

Kentucky's Approach to Alignment

Reducing the Need for Remediation

Kentucky began alignment discussions in 1999, following the NASH P-16 Summer Institute. The State P-16 Council charged KY Department of Education (KDE) and Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE) staffs to focus on ways to reduce the need for remediation in English and mathematics at the postsecondary level.

A working group was convened in each area composed of representatives of the K-12 and postsecondary sectors.

- **K-12** - For each group, the KDE selected an elementary, a middle and a high school teacher and three administrators—one each from curriculum and instruction, assessment, and superintendents.
- **Postsecondary** - For each group, the CPE (a coordinating board and agency for the state's eight public four-year institutions and the Community and Technical College System) asked the Chief Academic Officers of each of the public institutions to name a faculty member to represent the institution's standards. The CPE also worked with the association of independent colleges and universities to secure a representative from the independent institutions.
- **Chairs** - A board member from the KY Board of Education (KBE) chaired one working group; a CPE member chaired the other.
- **Convener** - A paid facilitator was hired to monitor and lead the conversations.

The resulting recommendations provided general recommendations for curriculum and instruction at both the high school and college levels. The chief areas that the teams identified as having the greatest impact on student readiness for postsecondary education and success therein centered on attention to reading (beyond third grade), analytical writing (valued more in the postsecondary sector than in the K-12), algebra (same), and the preparation of K-12 teachers and of postsecondary faculty. With an endorsement from the State P-16 Council and the CPE, and after being presented to the KBE and the Education Professional Standards Board, the recommendations were taken to local P-16 councils to share with local teachers and postsecondary faculty.

Next Step – The American Diploma Project

As a Phase I ADP pilot state, Kentucky worked with Achieve, Inc. to undertake a gap analysis of high school and postsecondary assessment standards and to articulate college- and work-readiness standards. While the K-12 sector was well-acquainted with standards-based reform, the postsecondary sector was not, and the ADP benchmarks provided a “discourse of standards,” at least in English and mathematics, at the postsecondary level. The Achieve benchmark report and the work leading up to it were effective in publicly building consensus around the need for aligning K-12 standards with postsecondary and workplace expectations.

Outcome—Statewide Standard of College Readiness

After the ADP report was released, the CPE charged its staff with developing a statewide placement policy for all of its public institutions based on the ADP benchmarks. The CPE again convened teams of institutional representatives to agree on basic college readiness standards in English and mathematics. Demonstration of these skills would guarantee any incoming student placement in credit-bearing coursework at any Kentucky public college or university, two- or four-year. As an ACT state, Kentucky asked ACT, Inc. to perform a crosswalk of the ADP benchmarks with both the ACT *Standards for Transition* in English and mathematics and the KDE's assessment standards in English and mathematics. Only after the English and mathematics faculty had agreed on what entering students should know and be able to do were they asked to identify ACT cut-scores that matched the college readiness expectations identified. Basing the discussion on content and standards rather than on test scores kept the focus on student learning (rather than institutional identity and image) and facilitated consensus.

As it happened, KY's placement policy threshold scores were precisely those identified by national research conducted by ACT, Inc. as predictive of college success in first-year English, college algebra, and college calculus.

Critical Friends

Several constituencies proved invaluable in building support for KY's college-readiness standards:

- **Skilled Labor**

Vetting the alignment recommendations by representatives of labor and the skilled trades and including representatives from the skilled trades in the ADP work showed that the standards prepared high school graduates for trade apprenticeship programs and employment, as well as for college and university study.

- **Community/Technical Colleges**

Because they shoulder the burden of remediation on the postsecondary level, and because they are accountable for preparing graduates to pass licensure exams, faculty from this sector have proven to be the most supportive of clearly articulated college readiness expectations.

- **Adult Education**

Nearly a quarter of KY's adult population with high school level educational attainment has a GED. KY Adult Education (KYAE) is administered by the CPE and has been a powerful ally in promoting KY's college-readiness standards. KYAE has used the ADP benchmarks and the Statewide Placement Policy to revise KY's adult education curriculum.

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