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The Georgia P-16 Initiative is a strategy to solve problems of low aspirations and under-preparedness of students in Georgia's public education systems. Insights drawn from lessons learned about statewide, local, and university partnerships lead to strategies that promise to improve and sustain student success at all levels of education. The focus is on closing the gap between what children are expected to learn in school and the content knowledge teachers bring to the task.

Georgia's P-16 Partnerships

Georgia is creating and building a climate responsive to preschool (P) through postsecondary (16) initiatives on campus, in local communities, and statewide. Examples used are Georgia State University, the Metropolitan Atlanta P-16 Community Council, and the Georgia P-16 Council.

Georgia State University (GSU) is an urban research university, located in downtown Atlanta, with a mission to be a center for learning about the many issues found in the living laboratory of a metropolitan environment. One of the major priorities for GSU is to work with public schools to better prepare all students for life after high school, to ease the transition from high school to college, and to prepare capable educators to achieve higher learning gains with all children. While seeking to work with many school districts, GSU recognizes that the local urban school systems offer opportunities for addressing some of the more significant challenges that must be met throughout this nation.

Systemic renewal of education can be advanced through a strong working partnership among business, then community, and various education sectors—a P-16 context. Working together in local P-16 councils, professionals become aware of what students should know and be able to do at various points along their formal learning career, as well as the opportunities for students to learn. As part of this effort, Georgia State University is a partner in the Metropolitan Atlanta P-16 Community Council, one of the local P-16 councils in Georgia.

The Georgia P-16 Initiative

The Georgia P-16 Initiative is a statewide, voluntary strategy to solve problems of low aspirations and underpreparedness of students in Georgia's public edu-

cation systems from preschool through postsecondary education. The overall goal is to prepare students to meet high standards at specified levels of their education, to ensure readiness to advance to the next level—whether that level is further education, occupational training, or work—thus seeking to improve productive employment and responsible citizenship in Georgia.

The P-16 Initiative involves the commitment and efforts of state-supported schools, postsecondary institutions, business/community leaders, youth advocates, and policymakers. Leadership at the state level is provided by the Georgia P-16 Council, appointed by the Governor and co-chaired by the Executive Director of the Office of School Readiness, the State School Superintendent, the Commissioner of Technical and Adult Education, and the Chancellor of the University System.

Through funding from the state legislature and the private sector, it has been possible to seed the work of local P-16 councils throughout Georgia representing partnerships that are working to devise seamless pathways for students from preschool through postsecondary education and to redesign teacher preparation and professional development programs to ensure that teachers are able to help all students achieve higher standards. Participants in local P-16 councils include 29 (of 34) University System colleges/universities, 147 (of 180) public school districts, 23 (of 33) technical institutes, 23 private schools, 80 businesses, 41 public agencies, plus representatives from communities.

In order to achieve P-16 goals, it is necessary to have clear expectations for what students know and are able to do at benchmark levels along their educational journey, e.g. at the end of third, fifth, eighth grades, at graduation from high school (12th), and at the transfer point (14th) from two-year to four-year colleges. It is also necessary to teach a more rigorous curriculum for all students to achieve higher expectations and to provide a safety net for those students who need extra help to reach the higher standards. In order for all teachers to achieve learning gains for all students, there should be strong emphasis on the initial preparation and professional development of educators themselves. Thus, there are three strands of work:

1. Alignment of expectations (standards), curriculum, and assessments for students, preschool through postsecondary education.
2. Alignment of school reform and teacher preparation reform toward practices that increase student learning in P-12 schools (co-reform).
3. Supplemental precollege programs for seventh-twelfth grade students in at-risk situations who need extra support in order to be prepared to succeed in postsecondary education—Post-Secondary Readiness Enrichment Program.

Through concurrent deployment of state and local strategies to achieve P-16 goals, the Georgia P-16 Council sets parameters for desirable change and then challenges local P-16 councils to devise strategies for implementation. Local P-16 councils work on long-term systemic changes (strands 1 and 2), while the Post-Secondary Readiness Enrichment Program serves students in the pipeline (strand 3).

State P-16 councils, while necessary, are insufficient for implementation of systemic change at the local level. Local P-16 councils provide the infrastructure necessary to build grassroots support and serve as laboratories for generating new strategies and piloting in new directions. There are fifteen local P-16 councils in Georgia centered at the fifteen public universities that offer education degrees. An example is the Metropolitan Atlanta P-16 Community Council.

Building Local Alliances in Metro Atlanta

The Metropolitan Atlanta P-16 Community Council is comprised of five school districts, three technical institutes, two two-year colleges, five four-year colleges, and over twenty education and business support organizations and foundations. It is involved in all three strands of P-16 work.

