recommendation #4: give college and work readiness assessments in high school

College entrance examinations often present a barrier to higher education for high school students. Low-income and minority youth in particular earn lower scores on college admissions exams and are less likely than their peers to take them. However, broadly administering these exams to all students can turn them into a point of entry and useful academic tool for all students. Requiring all high school students to take college admissions exams increases students’ postsecondary options and gives students a chance to improve their skills in high school, thus reducing college remediation costs.

Giving students college entrance exams earlier in their high school career also allows these data to be incorporated into individual high school graduation-plus plans, which identify what courses and additional support students need to graduate ready for further education. High school-graduation plus plans are a relatively new concept that build on the principles of individual education plans (IEPs) that exist for students with disabilities. Like IEPs, high school graduation-plus plans can make academic expectations clear, assess and monitor changes in a student’s skill levels, and describe the course and support services each student needs to be successful. These plans can help guide and personalize high school instruction and guidance counseling, as well as help connect out-of-school experiences to students’ academic goals. Currently, only Texas has integrated these and other data into formal, individual high school graduation-plus plans for all at-risk students.

California Early Assessment Program

Initiative Description and History

In 2003, the California Department of Education, the state board of education, and the 23-campus California State University system (CSU) launched an Early Assessment Program to assess high school students’ preparation for college. This program is the result of a three-year collaboration initiated by the California Education Roundtable, an organization representing the leaders of all educational segments in the state. The collaborative process involved the California Department of Education, state board of education, CSU Chancellor’s Office, and representatives of the CSU Academic Senate. The University of California systemwide office, its faculty, and an Intersegmental Coordinating Committee were also involved in the process.

The goal of the Early Assessment Program (EAP) is to meet CSU’s college readiness standards in English and mathematics. The program is voluntary and is offered to all 11th-grade students at California’s public high schools. It has three components:

- a voluntary test taken by 11th-grade students to assess their mathematics and English-language arts proficiency relative to CSU’s college placement standards;
- learning activities that help high school seniors develop college-ready skills in English and mathematics;
- and professional development activities that help high school English and mathematics teachers learn to prepare students to meet college-level proficiency in English and mathematics.

The EAP test is based on California’s high school standards tests required of all students. About 12–15 minutes of testing time was added to each test; an English essay is also required. Given the full alignment of CSU readiness and school standards, CSU was able to minimize the number of additional test items needed to integrate CSU placement tests fully with the schools tests. Consequently, certain levels of performance mean both school success and college readiness.

Students passing the English or math early assessment tests are exempt from taking CSU’s placement exams in those subjects. If they don’t pass the tests they are advised to take an appropriate English or math course during their senior year. There is also an additional option for students who perform marginally on the math test—they may receive a conditional exemption if they take and pass an approved math course during their senior year.
To support schools in preparing students for college, CSU has developed a new 12th-grade expository writing and reading course and related modules, which have been embraced by the high schools. A new 12th-grade mathematics course geared to CSU readiness standards is under development. CSU has made available to all high schools a mathematics Web site through which non-exempt students can access online diagnoses and a tutorial to prepare them to meet CSU’s standards. CSU is also providing professional development to support the new 12th-grade activities and also to help ninth-, 10th-, and 11th-grade teachers know and emphasize the college standards through the high school. Helping high school teachers to improve students’ critical reading skills is a major focus.

Costs and Funding Sources
The CSU provides funding for the different components of EAP. Annually, the 11th-grade assessment costs $3.2 million, the high school course/module development costs $400,000, professional development of high school teachers costs $1.2 million, and EAP campus/high school coordination costs $2.3 million. The cost of the 11th-grade assessment is minimized by using the existing high school standards tests required of all students as a base. CSU funds only the cost of the additional items and the English essay examination.

Enabling Authority
No legislative or regulatory changes were made, and no executive order was issued, to initiate or support this partnership between the Department of Education, state board of education, and the California State University system.

