

I. PREFACE

B. Description of what is in this report

In Section VII of this report, the Quality Education Commission's (QEC) Best Practices Panel summarizes the outcomes of the *College Readiness Case Study Report*¹ completed in 2016 for the QEC by the Educational Policy Improvement Center (EPIC). This study provides an inside look at the actual workings of four Oregon High Schools that are overcoming the odds and achieving significantly higher graduation and postsecondary enrollment rates than their student body demographics would predict. Each school represents one of the four geographic locales as determined by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).² The *College Readiness Case Study Report* may be found in its entirety in Appendix B of this report and on-line at: (ODE/QEC website link)

As a result of this case study project, the QEC has taken a significant step forward in understanding a dynamic *teacher-guided school effectiveness process* that underpins a school's capacity to make continuous progress in achieving equitable college going rates among all student groups. The researchers also provide new insight into the mutually beneficial ways in which schools work within their unique school communities and locales to meet a shared goal of ensuring all students graduate college and career ready and have access to postsecondary education options.

II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

D.1.a. Findings: Best Practices, College Readiness

During the current 2016 QEM Report cycle, the Quality Education Commission's (QEC) Best Practice's Panel findings have been informed by the periodic review of educational research, the evidence the Panel has collected from Oregon high schools using a variety of research methodologies, expert testimony and reports, and most recently, by the findings of the 2015-16 *College Readiness Case Study Report* completed by the Educational Policy Improvement Center (EPIC) for QEC.³ This report provides an in-depth look at the reform efforts of four high schools located in different geographic locales (Crater Renaissance Academy (Suburban), Jordan Valley High School (Rural), Sheridan High School (Town), and Jefferson High School (Urban)), all of which are overcoming barriers to an equitable high school education and increasing access to postsecondary education options for all of their students.

Since 2012, the QEC Best Practices Panel has increasingly focused on investigating a collaborative *teacher-guided school effectiveness process* found in Oregon schools that are achieving significantly higher graduation and college-going rates than their student body demographics would predict. Not only has the QEC found evidence of this process at work in pockets of successful schools throughout Oregon, a review of international research provided evidence of many more pockets of schools implementing variations of this process across the United States and in high performing member countries of the Organization of Education and Cooperative Development (OECD).⁴

One of the main reasons for implementing the College Readiness Case Study Project was to find out if this collaborative *teacher-guided school effectiveness process* exists in some form in all Oregon locales, and if so, to get a clearer picture of how the process actually works on the ground in each. EPIC provides evidence that it does indeed

¹ QEC 2016 College Readiness Case Study

² NCES

³ QEC Best Practices Research review 2014

⁴ OECD 2015 Annual Report

exist in all locales to varying degrees, although it “looks” different from school to school, because it reflects the unique characteristics and culture of each school’s community and the specific learning needs of its students.

EPIC highlights the following Key Takeaways in its *College Readiness Case Study Project Report*:

- The schools shared a number of common elements. They all were able to activate and leverage social capital in service of the students. In this context social capital refers internally to the degree to which adults in the school building are able to collaborate across classrooms, departments, and services. Some examples include professional learning communities, professional development, and school care teams. Externally, social capital refers to the degree to which the school partners with outside agencies in order to serve the academic, social, and cultural needs of the school.
- Schools in the study also demonstrated an ability to use data to make sense of student achievement and strategize for future efforts based on a commitment to the values and beliefs that they espouse.
- Schools in the study shared an approach to program design that includes weighting costs and benefits around aspects of school structure, which includes the importance of local and cultural relevance.
- In each of the schools there was a profound connection between student and teachers. Students felt known by their teachers and supported to reach their postsecondary goals.

