

Georgia’s Approach to Alignment

Defining Alignment

Alignment work in Georgia has been underway since 1995, when a Board of Regents policy directive established a P-16 initiative. The first goal, “align educational systems to maximize student progression and success pre-school through college,” articulates the alignment target, which was supported by an alignment framework developed by the Georgia P-16 Council. Alignment would become a reality when students could progress through this process—the crux being “college transition” under the auspices of all of the education agencies: Department of Education (DOE), University System of Georgia (USG), and Department of Technical and Adult Education (DTAE). This model creates a rationale for the P-16 approach.

Alignment Framework
High School Graduation
College Readiness
College Transition
College Progression
College Success

Georgia P-16 Council

Coordination of the P-16 council has varied since its inception 10 years ago. Currently, it includes representatives from the following entities:

- Governor’s Office
- State Education Agencies: USG, DOE, DTAE, Preschool
- Business leaders

The original Georgia P-16 Council was formed by Executive Order in 1995; participation was voluntary. Legislation was approved in 2000 converting the Georgia P-16 Council to the Education Coordinating Council (ECC) and requiring participation. The Governor chaired the ECC between 2000 and 2004, implementing a two-tiered approach. The top tier included the chancellor of USG, chairman of the Board of Regents, chair of the state board and the Superintendent. The second tier included coordinators of the work from each of the four education agencies. Because the high level leaders were at the table rather than those who were actually doing the work, many felt that work was not optimized. The ECC has not officially convened since 2004, but division of work into two grassroots committees—the Georgia P-16 Council and the Georgia Committee on Quality Teaching—has facilitated remarkable progress. Work has been sustained by the commitment of those who have been working on alignment since early in the process.

Articulating Standards

College-readiness standards were initially drafted by the University System, Technical and Adult Education, and a group of high schools. The former State Superintendent chose not to participate making it difficult to move the work forward. Currently, through Early Colleges and the American Diploma Project Network, Georgia is using both a “bottom-up” and a “top-down” approach to alignment of college-and work-readiness standards with the new Georgia Performance Standards:

- **Early Colleges.** Funding received from a Gates Foundation and Woodruff Foundation Grants have allowed the piloting of the college-ready standards in six Early College School sites in Georgia. K-12 and university faculty are in the process of coming to consensus on what standards should be. Early Colleges will serve as demonstration sites to inform the state policy work on college readiness standards and assessments and their alignment with the new Georgia Performance Standards and Assessments.
- **American Diploma Project.** Working with ADP as a partner provided a national foundation and another measure for the articulation and implementation of college-readiness standards. Through participation in the ADP Network, Georgia has a clearly articulated work plan for having college- and work-readiness standards into policy by June 2006 and college- and work-readiness assessments into policy by September 2007.

Lessons Learned

- Higher education and K-12 need to work as equal partners.
- Initiation by higher education is helpful. Clear articulation of standards at the top focuses the work of high schools to prepare students to be college and work ready.
- Work with outside partners and funders to build consensus.
- Incorporate demonstration projects (e.g., Early College Pilots) to test ideas to determine what works in policy and practice.
- Find and include committed people who can persist through changes in leadership and structure with a vision of reaching the goal of alignment.

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