

**Life Readiness and Education Beyond High School**  
***Summary of Ideas from Two Planning Meetings***

The first meeting of the Life Readiness and Education Beyond High School subcommittee was held on May 28, 2008. The second meeting was held on June 25, 2008. Many issues and challenges were discussed along with potential promising practices, all of which could possibly be grouped into two main areas for discussion: (1) alignment and connections across all levels of education, and (2) access and motivational strategies directed toward students (to encourage students to stay in school) and directed toward school based decision making councils (to encourage support of new initiatives in high school structures.) Listed is a grouping of the ideas generated at the first two meetings, organized along these two main areas.

## Alignment and Connections across All Levels

### **Issues and Challenges:**

#### **Post-Secondary Dropout Issue**

- From fall to fall, Jefferson Community and Technical College loses roughly 40% of its students.
- The Career Pathways experiment in health care has demonstrated some promising results, significantly raising the persistence rates of at-risk students. But it requires a hands-on approach by staff that is expensive to take to scale.

#### **Lack of One Voice on Testing and Alignment**

- The need is to cover less and go deeper in the content area (as called for by the science/math guidelines being developed as part of the GE Grant to JCPS).
- Instead, the growing number of tests (CATS, ACT, etc.) and the lack of alignment between K-12 tests and those given to determine readiness to do college-level work paralyzes well-intended efforts to improve performance.

#### **No System for our P-16 System**

- While other states have made great strides in trying to create a P-16 system, we have no agreement between high school and college faculty on core learning goals and requirements for basic courses like math and reading.
- “Obsolete” system to move 100% of kids to post-secondary education and/or training of some kind.

### **Promising Practices:**

#### **Growth in Dual Credit and Advanced Placement**

- Large yearly increases in the number of JCPS students earning college credit while still in high school.
- As numbers increase and college budgets shrink, colleges may face difficult funding decisions about how to support these efforts in the future.
- Opportunity to link these efforts more explicitly to Career Pathways opportunities in health care and other fields.
- Credits may still face significant hurdle in being accepted as part of a 4-year degree.

#### **Power of a Pathways Approach**

- A coherent pathway that is simple and clear would help interested parties answer “where do we fit in?” while guiding the expectations of students, parents, teachers and interested citizens.
- Early signs of progress in states like Florida and North Carolina that outline a coherent pathway for student progress – with opportunities for intervention where needed – seem very promising.

## Access and Motivational Strategies

### **Issues and Challenges:**

#### **Secondary GED Issue**

- For awhile, the state policy that allowed younger students to earn the GED (and their high school to get credit for it) helped to create an increase in the number of students earning the GED.
- But state policy shift at the state board now appears to have eliminated this possibility, eliminating a key incentive for potential drop-outs to be referred to GED programs that can help them.

#### **School-Based Decision Making Councils**

- SBDM's threaten to create a "system of schools," rather than a "school system."
- Their existence and power to set policy for each individual school makes it difficult or impossible to carry out systematic reforms (e.g. reading curriculum for Every1Reads effort had to be approved by each school's SBDM).

#### **Most Teachers Lack Knowledge of High-Demand Career Fields**

- Students get much of their information about "the real world" from influential teachers, but most of these teachers have limited experience and understanding of high-demand career fields.

#### **Career Exploration/Information/Counseling Gap**

- Tremendous gap between what community leaders would want young people to know and experience about careers and what we currently provide them.
- High school counselors face impossible caseloads – most often 400 to 1 or higher.

#### **Financial Assistance Gap Large and Growing**

- KES funding covered 100% of community college tuition in 1998. Today, it covers roughly 66% -- and is covering a smaller portion each year.
- Other sources of grant funding from the state are also not keeping pace with tuition increases, and often provide little help to adult students attending school part-time while also working.

#### **College Access Strategies**

- Strategies for in-school interventions often run headlong into school focus on academic preparation.

#### **Culture Issue**

- Huge question: how do we change the culture to make it one that values education and training – and sends that signal to students and adults?

#### **Funding Strains on After-School Providers**

- Quality after-school programs can certainly be part of "the solution," but many local providers are facing tough economic times.

### **Promising Practices:**

#### **Freshman Academies**

- Focusing on freshmen in high school with separate staffs, areas of the building and approaches.
- Designed to reduce anonymity of high school transition, connect students to caring adults.
- Potential to provide career exploration and support services

#### **Junior Achievement**

- Creating pilot project for fall 2008 implementation to help students utilize Career Cruising and Individual Learning Plans to develop better awareness of career options and how they are linked with educational choices in high school and after.

#### **ACT/EPAS/Early Warning**

- A number of efforts provide opportunity for students and parents to learn if they are “on track” for college-level work. But what if they are not – are the recovery strategies in place to move them up?
- Do parents really know and understand what this is and what it means?

#### **Career Credentialing**

- Refocus dual credit courses on specific career or transfer options
- Offer certificate level College credentials to high school students earned through dual credit courses.

#### **The Extra Mile City**

- What if Louisville decided that we will go “the extra mile” at every possible intervention point to improve academic achievement? What would it look like and what would it take?
- offer credentialled diplomas/certificates as they finish freshman year.