

THE PRINCIPAL'S RESIDENCY

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This was a journey that enlightened my perspective of school administration and leadership. As a result, I will take back and apply what I have experienced, and make all efforts to provide leadership that will create an environment and culture of learning and support that will not fail our children as they begin their journey to a much better tomorrow.



Principal Michelle Brantley

PRINCIPAL AS LEARNER

Professional development lies at the heart of the Middle College National Consortium (MCNC). For it is through our own on-going learning that we may better inspire and engage our staff and students. Our students are those who have been historically underserved and

underrepresented among college graduates. They are poor or minority or English language learners or simply unchallenged and unmotivated, who, if ignored, slip through the cracks. Our teachers hold our students, even those who come to us under-prepared, to the academic and emotional demands of college. Our schools operate within the nexus of two disparate and historically separate cultures, high school and college. Navigating this cultural divide and engaging the faculty to do this work requires a principal who is willing to embrace a new vision of leadership. (MB)

The Consortium provides numerous opportunities for the growth and development of our entire community of students, principals, teachers, counselors, and college

partners. MCNC fosters professional development in each of our schools, sponsors Summer Institutes, regional Technical Assistance conferences, Critical Friends Reviews, on-site and school-based coaching and an annual Student Leadership Initiative. In addition to these, the Consortium has specifically designed the annual Winter Leadership Institute and the Principal's Residency for our principals.

Richard Elmore, in his article, Building a New Structure for School Leadership discusses the principles that form the basis of Distributed Leadership. These principles are the driving force of our Principal's Residencies:

1. The most important function of school leadership must be the improvement of instructional practice and performance.
2. It is the job of leadership to create the climate and the structures that allow teachers to learn from each other.
3. Leaders should be able to model the learning and practices they expect from others.
4. Leaders need to recognize that true learning is based on expertise, not formal roles.

THE RESIDENCY EXPERIENCE

The Residency experience, one piece of the Consortium's Professional Development program, aims to positively transform our schools and the lives of the students we serve. The application is school based, practical, and tied directly to the needs of the individual principals. All sessions are led and debriefed by school-based practitioners – administrators, teachers, and counselors-- with an eye towards applying the practice to the visiting principals' own schools. The visiting principal spends time in as many as three different schools each with a unique mission and each serving a different population of students.

The visiting principal has the opportunity to observe a school as it is. No school is perfect. We are all in the process of "becoming". What we hope the visitor will take away, however, is to experience the strategies each school uses to take on these challenges. We hope that the visiting principal applies what they see to the context

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CONSORTIUM MATTERS

By Cecilia Cunningham, Executive Director, Middle College National Consortium



Cecilia Cunningham
Director, MCNC

We were in the office this week trying once again to determine the difference between a vision statement and a mission statement. We are redoing our web site and we want to get it right. Kathy Moran, the historian among us, referred to the California Mission Trail, which we all laughed at, but it does serve as a good metaphor. The Mission Trail was built so the missionaries could carry the vision of their religion to the indigenous people of California. This thinking led us to examine our own vision statement "Driving Educational Reform". Does it really capture the specific of what we envision for students? In our work with middle colleges, we learned that the design of the school structure positively impacted student outcomes and changed teachers' attitudes and capacity to reach all students, helping them achieve good academic success.

With the Early College Initiative, we have learned a lot more about the experiences that high school students need to successfully launch them on the path to earn a family living wage. Our early data indicates all students benefit from taking college courses while still in high school; the preparation for and support during the taking of these college classes ensures successful outcomes equally for males and females; and there is no achievement gap by race or ethnicity.

Teachers' capacity to help students has been enhanced by working with college faculty. Many middle colleges have developed deep relationships with college faculty

so that they are examining college texts and assignments, modifying high school curriculum and sharing writing rubrics. In some instances, college assignments and teaching strategies have been significantly improved by feedback from the high school teachers.