These “takeaways” are all indicators of the presence of a culture of sustained collaboration and inquiry focused on improving student achievement through a process that enables a team of teachers, regardless of their level of experience and expertise, to continuously increase their individual and collective effectiveness. Teachers who engage in this process express the belief that their students can achieve college and career readiness and in their own capacity as a classroom teacher to become increasingly better at helping them accomplish this. Further, Teachers say they are stronger as team, because they systematically and regularly improve their practice through the *teacher-guided school effectiveness process*. When teachers see evidence of the progress their students are making, their commitment to the process grows even stronger, and when students receive this feedback, their confidence grows and they “up their game” by pushing themselves to learn at more advanced levels.

...Professional capital, once you get it started, acts as a bootstrap that pulls up greater change. It has its own generative power because peers are positively influencing peers through transparent, purposeful, and energizing interaction... teachers soar not just when they want success, but when they also know how to soar, and when they know it is achievable.⁵
(Fullen and Hargreaves, 2012)

Components of this *teacher-guided school effectiveness process in Oregon* include:

- Administrators support the entire staff in ensuring leadership is distributed horizontally and vertically among administrators, teachers, other staff, families and the community
- With full support and engagement of the school’s principal, The staff develops, “owns”, and regularly revisits a coherent set of values, beliefs, vision, goals and an implementation framework based on teachers’ commitment to ensure all of their students graduate college and career ready and with postsecondary options.

⁵ Hargreaves and Fullan, p 58

- The school Administration provides a time and place for teachers to engage in the *collaborative teacher-guided effectiveness process* on a regular basis
- Teachers analyze multiple measures of assessment and other relevant evidence they collect to help them make a myriad of decisions including which strategies and interventions they will employ to meet their students' specific needs, how to make the best use of the resources they have at their disposal, how to marshal additional resources as needed, how to foster cultural competence in their classrooms, and how to include families and other community members in the interest of creating and sustaining a college-going school culture.
- Teachers lead their own professional development. They believe they can and must continuously improve their capacity to become more effective in meeting the needs of their students, and to this end, they have become very good at working collaboratively through the *teacher-guided school effectiveness process* to develop their Professional Capital. This means they regularly enhance and refine the classroom knowledge and skills they need to be more effective in meeting the specific academic needs of all their students. They work to create a culture of trust and support that helps them succeed and gradually extends to whole system reform. They also engage in critical inquiry and draw upon the insights and experiences of their colleagues to make discretionary decisions.
- The entire staff works on building cultures of communication, learning, and collaboration with their colleagues and with outside partners. These Reciprocal relationships with families and community organizations increase the social capital of the school and allow for innovative and supportive programming that activate local assets and address complex needs.
- Teachers intentionally redesign the "old system" and implement new structures (e.g., revised Freshman academies with a "Ninth Grade On Track" component, student congress for the student body, peer tutoring) designed to get to know students well and to ensure students know they are known well by the adults in the school. These structures facilitate rigor as teachers' understanding of their students deepens, and they are able to craft their instruction accordingly. In turn, students engage in the lessons that allow them to transcend basic understanding.

In order to grasp the power of this process, it is important to understand that it is not a laundry list of strategies. Rather, the toolkit of strategies a school uses are selected, vetted, and implemented through the *teacher-guided school effectiveness process*. Without this process, there isn't a way for teachers to "own" and collectively support the implementation of the strategies. Schools, Districts, and even the State have been criticized for launching one strategy or initiative after another that fizzles, because of weak implementation or implementation without fidelity. The lesson learned here, according to is that a "change initiative" cannot be "imposed on or done to" teachers. It must be done "by and with" teachers

Teachers must believe the strategies and interventions they implement will benefit their students and that they have the capacity (Professional Capital) to implement it well in their school. It is in working through this process that teachers decide if and how the strategy aligns with and is value added to the improvement priorities of their school, tailor it to meet the needs of their students, secure the resources (e.g., time to work on integrating the strategy into lesson, coaching) they need to implement it, evaluate its impact on an ongoing basis, and modify it when necessary. In other words, strategies are only as effective as a teacher has the capacity to make them.