1. Alignment of Expectations (Standards), Curriculum, and Assessment. One of the first actions by the Metropolitan Atlanta P-16 Community Council was development of a draft of voluntary academic standards in six disciplinary areas: English/language arts, mathematics, social studies, sciences, foreign languages, and fine and performing arts. These standards were derived from national disciplinary standards for P-12 and represent clear expectations for what students should know and be able to do at benchmark levels.

For each disciplinary area, twelve-person teams were appointed with five teachers, a principal, a K-12 disciplinary specialist, a parent, a business person, and three postsecondary faculty. On each team, there was at least one teacher from elementary school (K-5), one from middle school (6-8), and one from secondary school (9-12). Postsecondary faculty members were from technical institutes, and two and four-year colleges. The disciplinary teams developed draft standards based on national disciplinary standards and those developed in other cities or states. A draft set of Voluntary Academic Standards was then completed and disseminated. Since each school district was at a different stage in addressing standards, it was important to use the term voluntary rather than to try to obtain adoption by all partners. Also, the concept of level 14 standards challenges traditional assumptions about higher education and requires significant refinement and piloting before they come to be used in the postsecondary sector. Two of the major benefits that resulted from development of these draft standards were the discussions and the respect that was generated for the various perspectives represented by each team member.

Standards for level 12 are being used as a starting point for a Performance Assessment for Colleges and Technical Schools project, sponsored by the Georgia P-16 Council, and funded by The PEW Charitable Trusts. One goal is to eliminate the gap between expectations required for high school graduation and those required for entry into work, technical institutes, and college. Another goal is to develop and pilot a proficiency-based admission system to a technical institute or college.

Metropolitan Atlanta P-16 participants in the Performance Assessment for Colleges and Technical Schools project include four high schools from two school districts, three technical institutes, two two-year colleges, Georgia State University, and

personnel administrators from business. There are four local P-16 councils involved in the project and all have used national disciplinary standards to determine their local standards. Disciplinary teams again provide the vehicle for discussions across educational sectors. The first task is to agree on a common set of academic standards from which to develop performance descriptors that articulate expected student performance at level 12. Next, assessments will be developed to measure what students know and are able to do. These assessments will incorporate the Georgia High School Graduation Test, as well as common performance tasks and student work portfolios similar to those proposed for Oregon (Conley, 1996).

As a companion piece to the Performance Assessment for Colleges and Technical Schools, standards for level 14 are being used as a starting point for a Level 14 Standards for Exit and Transfer project. This is a partnership with the Association of American Colleges & Universities and is supported by the Fund for Improvement of Post-Secondary Education. The same four local P-16 councils are involved. One goal is to present curricula in a more understandable and integrated way to help students make wise course selections, especially those students who change colleges and universities. Another goal is to develop a proficiency-based system for exit from the University System of Georgia's Core Curriculum from one college and transfer to another.

Metropolitan Atlanta P-16 partners involved in the Level 14 Standards for Exit and Transfer project are Georgia Perimeter College and Georgia State University. The other three local P-16 councils have a similar pairing of a two-year college and a university. The first task is to agree on how various areas of the core curriculum are connected and will contribute to an educated citizen for the twenty-first century. Then, the expected student performance levels on concepts, processes, and skills contained in the core curriculum will be refined. Next, assessments to measure what students know and are able to do will be developed. Finally, these assessments will incorporate common performance tasks and student work portfolios.

Standards are an important tool for equity because they make clear to faculty, students, and the public what students should know and be able to do at major points in their education. Standards imply mastery or proficiency, not minimal knowledge or skill. Recent studies show that students in high-poverty schools perform at lower levels than students in low-poverty ones, and that achievement falls still further when high-poverty schools are located in urban areas. By expecting rigorous standards for all students, the equity dilemma can be addressed. To be effective, standards should be high, achievable, and credible to students, faculty, the lay public, and potential employers. Thus, better alignment of expectations, curriculum, and assessment can be accomplished through those from the P-12 sector working with educators from the postsecondary sector and other interested parties to design and set standards within a P-16 framework. As delineated in the next section, P-12 academic standards can then be used as reference points for establishing higher levels of content requirements for teacher preparation.

2. *Alignment of School Reform and Teacher Preparation Reform.* The Metropolitan Atlanta P-16 Community Council is one of ten local P-16 councils in Georgia, funded

by University System of Georgia grants, involved in co-reform of schools and teacher preparation. Metropolitan Atlanta P-16 partners that are involved in co-reform are Georgia State University and three partner schools (a high school and its two feeder middle schools) from one of the member school districts. As the work develops, feeder elementary schools and two-year college partners will also be included.