Doing real college work beyond the initial introductory college courses like the standard Study Skills offered to most dual enrolled students has made the difference. It allows them to apply the college skills identified by David Conley like time management, self-advocacy, extensive persuasive writing, reading technical texts, and applying new knowledge.

So back to my original question. If we believe in continuous improvement then our mission should be changing to incorporate what we have learned. Isn't our vision really to launch college ready students by starting college before high school graduation? Is it to enable our students to accumulate a substantial number of transferable college credits so that they and post-secondary institutions really know that they are college ready?

Is it time for MCNC to be more specific about this educational reform model?

Greenville Technical Charter High School Earns 2010 National Blue Ribbon Award

"Everybody graduates. Everybody goes to college after graduation. No wonder it was honored as one of the nation's best schools." (R Barnett, Greenville News)

Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, says that schools such as Greenville Technical Charter High School, chosen as National Blue Ribbon recipients, are models of excellence that other schools can emulate. Winners are either academically superior or demonstrate dramatic gains in student achievement. South Carolina Superintendent of Education Jim Rex said, "This award signifies their success in making it possible for each and every student to succeed, and it shows that they have outstanding administrators, creative teachers and dedicated staff members."

"There are a lot of things we do that could be done in any school," says Principal Fred Crawford, "but we just have the will to do it."



GTCHS Class of 2010:

- 99% graduation rate
- \$8,422,374.00 in scholarship offerings
- 1 National Merit Scholar, 1 Coca-Cola Scholar
- 3.25 average college GPA
- 8 graduates received Associate's Degrees
- 100% enrolled to attend college



JUST KIDS: CHALLENGE TO CHANGE

Justen Thompson, Founder and CEO is a Greenville native, who grew up in the New Washington Heights community that Just Kids serves. After attending the **Greenville Technical Charter High School** and then South Carolina State University, where he majored in Business Management, He came back to his hometown determined to make a difference

In the midst of despair, an oasis of learning and mentoring is changing lives in Greenville County, South Carolina. A new program called Just Kids is looking to change that stigma.

place. That's why he started Just Kids, a summer and after-school program for children in grades K-8 that is designed to steer them away from destructive behavior.

Thompson sees daily reminders of the competition for the hearts and minds of young people. Several childhood friends are in prison today. Some have died young. In 2004, a best friend he had grown up with was murdered. After this experience, He decided to form a 501(c)(3) non-profit **Just Kids**. His desire was so strong that he took a leap of faith by using \$10,000 of his own money for startup costs. "I feel like it's important because children are our future and without children we have no future. These kids are at-risk and all they need is guidance to be successful," said Thompson. He knows firsthand what the young people from this community are facing when it comes to their environment. In a community characterized by violence, crime, prostitution, drug addiction, gang affiliations, and other social vices, the kids who live here are at risk of being victims. Justen realizes that to improve the community you yourself must give back.

Although he loves to restore classic cars, especially old Chevys, lately, his attention has turned from older cars to young people. The best way to do people restoration, Thompson says, is to prevent people problems in the first

The mission of Just Kids is to improve the potential of at risk children by providing life skills training and individualized researched based academic and behavior support strategies to help them achieve their potential.

Most of the activities are fun, but all of them have the goal of providing behavioral or academic support to the children so that they are more successful at school, at home, after-school, and in life in general. This support is provided through individual behavior plans, recreational activities, field trips, and more. Just Kids aims to create healthy relationship between staff and the kids by a structured mentoring program capable of assisting the at risk children in defining goals, providing behavior intervention, and teaching life skills

In the After-School program, children are taught how to be respectful and interact. We teach the kids who may or may not have "developmental deficits" about the social implications and its consequences involved in anti-social behaviors. Life skills are taught individually and in small groups. The goal is to improve a child's ability to be productive, responsible and a caring citizen.

One of the philosophies of Just Kids is to uphold the saying "sound mind in a sound body" by involving our kids in sports and other recreational activities. This is meant to make them stay fit and healthy and even to pursue sporting events as a career.

