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Amesbury Early College Program: Second-Year Outcomes

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Summary/Abstract

Five-year longitudinal community-based program evaluation reports annually on outcomes for early college program for academically average students, grades 10-12, in a suburban high school partnership with MA community college. Mixed methodology uses surveys, interviews and quantitative student data to illuminate program design, measure student outcomes, investigate changes in teaching practice and examine effective leadership practices. Two-year results show impressive credit accumulation and improved college readiness skills in students. Strong support mechanisms promote student success. Program is now being replicated in other communities.

Goals and Objectives

1. More AHS students will earn college credit before high school graduation.
2. More AHS students will take AP courses at the high school.
3. All students must succeed, since failure will only reinforce the perception that some students are not cut out for college.
4. More AHS students will attend college after graduation.
5. Fewer AHS students will need remedial coursework when they attend college
6. More AHS students will complete a college certificate or degree within four years of graduating from high school

Approaches and Methods

Community-based research, using concurrent mixed methods for five-year, longitudinal program evaluation.

Research Questions:

1. Are the EC students truly average?
2. Are the EC college courses truly rigorous?
3. What are the outcomes for the EC students?
4. To what extent has the EC program made students more college-ready?
5. How has the program changed teaching practice and expectations?
6. How does student support change for an early college program?
7. What funding mechanism will provide sustainability?
8. What leadership characteristics support early college partnerships?

Sample Population:

1. Suburban high school, 600 students.
2. MA community college
3. Academically average students (report cards in B – C range) begin taking regular college courses in grade 10.
4. Opportunity to earn as many as 45 credits by graduation.

Data Sources & Instruments

1. Student demographic and assessment data
2. Student surveys/ interviews
3. Parent focus group interviews
4. Teacher/leader interviews
5. Classroom observations
6. Course material analysis

Results/Impact

Course Rigor:

1. Instructors for most courses are regular college faculty.
2. Students use authentic college textbooks, syllabi, assignments, and assessments.
3. Students receive college IDs and full access to Blackboard and campus facilities.

Second-Year Outcomes:

1. 53 sophomore students (Classes 2012, 2013) and 29 juniors (Class 2012) attempted 843 college credits and successfully earned 771 credits, a success rate of 91% or 9.4 college credits/student/year.

College Readiness Skills?

1. "This course requires me to do more writing than any other course" – student.
2. "The progress in their writing alone is unbelievable." – English teacher.
3. Yet, students still study only 1 hour/day.
4. "It makes you realize how important the future is." –student.

Teachers report new gains in co-teaching methodologies, better understanding of college readiness skills.

Shared responsibility splits costs between high school, college and families.

Parent contribution enables increased student support mechanisms.

Entrepreneurial skills in K-12 leadership prove essential for successful partnering.

Conclusion/Next Steps

Conclusions:

1. Faculty is essential to program success.
2. Guidance support is indispensable.
3. The co-teaching model must be preserved through careful scheduling.
4. College Success skills require annual reinforcement.
5. The voices of parents, teachers and students proved indispensable....

Next Steps:

1. Program evaluation will continue through 2014.
2. The Amesbury model will be shared and implemented in other communities.

References and Resources

- Leonard, J. (2010). *An early college program for average students: First-year outcomes*. Northern Essex Community College. Boston.
- Leonard, J. (2010). *Taking dual enrollment deeper: Supports for the "forgotten middle" in a tenth grade classroom*. Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association, Denver CO.
- Leonard, J. (2011a). Maximizing credits in high school. [under review]. *School Community Journal*.

Additional Partnerships, Information and/or Contacts

The Amesbury Early College model is now being replicated in other high schools, including:

- Haverhill MA
- North Andover MA
- Billerica MA

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