary students to succeed in rigorous curricula, enter mainstream activities in school, and increase their opportunities to enroll in four-year colleges. The state funds 11 regional centers located in county offices of education to provide support and assistance to schools implementing AVID. These services include financial assistance for professional development activities, regional technical assistance and quality control, coaching, special tutor training, mentoring, curriculum, data collection, annual certification, regional academic outreach and Advanced Placement awareness, and student support services. During the 2007-08 school year, California AVID served over 1,000 school sites and about 140,000 students.

Research on the effectiveness of AVID shows that students in the middle grades who participate in AVID have a better chance of succeeding in high school and pursuing higher education. Following is a summary of current research on AVID:

- 95 percent of AVID students are enrolling in college.
- 77 percent are enrolling in four-year colleges and universities.
- 84 percent of AVID students statewide completed the “a-g” curriculum.
- 98 percent of AVID students graduate from high school.
- 47 percent of AVID eighth graders take algebra.

### GEAR UP

Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) (<http://www.castategearup.org>) was created in 1998 as part of the Higher Education Act to give more students the skills and preparation to enter and succeed in postsecondary education. The program's goal is to develop the capacity of middle schools to prepare all students for high school and postsecondary education through the establishment of a statewide support network. Since 1999, California GEAR UP and the 68 partnership projects have impacted over one-third

of the 1200 middle schools in California, with the state grant serving over 236,000 students in 260 schools in 106 school districts in 25 counties. The state model is designed to create a self-sustaining college-going culture by working with whole schools through the adults that have the greatest impact on student life and experience: the principals, teachers, counselors, families, and community leaders.

## **MESA**

The Mathematics, Engineering, Science Achievement (MESA) program (<http://www.ucop.edu/mesa/home.html>) was created in 1970 and is nationally recognized for its innovative and effective academic development program. Administered by the UC, MESA partners with all segments of California higher education as well as K-12 institutions, and it is funded by the state legislature, corporate contributions, and grants. MESA has a proven track record of producing math-based graduates by providing classes, hands-on competitions, counseling, transfer support, and a community environment to students from middle school through four-year college. To the extent possible in California law, MESA emphasizes participation by educationally disadvantaged students from groups with low eligibility rates for four-year institutions. The program has been named one of the most innovative public programs in the country by Innovations in American Government, a project of the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University and the Ford Foundation.

## **PUENTE Project**

The PUENTE Project (<http://www.puente.net>) is co-sponsored by the UC Office of the President and the California Community College Chancellors' Office. The project has improved the college-going rate of tens of thousands of California's educationally underrepresented students. Its mission is to increase the number of educationally disadvantaged students who enroll in four-year colleges and universities, earn college degrees, and return to the community as mentors and leaders. The program is interdisciplinary, with writing, counseling and mentoring components. Started in 1981 at Chabot Community College in Hayward, the program has expanded to 33 California high schools and 59 community colleges. Puente staff train high school and community college instructors and counselors to implement a program of rigorous instruction, focused academic counseling, and mentoring by community members. Open to all students, Puente's programs currently benefit approximately 14,000 students.

## **Support for English Learners**

Pathway programs must pay particular attention to meeting the needs of English learners. A curriculum that incorporates both academic education and CTE may be especially relevant to English learners and immigrant students in the following ways:

- Provide English learners opportunities to succeed, via vocationally meaningful coursework that does not depend on their language skills.
- Increase immigrant parents' engagement with the school.
- Make classrooms inviting for all students.
- Introduce English learners to a full range of career options and models.

- Help English learners understand community colleges.
- Provide opportunities for English learners to study the arts and humanities (Gandara, 2008).

Project-based learning and cooperative learning strategies in pathway programs can also provide support for students who have not yet mastered English (Gandara, 2008). Support for English learners is a major issue within California high schools. The CDE offers a number of programs and information to improve language proficiency of English learners and help them meet content standards adopted by the State Board of Education. Examples of these programs include K-12 training for teachers who wish to become authorized to educate English learners, English instruction for adults who pledge to provide personal English-language tutoring to English learners, English language acquisition, Title III language instruction for limited-English-proficient and immigrant students, and resources on two-way immersion. For the purposes of this report, support for English learners is mentioned as a serious issue to be considered when drafting policies and establishing multiple pathway programs.

### **Support for Struggling Students**

In recent years, researchers and policymakers have paid more attention to how high schools meet the needs of struggling learners, particularly in reading, writing, and mathematics.