Just Kids encourages kids in our program to be actively involved in community development projects and to join clubs and organizations that uphold good behavior standards. It instills a sense of usefulness, a sense of belonging, and a sense of volunteering in the community. We achieve this by sending kids to prep food at soup kitchen centers and help serve food as well as clean-up projects around our center and in the community.

Thompson's view is "it's my mission to turn the kids' visions and dreams into realities".

SEMINAR: A SUPPORT PROGRAM FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS TAKING COLLEGE COURSES

By Claudia Hindo, Elisabeth Barnett, and Jennifer E. Kim,
The National Center for Restructuring Education, Schools, and Teaching (NCREST)

Education policy agendas are calling for high schools to blend rigorous curriculum with supports to help students be college-ready upon graduation. Research suggests that assistance programs incorporating personalization and supportive features similar to those found in advisory programs, where small groups of students work closely with an adult to receive ongoing targeted assistance, contribute to higher gains in achievement. A key aspect of Middle College-Early College High Schools (MC-ECs) is the implementation of academic and social supports.

To assist students taking college courses, MC-ECs offer seminar, designed to help students “unpack” college-level coursework, navigate college systems, and receive personal and social support. At MC-ECs, seminar is viewed as a means to provide students with the additional support needed to succeed in college.

In the 2009-2010 academic year, MCNC and NCREST conducted a study of seminar implementation at MC-ECs, with particular interest in how seminar may increase the success of college course-taking students.

Overview

To learn about the key design elements of seminar, coaches from MCNC and researchers from NCREST conducted site visits to 11 Early College High Schools. Interviews were conducted with approximately 10 administrators, 40 teachers and counselors, and about 100 college course-taking high school students. An interesting finding was the variability in organization and content found in seminar implementation – including what schools have chosen to name this support. However, every MC-EC visited held structured sessions of some type designed to support students in their college classes.

NCREST developed three major categories that framed data analysis: design features, goals and activities, and the perceived value of seminar. Within these categories, emerging themes were identified.

Design Features

Frequency and duration. In all but one school, seminars occur 1- 4 times per week, ranging from 40-120 minutes per session. Many schools schedule seminar on days alternating with college course(s)

meeting times. In a number of schools, individual students are programmed into a seminar on day(s) and times fitting with the student’s schedule.

Targeted students. Seminar was originally designed to support college course-taking students. Five schools offer additional “introduction to college” style seminars for students who have not yet begun college courses (i.e. visits to the partner college campus, learning study strategies and academic planning, career/major exploration). In two schools, attendance is required for selected students, based on teacher or counselor recommendations (informed by academic performance).

Credit and assessment. Six schools offer seminar for high school credit. Five schools require students to attend a non-credit seminar. None of the seminars involve grading students on material learned. Rather, students receive pass/fail marks. In a number of schools, seminar is attached to incentives such as priority college course registration or it is designated as a requirement to graduate. However, all schools maintain attendance, participation, or assignment records, to help determine whether students receive a pass for graduation and/or credit.

Materials and curriculum. Few seminars utilize a specific curriculum. In most schools, seminar uses teacher and/or counselor-developed lessons addressing particular topics such as “college knowledge” (i.e. using syllabi, time management, self-advocacy, using college textbooks). As the semester goes on, seminar often becomes a setting where students are provided with help in specific courses or use the time to study and do homework. At this point, high school and college texts become the main resources.

In schools where seminar is directly tied to a college course, the curriculum is typically designed to complement and reinforce college course content. Still other seminars incorporate supplemental materials such as test preparation books and college readiness or “introduction to college” publications.

High school-college collaboration. Schools collaborate with college partners in a variety of ways. Some schools work with colleges through curriculum planning, co-teaching, and academic performance meetings. Often, high school teachers and college instructors exchange contact information to develop a system for

tracking student behavior and academic progress. In one school, seminar teachers' attend college course sessions and plan seminar lessons accordingly.