A functional unit with responsibility for all educator preparation programs was formed in 1993, when the College of Education voluntarily agreed to share its responsibility with a group of faculty members from the Colleges of Arts & Sciences. In 1998, educators from the partner schools were added. A partner school is one in which university faculty, master teachers, school counselors, school psychologists, media specialists, and principals work together to: (1) improve student learning in the school; (2) prepare future educators; (3) strengthen professional development; and (4) conduct research on teaching, learning, and school improvement. To further improve the preparation of school leaders, the Georgia State University Principals' Center and relevant faculty are working on the initial and continuing preparation of principals and superintendents, with a focus on demonstrated ability to create conditions that support student and teacher success. The same goal is guiding the redevelopment of programs for school counselors. In addition, a new program has been developed to prepare teachers as leaders to better work with site-based managed schools.

Three local P-16 councils in Georgia are involved in a Standards-based Teacher Education Project (STEP), funded by the Council for Basic Education and the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education. This project is one component of a larger co-reform grant to the Metropolitan Atlanta P-16 Council. The expected outcome of the Standards-based Teacher Education Project is that universities will prepare teachers and other educators to meet content and pedagogy standards that have been carefully aligned with P-12 standards. The first goal is to ensure that students in teacher-preparation programs are fully prepared to teach the content expected of them, i.e., the content standards provided for P-12. The second goal is to model good instruction in both content and pedagogy that is consonant with the methods and strategies that student teachers are being taught to use in P-12 classrooms. In addition to much stronger content preparation programs for new educators, the approach in STEP can be used to provide more relevant and focused professional development for in-service educators.

The Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia approved Principles and Actions for the Preparation of Educators for the Schools in 1998. The policy represents a shift from a primary focus on "inputs" (courses, credit hours, number of clock hours of student internships in schools) to "results" (teacher, counselor, and administrator candidates can demonstrate increased learning of students in schools). Part of the policy includes a guarantee that graduates will receive additional training at no cost to them or the school system if they are unable to meet a school's expectations. To strengthen its educational programs, GSU will provide support, assistance, and professional development (in collaboration with the placement school) to graduates in their first two years of practice immediately following graduation. Follow-up support for graduates, in conjunction with strengthened programs as suggested by STEP, should ensure that Georgia State University will have graduates who meet the guarantee.

3. *Supplemental Precollege Programs for 7th-12th Grade Students who Need Extra Support to Succeed in Postsecondary Education.* The Post-Secondary Education Readiness Enrichment Program (PREP) has been implemented statewide as a supplemental academic program offered to 7th-12th grade students in at-risk situations to facilitate their access to postsecondary education. PREP services include special advising to get students into more rigorous courses, tutoring, mentoring, career exploration, leadership development, cultural enrichment, community service, and parental involvement. About 14,000 students from 133 high schools and 249 middle schools throughout the state participate in PREP. Over 5,000 of these students have participated in two-week summer enrichment programs on college campuses. Additionally, 33,000 middle school students visit a college or technical institute campus each year to learn about admission requirements and to interact with faculty and students.

State funded gifted academies for high school juniors and seniors have been put in place on two college campuses. Students enrolled in these academies earn both college and high school credit while enrolled full-time in college courses. Over 100 high school students have been able to move to the next level of study (college) when ready without having to first graduate from high school.

Creating a Climate Responsive to P-16 Activities

In its 1994-95 strategic plan, Georgia State University emphasized a local P-16 initiative as one of its areas of distinctiveness. Distinctiveness is gained through the university's contributions to regional, national, and global communities. Since 1995, the P-16 initiative has received high priority in each year's action plan and a corresponding high priority in budget allocations.

Part of the strategy to encourage P-16 work in the College of Arts & Sciences is creation of positions in discipline departments where faculty members are expected to work with their colleagues from the College of Education on issues of teacher preparation. To date, faculty members have been hired in English, geology, history, and mathematics. To further improve the preparation of educators, there are plans to add faculty members in biology and to increase the number of faculty in mathematics and reading in arts and sciences as well as in early childhood and middle school education. Concurrently, additional "partner school" faculty have been added in the College of Education to aid in linking the university to schools.

At Georgia State University, there are departmental expectations and responsibilities for contributions to university goals as well as to the department's discipline. Thus, most departments in the Colleges of Arts & Sciences and Education are expected to contribute to the P-16 initiative. This is a department expectation, not an individual faculty one. The campus recognizes that faculty members contribute differently to their departments' teaching, service, and research goals, and that the mix of professional responsibilities may change over time. Thus, while some faculty are working in traditional areas, others could be rewarded by assuming greater responsibility in the redesign of content and content pedagogy courses for teachers or for substantive contributions to partner schools, although the issue of faculty rewards is still not totally resolved. Delineation of types of evidence of this broadened scholarship that can be assessed by faculty peers (American Association of Higher Education, 1999) is of special interest.

