
Policy Recommendations

Evidence from the Alliance project indicates that education partnerships are valuable strategies for helping to prepare all students for success in college and careers and closing achievement gaps between racial and socioeconomic groups.

The Alliance project developed recommendations for policy aimed at facilitating the creation of partnerships and strengthening their collaboration in support of student achievement.

These recommendations are intended for Trustees of the University of California, the California State University and California Community Colleges, the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities, the California Department of Education, the California Education Roundtable, the California State Board of Education, college and university presidents, school district superintendents, local school district boards, local community college boards, boards for county offices of education, and others. These recommendations may also be of interest to other states and to educators and scholars.

A number of the recommendations here are echoed in those of the recent task force on revision of the California Master Plan for Education. The Master Plan recommendations call for better connections between and among education entities including recommendations for common assessment instruments, alignment of curriculum, articulation agreements, shared responsibility for preparing teachers, collaborative professional development, resources to fund collaborations, flexibility within collective bargaining agreements, inter-segmental coordinating committees, and a common database for tracking student achievement.

Recommendations are organized under five policy goals having to do with alignment across educational segments, incentives for collaboration, exchanging personnel, use of data, and accountability.

Policy Goal 1: Improve Alignment across Educational Segments

1. Assign joint responsibility for ensuring alignment of K-12 and college expectations to the respective chief executive officers of each school district, each institution of higher education, and each county office of education.

Responsible Partners: University of California (UC) Regents and California State University (CSU) Trustees, California Community College Board of Governors, the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities, the California Department of Education, the State Board of Education, the California Education Round Table, local community college boards, and boards for county offices of education, local school districts.

State standards provide a set of common expectations for curriculum and assessment through grade 12. However, to ensure that the local implementation of standards is articulated with higher education expectations, collaboration at the local level between public schools and colleges and universities is necessary. At present, there is no clear assignment of responsibility for ensuring alignment across segments.

Leadership of public and private systems of education should assign this responsibility to local college and university and school district chief executive officers (CEOs). CEOs in turn should convene and initiate local collaborative processes. Within local collaborative processes, chief academic officers of respective institutions should be responsible for creating and maintaining alignment of secondary course curricula, end-of-course examinations, high school exit examinations, and writing and mathematics skills expected of entering college and university students. Local business leadership should participate in order to facilitate alignment with business needs. Campus academic senates should

participate in order to facilitate institution-wide alignment.

2. Create and maintain broadly representative committees for college and university teacher preparation programs, including faculty from education, arts and science disciplines, representatives from counseling programs, teachers from local public schools, and faculty from local community colleges.

Responsible Partners: California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, University of California Regents and California State University Trustees, California Community College Board of Governors, the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities, the California Education Round Table, local community college boards.

Effective teacher training must include exposure to the realities of K-12 schools: children who come to school hungry and whose lives are filled with violence, neglect and abuse; students of diverse cultures and limited English backgrounds; schools with ill-equipped classrooms in buildings with deferred maintenance needs.

Effective teacher training must incorporate knowledge from a broad range of academic disciplines, including arts and sciences. On a typical college or university campus, coordination among these disciplines may be minimal, resulting in a program that does not well serve future teachers.

Community colleges are an important source of a diverse workforce of future teachers. New fast-track programs require that students be enrolled in a proper array of courses from the beginning of their college years. Community colleges need to align the first two years of college education with the four-year university programs. This will benefit students by reducing time to degree and benefit the state of California by increasing the production of qualified teachers.

For these reasons, teacher preparation oversight committees should include membership reflective of K-12 schools, arts and science disciplines and community colleges.

3. Include representatives of public schools, community colleges and the local community in policy planning for higher education admissions and placement.

Responsible Partners: University of California Regents and California State University Trustees, California Community College Board of Governors, the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities, the California Education Round Table, local institutions of higher education.

Admissions and placement policies at the system and campus levels have great impacts upon the educational opportunities of public school graduates. Misalignment between universities and high schools can be traced in large measure to limited communication between the differing segments. One example is the limited awareness in high schools regarding the nature and importance of the entry-level placement tests administered by the CSU and UC. Misalignment contributes to continuing high rates of remediation in math and English.

Improved communication between segments is an important part of a strategy for improving student success. K-14 participation in university policy planning for admissions and placement will help ensure that university policies are both understood by high schools and informed by a realistic understanding of K-12 student experiences.

Policy Goal 2: Increase Incentives and Resources for School- University Collaboration

4. Use best practices of school- university collaboration as criteria for funding educational reforms.

Responsible Partners: Private, federal and state funding providers.

