

Getting the Disadvantaged to College—Q&A

Why is Texas pursuing a P-16 Initiative?

Is it because our local public schools are failing to prepare our advantaged high-achievers for college?

Is it because our local public schools are failing to prepare our disadvantaged low-achievers for college?

Is it because our high school standards are not aligned with the college standards?

Have our current Standards-Based Reform efforts helped prepare our disadvantaged low-achievers?

Our public schools have failed to prepare all our students for college.

No. The state is not intervening to help our high-achievers; our local school districts are preparing them just fine.

Yes.

No. If this were the cause then our high-achievers would likewise be ill prepared.

Yes and no.

"Even with the progress, K-8 Hispanic and African-American students lag two years behind their Anglo classmates. Eighth-grade reading proficiency is below national average, and eighth-grade reading (26 percent) and math (31 percent) proficiency are too low to support success in advanced studies.

Although more students are taking a more rigorous curriculum, the fundamental skills of many of our high school graduates have not improved. Only 18 percent of high school graduates acquire the skills necessary for college and the workplace, and 52 percent of high school graduates require remediation to do college work. There are major gaps in the pass rates between the high school exit exam and the college-ready scale score."

Jim Windham, Fort Worth Star-Telegram, October 15, 2006

Has any state-wide reform effort helped?

Yes! Charter school reform.

Our high achieving charter schools are getting the disadvantaged to college. For example, Kipp Academies and Yes Preparatory Academy.

Is there an alternative to the P-16 Initiative?

Yes. Pursue state policies that have actually worked. For example, take the principles embodied in the charter school law and apply them state-wide. Kipp's Mike Feinberg identifies five pillars for their educational success. They are:

- High Expectations
- Choice and Commitment
- More Time
- Power to Lead
- Focus on Results

Conclusion

Focus on what has actually worked. Do not expand reform efforts to higher education that have not worked—especially the current Standards-Based Reform efforts.