

Four Observations of Dr. Kent Pekel

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These are unofficial notes from Dr. Pekel's comments to the HS-College Transitions Sub-Committee of the Assessment and Accountability Working Group of MDE. I take full responsibility for any unintended errors. Dr. Fred Nolan, Co-Chair, Assessment and Accountability Working Group

1. Don't rush past the work that has been done in this area. Look at previous reports. HS-College transition work is never finished and needs a feedback loop.
2. There is some important research to be done.
 - a. What are the outcomes for students taking dual enrollment course while in HS? How do they do in college? What is their graduation rate? How many years does it take to graduate? SLEDS is the data base that can be mined for the answers to questions like this.
 - b. Hundreds of students are earning AA degrees on their own. How are they doing this and what can we learn to maximize the number of students earning AA degrees?
3. Make the information we currently have in SLEDS (State-wide Longitudinal Education Data System) very public. It has data on every MN student and district, what college each student enrolled in (private and public) and the outcomes in college of those students. This needs to be on a searchable platform for students, parents, school officials, colleges, legislators, EVERYONE in a very public way.
4. When this Sub-Committee thinks of solutions to propose, it would be useful to classify them as Deep or Broad.
 - a. Deep solutions are very targeted, resource driven, and probably beyond the reach of this sub-committee to fully articulate. You may point out useful directions for others to pursue in deep solutions.
 - b. Broad solutions can be thought of as "signals" to which people will respond, but are not in themselves detailed solutions. It is important to get the signals right, and currently this area of transitions has some very problematic and contradictory signals.

Some broad solutions the sub-committee may want to consider could be any of the following:

- i. Very few and very clear post-secondary guidance standards for students in grades 6-12.
- ii. Have HS and College faculty collaborate on model syllabi for key HS courses as models, not mandated approaches, to aligned content and skills.
- iii. Call for 7-20 individual electronic portfolios within systems that bridge the grades 12-13 divide in electronic record keeping systems.
- iv. Address the critical "cut score" issue very directly whether in required exit exams (as are currently in place) or in end of course exams as recommended by the ACCESS report.

The research in this area, while inconclusive, has shown no benefit to exit exams to most students, and significant negative impact on a smaller subset of students. If we have to have cut scores, do it at level of achievement where we are very confident that kids not at that level, are not ready for college.