Educational reforms are too often undertaken by one segment in isolation from others. Since students must necessarily either come from or go to another educational segment, collaboration across educational segments should be an expected part of most educational reforms. Funders should expect that collaboration across educational segments is included in most successful proposals for educational reform.

Key principles of successful school-university collaboration identified in this document are based on current and prior research. In requesting proposals, funders should make reference to these principles. In reviewing proposals, funders should expect that applicants incorporate these principles. Funders should also support dissemination of excellent models of collaboration.

5. Support K-12 teachers with opportunities to participate in K-16 collaboration.

Responsible Partners: Local school boards and superintendents, the California State Board of Education.

Teachers face intense demands upon their time. In order to make collaboration with higher education realistic and productive, districts must adjust teacher responsibilities, hire qualified substitutes, pay travel expenses, and otherwise support and recognize participation of school staff in collaborative activities.

6. Recognize and reward community college and university faculty and administrators for effective school- university collaboration.

Responsible Partners: University of California Regents and California State University Trustees, California Community College Board of Governors, the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities, the California Department of Education, the California Education Round Table, local community college boards, local school districts.

University faculty on a tenure track have strong incentives to allocate their time and energy in ways that will earn them retention, tenure and promotion. To the extent that collaboration with schools is recognized and rewarded in university settings, faculty will be encouraged to participate. A broad array of disciplines, including arts and sciences, should recognize and reward K-14 collaboration, not just education disciplines. Graduate students in preparation to become university and college faculty should be involved in collaboration with K-12 schools in order to develop expectations that collaboration is a routine part of a university career.

University and college administrative leadership is also a key. Without support of university and college administrators, K-16 collaboration is unlikely to be sustained or effective. Administrators all the way to the top of the institution should be recognized and rewarded for collaboration, not just the outreach staff and education faculty.

7. Develop collaborative professional development for teachers, counselors and administrators that is aligned with state content standards and higher education competency expectations.

Responsible Partners: Local and county school boards and superintendents, local institutions of higher education, California State Board of Education.

Districts have significant ongoing needs for professional development for teachers, counselors and administrators. Universities have significant resources and needs in these areas. Yet rarely is there a strong collaborative relationship between local districts and universities focused on ongoing professional development. Each local district and each UC and CSU should designate personnel responsible for establishing, coordinating, and maintaining collaborative local professional development programs.

Policy Goal 3: Encourage Cross- Institutional Exchange of Faculty, Staff and Students

8. Involve faculty, staff and students across educational segments.

Responsible Partners: Local institutions of higher education, local school boards and superintendents.

Partnerships are forged out of shared experiences. Educational partners should look for ways to involve faculty, staff and students in their partner organizations: college faculty teaching in high schools, high school faculty teaching at the college level, college tutors in elementary and high schools, high school students taking courses on college campuses, and administrators working side by side. These experiences are valuable to the participants and the relationships that are created form the backbone of the partnerships.

9. Encourage flexible cross-institutional use of human resources by providing portability of benefits and, when warranted, waiving collective bargaining agreement provisions.

Responsible Partners: Collective bargaining organizations, education employers and academic senates.

The California Education Code (Title 5) already contains language which encourages exchange of personnel across educational segments. However, a major barrier to collaboration is the lack of portability of benefits among retirement systems for educators who might be loaned across segments for one or a few years. Teacher and faculty union representatives and retirement authorities such as the State Teachers Retirement System and the Public Employees Retirement System should negotiate fair and equitable ways to make such portability easy to achieve. This will facilitate the loaning of personnel across segments and encourage sustained collaboration.

Collective bargaining agreements may contain language about working conditions, workdays or hours which present barriers to cross-institutional sharing of human resources. Certainly, K-18 collaboration should in no way erode collective bargaining rights. However, sometimes all parties to a proposed collaboration are willing but collective bargaining language presents an obstacle. When this occurs, districts and unions should negotiate appropriate revised language or waivers, which make collaboration possible while protecting rights of all parties.

10. Create efficient and portable hiring and training processes for college tutors and other personnel bridging educational segments.

Responsible Partners: Local school boards and superintendents, California State Board of Education, California Department of Education.

School districts are held to a high standard to provide safe and healthy learning environments for their students. Laws closely regulate the screening and selection of employees who will work with children and these laws often extend to volunteers and to college aides, student teachers, and other individuals who are also college or university students. At the state level, the California Department of Education should work

toward a program to certify college student tutors to work in any school district. Within local regions, school districts should work with universities and coordinate with one another to simplify and streamline the hiring and screening processes to qualify college students and other personnel to work in the schools.