Goals and activities

While seminar implementation varied, perceptions of the goals and value of seminar did not. Across schools, respondents indicated that the goals of seminar were one or more of the following: a) to give additional time for academic assistance, b) to instruct and reinforce key college readiness skills and behaviors, and c) to provide information and help with college and financial aid applications.

Seminar goals and types of activities

GOALS	SAMPLE ACTIVITIES
Academic support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students work independently, in pairs, or small groups to work on homework or study Use of library or computer labs Teacher or High school/college tutors work one-on-one or in small groups Content support through math, literacy, technology exercises and assignments
College readiness skills and behaviors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Test preparation/test-taking skills Questioning techniques and problem-solving strategies Socratic seminars Research and writing exercises (note-taking, managing, producing, and editing work) Exercises in goal-setting, time management, study strategies, public speaking Contextual college knowledge/Navigating college systems & campus
College application & financial aid assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussions/exercises related to college and financial aid application processes (researching colleges & universities and majors, writing essays/personal statements, asking for letters of recommendation, applying for scholarships and federal aid)

The Value of Seminar

Teachers felt that the additional time for academic help has positively influenced student performance in college courses. Some schools cited seminar as contributing to higher college GPAs, college entrance exam scores, and increased pass rates and credit accumulation.

It is apparent that students need a structure for a place to study and a mentor to guide them through studying.

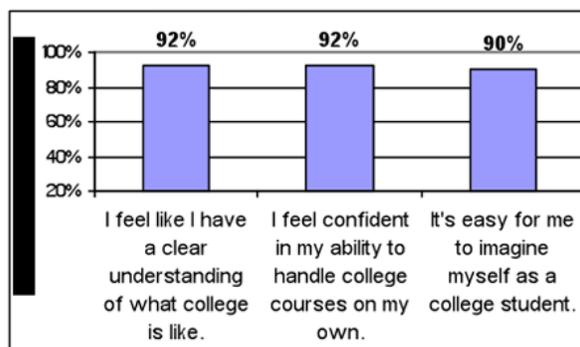
Removing seminar would be detrimental to some students taking [college] courses for the first time.

Students believe having an academic assistance system and a sense of care and high expectations from high school teachers are the most important features of seminar. Students appreciate having extra time for homework and studying, peers becoming academic resources for one another, and a having a forum for sharing college course-related issues, ideas, questions, and opinions. These feelings were expressed in the following selected quotes from student focus groups:

The seminar teacher helped build my confidence by explaining the college course work, and I did better in the

class. It helps to have material explained in a different way to better understand. It's good to have a space to share information and questions with everyone.

When [teachers] check up on you, you feel like they care about you and you want to make them proud and make yourself proud.



Two other benefits were cited by teachers, counselors, and administrators. **First, they have observed the emergence of a college going culture, as evidenced by student engagement in “college speak,”** meaning informal and formal conversations about college-related issues such as credit accumulation, college majors, GPAs, course offerings, advocating for themselves in interactions with college faculty, and viewing themselves as college students. These perceptions parallel findings from an NCREST survey of 1098 MCNC graduating students.

A second benefit cited by practitioners is the way a system for student performance “check-in” is embedded in seminar. Seminar gives teachers a scheduled time in which to regularly ask students about progress in courses, provide them with assignment and deadline reminders, and intervene when necessary (i.e. refer students to formal tutoring, communicate with the college instructor).

Implications

Ensuring that high school students become college and career ready is an ever-present education policy concern. This study describes ways that MC-ECs provide an additional support for college course-taking students. Findings show that although seminar is structured in varied ways, students and practitioners alike perceive a positive impact. Studying the structure and effects of seminar can help schools make decisions about how to best prepare students for success in college level coursework.

NCREST is a research and development organization at Teachers College, Columbia University in New York City. Please contact NCREST at (212) 678-3432 for more information.