Suggested Strategies

Metropolitan universities must recognize and accept their key role in P-16 education by making educator preparation a high university priority and the responsibility of the whole university, particularly faculty members from Arts & Sciences and Education. A first step is to form a functional unit responsible for educator preparation that includes faculty from arts & sciences and education and partner schools. University and department practices should include differentiated workloads and rewards for faculty for demonstrated contributions to broadened scholarship associated with partnerships with local schools. It is also important to recognize that work with schools is labor intensive and that allocation of resources based on credit hours generated may work against initiatives aimed at seamless P-16 education. For healthy cities of the future, P-12 students from diverse groups must be fully prepared for success in postsecondary endeavors. Concomitantly, educators must help prepare students for successful transition from high school to college, technical institute, or work.

Incentives for building local P-16 partnerships can be fairly modest. In Georgia, a request for proposals for planning grants was sent to all universities that prepare teachers. Within a few months, 15 local P-16 councils formed and each was awarded a \$10,000 planning grant to devise plans to achieve the Georgia P-16 goals. The following year, the University System succeeded in getting a P-16 line item approved in the state's budget. The state's investment in the Georgia P-16 Initiative made it possible to leverage private support for the project. A competitive process was then used to fund implementation grants to those local councils with the most promising plans. State and private funds, as well as in-kind contributions, are used to support the work of the state and local P-16 councils and the Post-Secondary Readiness Enrichment Program.

An early lesson was learned in Georgia: It is important to build a structure for bringing the local P-16 councils together periodically to share work, for professional development, to maintain linkages with directions approved by the Georgia P-16 Council, and for evaluation. The P-16 Network serves as this forum in Georgia. All 15 councils attend meetings of the network to focus on a single strand of work; other meetings involve a subset of councils, such as those working on the Performance Assessment for Colleges and Technical Schools. Through meetings of the P-16 Network, it is possible to build a statewide consensus on "essential elements" of P-16 work and to monitor progress statewide.

A second lesson learned in Georgia: In order for local P-16 councils to be successful, they must focus on both alignment of expectations (standards), curriculum, and assessment in P-16 and on alignment of school and teacher preparation reform toward practices that improve student learning in P-12 schools. Without the other, neither strand of work is sufficient. It is also becoming increasingly clear that greater progress will be achieved if the work on alignment precedes work on improving teacher quality. Focusing first on aligning what might be called "the student system" helps set the standards at each level sufficiently high for students to move smoothly from P-12 to college; i.e., to close the gap between expectations set for high school graduation and college admission. Then the student standards can be used as the target for setting standards for their teachers. This approach offers greater assurance that teachers will

have sufficient depth as well as breadth in specific subject fields to instruct P-12 students to achieve the higher expectations at each level.

The balance in Georgia, like many states, is shifting from an agrarian-based economy to a service-driven and knowledge-based one that requires more highly skilled and better-educated workers. Students who graduate from high school must be prepared to move smoothly into postsecondary technical training, college, or the work force. Also, the level of work expected of students between the early and middle years of schooling and between middle years and high school must be in alignment with one another and at higher performance levels than previously required. Further, educational programs must be in place that will ensure equity for students from diverse ethnic, cultural, international, and socioeconomic groups as they work to meet the higher standards.

According to a recent report from the State Higher Education Executive Officers (1998), in most states gaps exist between what is expected of students to graduate from high school and what is expected of them to enter postsecondary education and work. There are also gaps between what children are expected to learn in school and the content knowledge teachers bring to the task (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996). Through the work of the local P-16 councils and the Post-Secondary Readiness Enrichment Program sites, connected high-expectation educational experiences for students can be put into practice. The collaborative structure of statewide P-16 initiatives allows all stakeholders, particularly those educators who work directly with students, to contribute their expertise to address specific areas of need and implement strategies that promise to improve and sustain student success.

Implementing a strategy such as P-16 requires leadership, an investment of seed money, and recognition that the problems of underpreparedness of students in public education cannot be solved by P-12 schools or postsecondary education institutions or the legislature or the business community alone. Instead, it will take all of these responsible parties working together strategically and in partnership toward shared goals.

Suggested Readings

Conley, D.T., *Phi Delta Kappan* (December, 1996): 309-314.

Making a Place in the Faculty Rewards System for Work within K-12: A Project Report of Four Universities (Washington, DC: AAHE Publications, 1999).

State Strategies that Support Successful Student Transitions from Secondary to Post-Secondary Education, (Denver, CO: State Higher Education Executive Officers, 1998).

What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future. (New York: National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996).