A recent meta-analysis conducted by John Hattie of the University of Melbourne⁶ synthesized the results of more than 65,000 research reports on the effects of hundreds of interventions on over 250 million students and found that most of them make little or no lasting difference in student learning. Interestingly enough, the top four are learned and practiced by teachers who meet collaboratively with their colleagues and engage in the *teacher-guided school effectiveness process* at its best. It naturally follows that they would become very good at incorporating these strategies into their teaching over time:

STRATEGY	Effect in additional months' progress	Relative costliness (5x\$ = most expensive)
Feedback to students	8 months	\$
Meta-cognition and self-regulation*	8 months	\$
Peer tutoring	5 months	\$
Collaborative Group Learning	5 months	\$
Early years intervention	5 months	\$\$\$\$
Homework (secondary level)	5 months	\$
Mastery learning	5 months	\$
One to one instruction	5 months	\$\$\$\$
Oral language interventions	5 months	\$
Peer tutoring	5 months	\$
Reading comprehension strategies	5 months	\$

Source: Education Endowment Foundation

*Helping students think about their own learning more explicitly

There is, in fact, a growing body of literature that points to the powerful impact of effective teaching and disproves the outdated notion that great teachers are born, not made. Stanford Economist, Eric Hanusek, has estimated that students taught by a teacher at the 90th percentile for effectiveness learn 1.5 years worth of material, while those taught by a teacher at the 10th percentile learn .5 years worth of material.⁷ Harvard University Researcher, Thomas Kane, estimates that if African-American students were all taught by the top 25% of teachers the achievement gap between blacks and whites would close within eight years. He also estimates that if the average American teacher were as good as those at the top quartile the gap in test scores (OECD/PISA) between American and Asian countries would be closed within four years.⁸

The good news is that average teachers can become great teachers given the right set of circumstances in their teaching environment and the personal belief that they have the capacity to become a great teacher. Current research holds that this belief system is critical to the teaching professions and that committed collaboration and sustained inquiry get results. In a seminal meta-analysis of teacher effectiveness conducted in the UK, researchers found that “Teachers’ sense of self-efficacy is tied to their belief that they could make a difference in the learning and achievement of their students.” Further, 80% of the teachers in all professional life phases found leadership,

⁶ <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/evidence/about-the-toolkits/about-the-toolkits/>

⁷ Stanford, Hanusek

⁸ Harvard, Kane

colleagues and culture to be key influences, positive or negative, upon their capacity to be effective. Professional development was found to be a consistently positive influence on teachers across all professional life phases as well. The main dissatisfaction for over 75% of the teachers was that there wasn't enough time available to reflect on their teaching and to learn from colleagues. Collaborative learning was highly rated by teachers in the study.⁹

If we want to improve teaching and teachers, we must... improve the conditions of teaching that shape them, as well as the cultures and communities of which they are a part. We must invest in developing teachers' capabilities and give them time to sharpen these capabilities to a high standard. It's no good just hunting for a few more hidden gems for teaching—people who might possess unseen talents or who have been hiding in other walks of life. We must develop more professional capital among the vast majority of teachers. Fullan and Hargreaves, 2012)

II.E. RECOMMENDATIONS (from the Best Practices Panel):

a.iii: High School Graduation and

a.iv: College Readiness

*1. The QEC Best Practices Panel Recommends a cost/effectiveness analysis be conducted to determine, and if appropriate, modify the QEM to incorporate the real cost of teacher collaboration and other resources used by schools that achieving significantly higher graduation and postsecondary enrollment rates than their student body demographics would predict. (Note: Consider combining this with the EPIC recommendation to conduct a statewide survey examining the frequency of occurrence and diversity of implementation of the practices identified in the case studies to determine the breadth of practice and whether these practices correlate with metrics of college and career readiness at the school level.) **Could this be evaluated using the Student Achievement Model?***

Rationale: The findings of the College Readiness Case Study Project combined with past research of the QEC provides evidence of a process that effective schools engage in to realize increasingly equitable and improved graduation and college-going rates for their students. It is a process through which teachers consult to improve the progress their students are making and through which they ensure they continuously improve their effectiveness as classroom teachers. They also use this process for a myriad of other decisions including how to utilize resources cost effectively in the service of their students. All of this takes time, a commodity that is virtually impossible to find within a teachers workday given current school schedules in Oregon High Schools.