NUMBERS, NEWS AND NOTES

Harbor Teacher Preparation Academy Honored as 2010 National Title I Distinguished School

The National Title I Distinguished Schools program is a project of the National Title I Association. Harbor Teacher Preparation Academy was chosen by the California State Department of Education based on its outstanding performance in ELA and mathematics test scores. Only one school per state is named each year, making this an especially significant national accolade for Harbor's school, staff, and students.

As a result of this honor, Harbor will be invited to attend the 2011 National Title I Conference in Tampa, Florida from January 31 to February 3, 2011 and will be placed in the "Selected 2010 Distinguished Schools" group on the National Title I Association's website www.nationaltitleiassociation.org.

Principal Mattie Adams said, "I was pleasantly surprised when I received a telephone call from the State Department of Education informing me that Harbor Prep has been selected to receive this recognition. We are the Secondary representative. Our students earned the highest ELA and mathematics test scores of all (except one gifted school) secondary Title I schools."

Local Student Elected to National Beta Office

By Brenda Britt, Beta Club sponsor



If Carla Littlejohn, a senior at Greenville Technical Charter High School, is asked to write about what she did last summer, she can share her adventures at the National Beta Convention in Louis-

ville, Kentucky. Littlejohn is the first Charter school student and only the third African-American female to serve on the national level.

Beta is the premier leadership student organization in the nation. Each club sets up its own service activities. The chapter at GTCHS works with the Red Cross, Samaritan's Purse and added the Cancer SBK group and a local group that sends personal items to soldiers.

Littlejohn had only five members and two teacher sponsors from the GTCHS club in attendance to support her as National Beta Secretary. She knew before arriving in Louisville that she needed to take a strong leadership role to gain the votes. Sending out letters asking for support from other SC schools attending, sharing the GTCHS bus with another high school, and garnering support from other states were all part of her plan. "I would just walk around the Kentucky Convention Arena introducing myself to Betas, asking about their trip, and telling them about my candidacy."

"It feel so excited, and it is an honor to be able to serve," Littlejohn said. "This is not just about me, but the Betas and teachers who supported me, and the parents who planned the bake sales and other fundraisers to help us all get to Louisville."

Edgecombe Early College High School recognized

By Tony Habit, President, North Carolina New Schools Project

TARBORO, NC — State Superintendent June Atkinson recently recognized high schools in North Carolina for achieving a perfect or near perfect graduation rate. Worthy of recognition are those schools that are setting an example with graduation rates that clearly indicate the same kind of laser-like focus on the finish line.

Sixty-four high schools in the state, including **Edgecombe Early College High School, graduated at least 90 percent of their class of 2010**, significantly outpacing the state's overall graduation rate of 74.2 percent. That, along with ensuring all graduates possess the skills and knowledge to succeed in college and careers are the twin objectives that must drive everything high schools do. The high graduation numbers from these innovative schools includes achievement by an often-overlooked group of students, those who are under-represented in higher education because of race or family income.

Upcoming Events

**MCNC Professional Development Institute
Thursday, July 7 – Sunday, July 10, 2011**

Jersey City, N.J.

For more information contact
thoffmann@mcnc.us

GENESYS WORKS: IT REALLY DOES

By Brandi Russell, Junior, Challenge ECHS

Monday through Friday at twelve, six Challenge Early College High School (CECHS) senior students pack up their cars and head off campus. They're not going to lunch with their friends; they're not going to their jobs at the Galleria. Raquel Azcue, Shanika Parris, Denise Flores, Elvis Jimenez, Tayler Milburn, and Jasmine Blackmon are going to their Houston, Texas offices and businesses.

"I was nervous, extremely nervous, because I wasn't sure what they wanted me to do," said Raquel Azcue, who along with the others, participates in a pilot program known as Genesys Works. The program, located in Houston and Chicago works with the students to help them reach their goals for the future.