Evidence of Success
Since the program was administered to all 11th-grade students in the spring of 2004 for the first time, it is too early to tell whether college remediation rates are being affected by the program. However, one early measure of the program’s success is the higher than expected rate of student participation during its first administration. Of the state’s 400,000 11th-grade students, 186,000 (46.5 percent of those eligible) took the English exam and 118,200 students (70 percent of those eligible) took the math exam, a much greater number than expected by CSU officials.

Resources
1. David Spence, The California State University, (562) 951-4710, dspence@calstate.edu

Florida’s Partnership with the College Board

Initiative Description and History
The Florida Partnership is a collaboration between the College Board and the Florida Department of Education. Its goal is to increase the quality, rigor, and consistency of academic experiences for all students—especially under-represented students—in Florida’s middle schools and high schools by offering pre-collegiate assessments for all 10th-graders, college entrance examination readiness for teachers and students, and professional development opportunities for teachers and administrators. A key component of the partnership is integrating student-level data produced by the PSAT/NMSQT (a pre-collegiate assessment) into improvement plans that guide students toward more rigorous high school classes, including the college-level Advanced Placement classes. All 10th graders may take either the PSAT/NMSQT or PLAN test at state expense.

The partnership is jointly managed by the College Board’s Florida and Southern Regional Offices and the Office of Equity and Access in the Florida Department of Education. The partnership targets its efforts on high-need school districts and low-performing high schools, as identified by the state’s accountability system. A principal-appointed coordinator at each of these schools is a liaison to the partnership. As liaisons, school coordinators participate in “train-the-trainer” sessions about how to use skills feedback from the PSAT/NMSQT to improve learning, and the AP Potential to help identify students who have the potential to succeed in rigorous high school and college-level courses, such as Advanced Placement (AP). School coordinators also receive training for teaching SAT preparation courses at their schools and for training others to do the same.

2. California State University Early Assessment Program Web site, http://www.calstate.edu/eap
Intensive, content-focused professional development workshops are also offered to help teachers prepare students for rigorous academics by providing teachers with instructional strategies for teaching AP courses and bolstering content knowledge. Through the partnership, each summer more than 800 teachers participate in AP Summer Institutes, tuition free. Teachers working in “high-priority” schools have preference in registering for all partnership-sponsored College Board workshops, including the AP Summer Institutes. While teachers benefit from strategies and content, principals and other administrators also take advantage of an AP Summer Institute for Administrators. Topics at the administrators’ institute include learning how to create a master schedule that maximizes the impact of AP classes, as well as what content is needed in non-AP courses to help students prepare for success in AP.

The College Board also provides services through various means of outreach, including disseminating materials in several languages for teachers and community organizations to use with students and their families. The partnership also engages community organizations in providing academic support, SAT readiness, and college readiness particularly for students traditionally underrepresented in postsecondary education. In addition to community groups, the partnership is fortunate to have alliances with Florida’s state universities, community colleges, and historically black colleges.

Costs and Funding Sources
Several statewide programs fund the Florida Partnership. The state has typically appropriated $5.5 million annually for its Partnership for Minority and Underrepresented Student Achievement and $1.6 million annually for statewide pre-collegiate assessment testing for 10th-graders to include the PSAT/NMSQT administration (per student cost of $11). The state does not appropriate funds specifically for AP exam fees; however, schools and/or districts pay AP exam fees for their students (exam fee of $82 per student). Florida statute requires the participating partner to match at least one-third of the annual state allocation in materials and services to the program.

Enabling Authority
Section 1007.35 of the Florida Statutes, [http://www.fl senate.gov/Statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_ Statute&Search_String=&URL=Ch1007/SEC35.HTM&Title=-%3e2004-%3eCh1007-%3eSection%2035](http://www.fl senate.gov/Statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_ Statute&Search_String=&URL=Ch1007/SEC35.HTM&Title=-%3e2004-%3eCh1007-%3eSection%2035), created the Florida Partnership for Minority and Underrepresented Student Achievement.