The National Research Council described effective pedagogy in secondary literacy as “personalized relationships, authentic tasks, capitalizing on cultural knowledge, use of multiple resources, rigorous and challenging instruction, explicit instruction, frequent feedback from assessments, and integrated curricula” (Comprehensive School Reform Quality Center, 2005). The NRC description of effective pedagogy in mathematics is similar. This instruction for secondary students should be personally relevant for students; provide access to students’ native language; include authentic, open-ended problems and involvement in mathematics discussions; promote peer collaboration; provide rigorous and challenging instruction with frequent assessment feedback; and provide access to technology (National Research Council and the Institute of Medicine, 2004).

Response to Intervention (RtI) is an approach for gathering student data and using that data to adjust instruction for students who are struggling, focusing on improving student outcomes in the general school setting (as opposed to referring students to special education.) A concept with a strong base of over 30 years of research, the term “Response to Intervention” was introduced in 2001 at the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Special Education’s Learning Disabilities Summit (Gresham, 2001).<sup>1</sup>

Historically, RtI has been an elementary level approach; however, it holds promise for high schools. RtI requires professional development for high school administrators, teachers, and counselors; changes the culture of the classroom and the role of the teacher; and provides outreach to families and communities (Duffy, 2009). In California, the State Superintendent of

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<sup>1</sup> The National Association of State Directors of Special Education sponsored one of the most comprehensive reviews of the research supporting RtI to date. Its report, “Response to Intervention: Research for Practice” released in 2007, was conducted to address concerns about the lack of a research base for RtI (Griffiths, et al., 2007).

Public Instruction established the Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtI<sup>2</sup>) Initiative, with resources providing guidance to districts and schools. The CDE is working with the county offices of education to assist districts and schools with RtI<sup>2</sup> implementation.

Long Beach Unified School District has been recognized by both the Broad Foundation and the National Center for Urban School Transformation at San Diego State University as an excellent school district, providing innovative and rigorous instruction. It implements RtI<sup>2</sup> with high school students, providing regular assessments and tiered interventions that use a battery of eighth-grade assessments to determine the needs of incoming ninth graders. All ninth graders receive core literacy instruction. For those who are six months to two years behind, an additional literacy workshop provides them with support for the core program. Those who are more than two years below grade level are enrolled in a double block of intensive English-language arts or an after-school reading program (Duffy, 2009).

### **Career Guidance and Exploration**

Career guidance and exploration are central to the multiple pathways initiative. These strategies provide students with access to information and experiences that allow them to envision many possibilities for their lives and to make informed decisions, both while in high school and throughout their careers (CDE & CCCCCO, 2008). This guidance is very important for students in multiple pathways programs, because much of their high school experience will center on a single career theme. Well-designed pathways expose students to a wide variety of occupations, requiring all levels of academic achievement and postsecondary education. Even with broad themes, choosing a theme necessarily focuses the learning and defines the community of teachers and students over the next three or four years. Students benefit when given the tools to evaluate their experiences against their emerging sense of self, monitor their changing interests, adjust their goals, and sometimes, change direction altogether.

Career exploration and guidance encompass the services that counselors and career guidance staff offer and the career exploration that may occur through classroom-based or work-based activities. Self-knowledge is the core purpose of these activities. It may range from career-related research, informational interviewing, and speakers, to workplace tours, job shadowing, mentoring, and work-based learning. Some schools require students to create educational and career plans.

In addition, students need opportunities to develop essential transferable workplace skills, such as “expert thinking” and “complex communication” skills, flexibility, creativity, teamwork, and basic workplace etiquette (Levy & Murnane, 2005). These are also called “habits of mind.” These skills are often best learned through direct experience, including projects, simulations, school-based enterprises and internships, as well as through the classroom pathway curriculum. (CDE & CCCCCO, 2008)

In the multiple pathways approach, it is critical that teachers incorporate and highlight the transferable academic and technical skills within their curricula, as well as the “habits of mind.” This exposure is important not only to ensure that students can move from one pathway to

another if necessary without “getting lost” academically, but to help students better understand themselves and how their skills might be relevant in any number of future careers.

### **Career Guidance Services**

California offers career exploration and development opportunities to students in several ways, and these opportunities have expanded. AB 1802 (2006) has provided support to increase the number of counselors available at the K-12 level, along with a requirement that counselors provide information to students about CTE programs, courses needed for UC/CSU admission, and services to help students pass the CAHSEE. Counselors must document that sessions occurred and whether students have passed the CAHSEE; they are not required to document referrals to CTE programs or academies. Since the requirements of AB 1802 have been suspended until 2013, and districts have more discretion regarding use of the funds, it is unclear whether these counseling services will be maintained. Further, SB 70 funds the development of career exploration programs across the state, currently through the 52 CTE Community Collaborative grants — partnerships between community colleges, ROCPs, middle and secondary schools, and others.