Policy Goal 4: Effectively Use Student Achievement Data

11. Assign to each institution of higher education the responsibility to summarize and communicate to local schools the performance of high school graduates in their first college year.

Responsible Partners: University of California Regents and California State University Trustees, California Community College Board of Governors, the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities, the California Department of Education, the California Education Round Table, local community college boards, local school districts.

Data are already collected which document the success of high school graduates in their first year in California's colleges and universities. However, these data are little-used by public schools for improvement because of the complexity of assembling and interpreting the information.

Assigning responsibility to CSU and UC campuses for interpreting and communicating the data to public schools would add an essential personal touch that would make it much more likely that the data would be used. A local team including K-12, community college and university representatives should organize and interpret the data for dissemination in the local public schools. (Dan – might want to include parents such as PTA) This collaborative approach would greatly improve the awareness and understanding of

results such as the CSU Entry Level Mathematics examination, the UC Subject A examination and performance in first-year academic courses.

12. Strengthen the California system for measuring the success of students as they move across educational segments.

Responsible Partners: State Legislature, Governor, California Department of Education.

A highly effective California educational system will require a highly useful information system that measures progress across educational segments from kindergarten to college. Such a system will be very important to meeting the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act.

Key cross-segmental data showing the success of students as they move from segment to segment of the educational system are already collected in many forms: college-going rates, success of students on entry tests in math and English, and success in first-year courses. Key data within K-12 include the percentage completing college preparatory requirements, the success of students in first-year middle school academic courses and first-year high school academic courses. Such data are already collected but little-used by school sites because of slow turnaround for results and because of the complexity of assembling and interpreting the information.

Creating an effective information system for the state is a major and challenging undertaking. Hallmarks of an effective system would include: validated measures aligned with state standards and with higher education expectations, seamless tracking of students from segment to segment and from school to school, quick and convenient availability of data and summary reports, widespread understanding and acceptance of measures by educators across the state, and frequent use of data by school sites and school districts for purposes of program improvement.

When fully implemented, the California Student Information System (CSIS) is intended to provide the ability to track student performance across school districts and into colleges and

universities and provide information that can be used to evaluate the program effectiveness. These capabilities would be of high value although it is unclear how soon CSIS will be fully implemented. Any statewide information system will require a major investment in infrastructure and training at state and local levels.

Policy Goal 5: Strengthen Accountability for Student Attainment of Higher Education

13. Include expectations for preparing all students for higher education in accountability systems for public schools.

Responsible Partners: The California Department of Education, the California Legislature, the Governor.

California public schools are necessarily very focused upon the systems to which they are accountable, particularly the Academic Performance Index (API), the High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE) and the Adequate Yearly Progress Report required by the No Child Left Behind Act. Unfortunately, none of these accountability systems includes any direct indicators of student preparation for higher education. An important barrier to collaboration is that schools often perceive working with universities as a distraction from the imperative to improve their standing on API and CAHSEE indicators. The API should include indicators such as the percentage of high school students who complete college preparation coursework and the percentage of students who go on to college. California has one of the lowest rates in the nation of high school students going directly to college and improving that rate should be a key goal for the state.

14. Include expectations for collaborating with local schools into accountability systems for higher education.

Responsible Partners: The University of California Regents, California State University Trustees, California Community College Board of Governors, and the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities.

Accountability systems for higher education should incorporate indicators of the effectiveness of local campuses in working with neighboring elementary and secondary schools. The current CSU accountability system holds local campuses responsible for the preparation of their entering students in math and English. This is a challenging expectation but it does make clear the responsibility of each campus to be concerned about what is happening in local high schools with respect to student preparation for college. An even better model might be what was intended for the CSU California Academic Partnership Initiative (before it fell victim to budget cuts); each campus was to have been responsible for improving performance in math and English of students from designated local high schools with whom they were funded to work.

Summary

Seven California partnerships are contributing to significant improvements in student achievement. All are applying key principles of effective partnerships identified by prior research. Policy recommendations identified by the Alliance project would encourage additional localities to develop partnerships and make it easier for those partnerships to become effective.

The bottom line for partnership efforts is the same as the bottom line for all of California education: to prepare all students for success in college and careers and to close achievement gaps between racial and socioeconomic groups. The Alliance project validates that partnerships are an effective strategy for attaining these goals.