To this end schools marshal inside and outside resources (e.g., grant funding, coaching, professional development networks, postsecondary and community partnerships) to secure the time and expertise they need to implement the *teacher-guided school effectiveness process*. Good examples of this include Chalkboard's CLASS Project,¹⁰ which currently provides resources and expertise to over 50 districts utilizing monies from the State's School District Collaboration Fund authorized through Senate Bill 252, and the Oregon Business Council/E3 Small Schools Initiative Project for which the Gates Foundation and Meyer Memorial Trust provided years of funding and expert coaching to Woodburn High School and Crater Renaissance Academy grant funding for the transformation of their schools.

According to the Oregon Education Association and Oregon Department of Education's jointly sponsored 2014 Oregon Teaching, Empowering, Leading and Learning (TELL) Survey, however, only 51.1% of Oregon teacher

⁹ Variations in Teachers' Work, Lives and Effectiveness, Christopher Day.p xll, xv, Xiv,

¹⁰ Chalkboard

respondents declared they have enough time to collaborate with their colleagues, and 62% indicated their school provides ongoing opportunities to work with colleagues to refine teaching practices.

These findings beg the question: *What is successful reform costing in Oregon's neediest schools, to what degree do they depend on funding outside of their basic school support, and what are the implications of this for the QEM?*

2. Identify and research those specific practices, processes and partnerships that create a bridge between high school and higher education and result in equitable rates and levels of postsecondary degree and/or certification for historically underserved student populations.

Rationale: The recently released Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Commission's (HECC) Report, *Disparities in Higher Education Workgroup: Report and Recommendations*,¹¹ provides evidence of under enrollment among populations of students who are traditionally marginalized, underserved and underrepresented in higher education and those students who identify as white. It also found disparities between and among Oregon's universities and community colleges in addressing this issue through a process designed to increase the overall cultural competency/fluency of staff.

The QEC has expressed a desire to identify and research those specific practices, processes, and partnerships that create a bridge between high school and higher education and result in equitable rates and levels of postsecondary degree and/or certification completion for historically underserved students during its 2016-18 research cycle. Of particular interest are those partnerships involving secondary schools, community colleges, universities, and community outreach programs such as the Portland Community College and Jefferson High School Early College and Oregon State University's Open Campus project, Juntos.¹² The findings and recommendations of the HECC, make this research all the more imperative.

3. Expand the QEC's portfolio of case studies to explore, broaden and disseminate the stories of current practices and processes that are in place across successful high schools, using newer data, alternative measures to define college and career readiness, and/or a targeted focus on specific factors (note: Explore whether this could be combined with #2)

Rationale: Case study findings are informative but limited to just four schools. Expanding the current portfolio of case study schools will provide valuable information to all stakeholders about the experiences and learnings of a more diverse and geographically representative collection of Oregon schools that are closing achievement gaps. It will also provide the QEC with the ability to address questions that surfaced as a result of the findings of the first round of case studies. EPIC suggests expanding the QEC's portfolio of schools by adding larger high schools, more and varied rural schools, tribal schools, charter/alternative schools, schools with a large Hispanic population and schools identified using a different composition of factors to define success in college and career readiness.

II.E. b: Past Recommendations—how do they fit in with current?

1. These are consistent with expansion of the QEM to a P-20 continuum of education
2. They build upon the results and recommendations of EPIC and Commissioner

¹¹ HBB3308 Disparities in Higher Education Final Report

¹² OSU Open Campus Juntos (<http://opencampus.oregonstate.edu/programs/juntos/>)