Many high schools have career centers that provide materials and services, from career assessment to job search and preparation activities. In addition, many counselors offer career-related support combined with academic counseling. At Petaluma High School, students receive help in charting a career path that is entered into their registration form. In some schools with career academies, such as those in Elk Grove, counselors are assigned to the academies and are integral members of the academy team.

ROCPs also provide counseling and guidance in CTE. Some ROCPs hire their own counseling staff and provide services themselves. Others contract with participating districts for partial use of school-based counselors, and still others combine ROCP and outside services. Since districts have been granted greater flexibility with the use of ROCP funding until 2013, it is unclear whether these counseling services will be maintained.

California Partnership Academies, career pathways, and career-focused SLCs provide experiences that allow students to explore and prepare for the career areas in which they are interested. In addition, some students have access to career exploration and development services through their local Workforce Investment Board’s youth council, as well as through community-based organizations, such as Girls Inc.

California published *The California Results-Based School Counseling and Student Support Guidelines* to help counties, districts, and schools strengthen their existing school counseling and student support programs or to create such programs where none exist. The guidelines address academic, career, and personal/social counseling. (CDE & CCCCCO, 2008)

## Career-Related Tools and Resources

The California Career Resource Network (CalCRN)<sup>2</sup> website (<http://www.californiacareers.info>) offers various materials, such as planning guides and assessment tools, as well as links to job listing resources, job search preparation guides, and career development information specific to California for many career areas and occupations. With SB 123 (2009), CalCRN, which had been a separate small agency, will be incorporated into the CDE in 2010, enabling closer coordination between career guidance and instructional services.

The primary free online career exploration tool is the California CareerZone (<http://www.cacareerzone.org>), with three assessments that link 900 occupations. Students can generate initial ideas about occupations that match their interests. California Reality Check (<http://www.californiarealitycheck.org>) is an online budgeting activity that allows students to build an adult work/life budget and then connect that budget to potential education level and career choices. The California Career Planning Guide is a printed tool that allows students to create a Career Action Plan (also at <http://www.californiacareers.info/ccpg>). The Real Game California™ (<http://www.realgamecalifornia.org>) is a classroom-based curriculum that uses a simulation game to engage students in discovering the importance of education and lifelong learning while they explore potential career options.

Some other tools include:

- National Career Development Guidelines, including a national framework of competencies (skills, knowledge, and attitudes), to help people of all ages be self-reliant career managers is available from America's Career Resource Network (<http://cte.ed.gov/acrn/ncdg.htm>).
- The federal government's free online career exploration resource, Career Voyages (<http://www.careervoyages.gov>), provides information on high-growth, in-demand occupations and the skills and education needed to attain those jobs.
- The Roadtrip Nation (<http://www.roadtripnation.com>) contains interviews recorded by college students seeking to discover how others found their passion in life. The CDE is currently partnering with Roadtrip Nation to develop a high school experience.
- California Direct Connect links students and workers to jobs and careers (<http://www.cde.ca.gov/re/dc>).
- WhodoUWant2B CTE marketing campaign is managed by the Academic Senate of the Community Colleges, with support from the Governor's CTE Initiative, including CDE. (<http://www.whodouwant2b.com>). In addition to student-oriented content, this site has ordering information regarding the recently developed CTE/Academic Planning Counselor Toolkit.
- Information on career and college planning is available from <http://www.californiacolleges.edu>.
- Information on labor markets is available from <http://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov>.
- Information on training and apprenticeships is available from the Labor Market Information Division's website (<http://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov>).

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<sup>2</sup> CalCRN is a state agency funded with state general funds and Perkins funds to provide all persons in California with career development information and resources to enable them to reach their career goals.

- Information on California's regional economies and analysis on economic development opportunity is available from California Department of Labor and Workforce Development's Economic Strategy Panel (<http://www.labor.ca.gov/panel>).
- California Postsecondary Education Commission's School to Employment Pathway is at <http://www.cpec.ca.gov/FiscalData/Steps.asp>.

## CONCLUSION

Although AVID, PUENTE, GEAR UP, and MESA have shown success in helping disadvantaged students to succeed, these programs reach a relatively small number of students needing assistance. While high schools are putting some practices in place to address these issues, there is a lack of research on the scope, distribution, and effectiveness of these approaches. Nevertheless, many students enter high school functioning below grade level and need special assistance to catch up and be able to function successfully in high school. A continuing challenge to educators is ensuring that students acquire the English language and academic skills necessary for colleges and the workplace.

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