Evidence of Success
PSAT/NMSQT and AP participation have increased significantly since the start of the initiative, particularly among minority students. Between 1999 and 2003, 10th-grade participation in the PSAT/NMSQT increased 326 percent for minority test takers.

Nearly 1 in 5 public school students (19 percent) in Florida’s high school class of 2004 left high school more prepared for college, having earned a score of 3 or higher on a college-level AP exam. Florida achieved the largest expansion of any state in the nation in the proportion of students succeeding on an AP Exam in high school (19 percent of the class of 2004 compared to 13 percent of the class of 2000). African American students’ participation has increased 133 percent, and Hispanic students’ participation increased 138 percent, since 1999. As a result, Latino students are now no longer underrepresented in Florida’s AP classrooms.

Resources
1. Jenny Oren Krugman, The College Board, (305) 858-9590, jkrugman@collegeboard.org
3. The One Florida website, [www.oneflorida.org/myflorida/government/governorinitiatives/one_florida/education.html](http://www.oneflorida.org/myflorida/government/governorinitiatives/one_florida/education.html)
Illinois Prairie State Achievement Examination

Initiative Description and History

Illinois includes a college entrance exam as part of its Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE) for all 11th-grade students. The PSAE includes three components: a science assessment, the college entrance exam, and two ACT WorkKeys assessments. Illinois includes a college entrance exam in its high school assessment for four main reasons:

- To ensure all students take a college entrance exam;
- To help parents by having the state pay for all students to take a college entrance exam;
- To ensure that high schools offer a college preparatory curriculum to students in order to prepare them for the test; and
- To provide a comprehensive picture of high school student achievement in Illinois.

To date, the state has used the ACT but is currently working on a new RFP to bid out the college entrance component of the PSAE. Illinois has used the ACT in the past because it assesses students’ competence in the major subject areas and their ability to perform college-level work. Students have been taking the test since the spring of 2001, but have only been required to take the test in order to receive a regular high school diploma since 2004. Students have the opportunity to retake the PSAE in 12th grade to improve their scores.

Costs and Funding Sources

In 2004, Illinois spent $5.5 million to administer the PSAE to 122,000 11th-grade students. The estimated $45.00 per student price for administering ACT’s exams includes new test forms, student planning materials, scoring, student score reports, school reports, district and state reports as well as staff support (e.g., workshops, instructional support).

Enabling Authority

In 2004, Governor Rod Blagojevich signed Public Act 93-857, http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/publicacts/fulltext.asp?Name=093-0857, which requires all students to take the Prairie State Achievement Examination in order to receive a regular high school diploma.

Evidence of Success

Since the statewide requirement to take the PSAE for high school graduation began in the spring of 2004, it is too early to assess its impact. However, college readiness testing has been a part of the PSAE since 1999. Over that time, Illinois high school students are taking more core courses, particularly minority students. As a result, more African American, Hispanic, and Native American students are meeting or exceeding the state standard on the PSAE. Further, college enrollment has also increased: the number of students enrolling in Illinois colleges in 2002 was 23 percent greater than the previous year, and the number of college freshman from families earning $30,000 per year or less was 6 percent greater than the number enrolled in 2001.

Resources

2. Cindy Schmeiser, ACT, (319) 337-1091, schmeiser@act.org

Texas Individual Graduation Plans

Description of Initiatives and History

Texas has developed a number of recent initiatives that use data to personalize high school instruction to students’ individual strengths and weaknesses. These initiatives include the personalized graduation plan, the individualized graduation plan, and the personalized study guide for the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS).

Texas secondary schools are required to provide all at-risk students with personalized graduation plans (PGP)—individual instructional programs designed to accelerate students’ progress. School principals must designate a guidance counselor, teacher, or other appropriate individual to develop and administer a PGP for each student enrolled in a junior high, middle, or high school who performs poorly on the TAKS or is not likely to graduate from high school in five years. The PGP must 1) identify edu-
cational goals for the student; 2) include diagnostic, monitoring and intervention information and other evaluation strategies; 3) provide an intensive instructional program; 4) address parental participation and expectations for the student; and 5) provide innovative methods to promote the student’s advancement, such as flexible scheduling, alternative environments, online instruction, and other interventions proven to accelerate learning. The PGP is intended to enable students to perform on grade level by the end of the school year.

