

## 9.3 Partnering to Support College and Career Readiness

Have you ever heard a comment like one of these?

**College CTE instructor:** *I don't know what they are teaching these kids at that high school. They come to me and they have no sense of responsibility. They can't even begin to read a manual.*

**Secondary teacher:** *I am so sick of hearing college professors complain about how incoming freshman aren't prepared. We work so hard to get them to pass those exams. If they're passing end-of-course exams and graduating, what else can we be doing?*

**High school counselor:** *These colleges admit our kids, but then fail them or make most of them take developmental education courses. If these students aren't ready, why are they letting them in?*

**Developmental education college instructor:** *Most of my students don't even place into credit bearing courses. I don't get it. How did they leave high school without these basic writing skills?*

These people are all observing different pieces of the same college and career readiness problem. The K-12 system and higher ed may need to communicate more.

One way to improve college and career readiness is to build strong partnerships between institutions at different levels, and to reach out to business and industry as well.

Let's look at a couple of examples of partnerships that can help clarify and align college readiness goals and expectations.

If you are a K-12 educator, consider inviting speakers from local higher ed institutions and businesses to talk with students about the skills—and skill levels—that are necessary in their fields. Inviting alumni to speak about their college and career experiences is also highly informative—and motivational—for K-12 students.

Another suggestion is to ask for samples of college syllabi and model high school syllabi after them so the syllabus becomes a familiar tool for helping students understand expectations. Take it a step further and invite faculty from local high schools and colleges to participate in a collaborative grading session, and compare the way student work is assessed at different levels.

**College Instructor:** *This student used a lot of strong evidence from the text in her argument, but I would score this paper low because it is improperly cited and the bibliography is incomplete.*

**High School Teacher:** *That's interesting. I don't use citation quality in my rubric. Our grades would have been very different.*

Speaking of grading, when your students do long-term projects or portfolio work, consider inviting experts from outside the school to provide input about how this work would stack up to the demands of college and the workforce.

**Jury Member:** *This is an impressive project, but I would like to have seen more original research. When my employees propose solutions like you do here, I ask them for the latest research and*

*also for evidence that they've gathered and analyzed from our own community. Can you tell me what idea you have about how research could be incorporated into your project?*

K-12 educators traditionally haven't had good data to illustrate whether their students succeed in higher ed settings. It may not always be possible to get data on specific students, but websites like Texas Higher Education Data [show this website front page: <http://www.txhighereddata.org/>] can provide aggregate performance data to help schools target interventions and improve student achievement.

Secondary-post-secondary partnerships come in all sizes depending on the resources available. Don't be afraid to start small. You can help your students find internships, shadow college courses and connect with mentors [show students working with businesses or higher ed instructors] just by taking the time to reach out and ask.

And the most important thing to remember? Planning and building partnerships should start with the goals you want to accomplish. That's what we tell our students, right? Knowing where you want to end up makes it a heck of a lot of a lot easier to get there!

**HS Teacher 1:** *I'd really like to see more of my students to place into general education courses.*

**College Instructor 1:** *I want to see more students from our local community successfully graduate from the university.*

**HS Counselor:** *I'd like my students to have the opportunity to practice workplace readiness skills while they're still in high school.*