Since 2003, the individualized graduation plan (IGP) is required of all high schools that receive Texas High School Completion and Success (THSCS) Grants. These grants provide services to students in underperforming high schools and in high schools with low rates of matriculation. The IGP must ensure that students at risk of not graduating high school 1) are afforded instruction from highly qualified teachers; 2) have access to online diagnostic and assessment instruments; and 3) are provided accelerated instruction in areas of academic weakness. The Individualized graduation plan may serve as an extension of the personalized graduation plan.

Beginning in the fall of 2004, the Texas Education Agency began providing free individualized study guides to high school seniors who have not passed all parts of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) required for high school graduation. The study guides are produced and sent to districts after each administration of the 11th-grade TAKS. The study guides are customized based on each student’s test scores and are designed specifically for students’ use. The guides, which are being produced by the Grow Network/McGraw-Hill, contain the following information:

- an overview and explanation of the student’s individual TAKS results by subject area and by objective within each subject area;
- a personal study planner to help the student get organized;
- customized study sections for each subject area of the TAKS in which the student did not meet the passing standard; and
- a tutor guide to enable teachers, tutors, and parents to help the student work through the guide.

Study guides currently link to a student’s PGP, but work is underway to integrate the guide more closely with the PGP and to provide a more comprehensive look at the students’ assessment history within the PGP.

**Costs and Funding Sources**

Texas provides no direct support for schools to implement personalized graduation plans. In 2004, Texas spent $38 million on THSCS grants, which includes implementation of the individual graduation plans. In 2004, Texas spent $3.1 million on personalized study guides.

**Enabling Authority**


**Evidence of Success**

All of these initiatives are too new; therefore, it is too early to evaluate their impact. However, one indication of the efficacy of these initiatives is their use by the intended audience—students, parents, and teachers. Focus groups conducted to evaluate the first year of implementation of the personalized study guide have indicated the popularity of the guide with students and teachers.

**Resources**

1. David Coleman, Grow Network/McGraw-Hill, (212) 889-5678, dcoleman@grow.net
2. Tisha Pryor, Grow Network/McGraw-Hill, (212) 889-5678 Ext. 135, tpryor@grow.net
5. A model personalized graduation plan, [http://www.tea.state.tx.us/taa/stanprog102303a2.pdf](http://www.tea.state.tx.us/taa/stanprog102303a2.pdf)
Considerations for Implementing Recommendation #4

- Requiring all students to take college and work readiness examinations early in high school gives schools the opportunity to assess students’ college preparation and provide them with courses that will develop the skills they need to be successful in college and work. Tying these assessments to an individual graduation-plus plan would be a logical and low-cost way to build on the eighth- and ninth-grade achievement data to guide students toward graduation and education beyond high school. By adding college readiness data to the individual plans, high schools can personalize instruction, academic support, and counseling based on individual students’ skill deficiencies, and states can save money on later remediation. Providing this support in high school makes it less likely that students will need remedial support in college, or make expensive and lengthy transitions into a good career path.

- Historically, college readiness tests, such as the SAT or ACT, have been a means to screen out students for college. Work readiness tests, such as ACT WorkKeys (assessments measuring applied skills in reading and mathematics), are not commonly offered to high school students. Similarly, students took a college placement exam only if they had been admitted and enrolled in a college. For most high school teachers and students, the content of these exams is unknown. There is no “best” readiness assessment for states to use; each of the states profiled uses a different assessment strategy for measuring college and work readiness. Rather, this test or set of assessment tools should be valid, reliable, and reflect the consensus of a state’s employers and postsecondary institutions about college and work-ready skills.