The Challenge students are currently working as interns within different companies as information technology (I.T.) or accounting technicians. Their tasks range from configuring and imaging laptops to working under system analysts. Through this program, the students are gaining an advanced approach to the workforce after high school graduation, and they learn about working within their chosen department.

Not only does Genesys help the students learn how to work in their department, but "it prepares us for the future with networking and working with teams," said Tayler Milburn about the benefits of Genesys.

Kanavis McGhee, teacher and Genesys coordinator, extolled the different benefits of Genesys and the connection it has to Challenge. "I think our missions kind of correlate with one another... it's bringing some classroom relevance to the students," he remarked, "They're beginning to use some of what they've acquired in a classroom now out into the world."

Another benefit of Genesys is their Thursday night College Connection which helps the interns from different schools meet, as well as help them with college and scholarship applications.

"I like to do I.T. work, it's basically what I wanted to do since I was twelve. It's hard at times, but it is worth it," Elvis Jimenez said. The qualification process for the internship was rigorous and intense. Over three hundred students applied, competing for few open spots. Qualification was a three series process that

weeded out the people that weren't fit for the program. Before students could apply, they needed a teacher who was willing to recommend them.

Then the process proceeded with an interview, and afterward they send a letter to the school asking students to return for orientation. The last part was the training, which started in June and continued into mid-August. Not everyone made it into the program, but just having the training can be beneficial to their future. "Even if I hadn't placed [in the program], the amount of training and the certificate allows me to have a better chance of getting a job individually," Tayler said about the advantage of the training and the program itself.

Denise Flores is grateful for how the program helps them now as well as in their future. She remarked, "I think Genesys is a pretty awesome opportunity... you can't really say that a bunch of high school students get to work in a huge company like Genesys. We actually get trained in the fields we choose, and we actually get jobs in that. The training is a continuous learning experience."

The students also learned a valuable lesson about the workforce. Jasmine Blackmon said, "I realized that sometimes having a job is about what you have to do, not what you want to. You won't always have fun." This helped her and the other students see the realism in their future.



Principal Justin Fuentes looks on as Works interns Shanika Parris, Elvis Jimenez, Jasmine Blackmon, Denise Flores, Raquel Azcue, and Taylor Milburn explain the positions they hold at their respective companies, during a school assembly.

BUILDING COGNITIVE SKILLS IN ALL CONTENT AREAS

By Melinda Zeares, Geometry Teacher, Middle College High School at El Centro College, Dallas, TX

College Readiness must be the educational buzzword of the decade. Everywhere, educators, parents, politicians, and the Media are talking about how best to ensure that more students not only go to college, but also are successful in the endeavor. College and career ready research has now reached the point of being overwhelming, especially to the teacher “in the trenches”.

One of the leading researchers is Dr. David Conley whose Educational Policy Improvement Center (EPIC) provides a rich array of research, publications, tools, and techniques and has been a catalyst for change nationwide. While college readiness is a complex topic involving many dimensions, helping students develop Key Cognitive Strategies is one of the essential components. (Conley, 2010)

One approach to college readiness is to establish Early Colleges. Walk into an early college classroom and you will see kids working collaboratively as they write and discuss and answer challenging questions from their teachers and peers. You will see accelerated learning where teachers scaffold their lessons to help students master difficult concepts at an early age. On the surface, we are differentiated. We are implementing a variety of instructional strategies we have been trained to use and are told these strategies will develop the key cognitive skills our students need. Ask classroom teachers, though, to name the number one thing they need and they will most likely tell you “the right materials and the right activities.” If students sit in collaborative groups to write about and discuss a low-level worksheet, they would probably learn more from well-delivered direct teaching.

This article offers some of those activities combined with ideas for using them in combination with effective teaching methods to develop the cognitive skills. I hope they will serve as a conduit to your own “bag of tricks” and help stimulate your creativity so you can write your own customized to your discipline. It’s the children who will benefit!

Activities

First, as a framework, let me explain that I prepare a weekly calendar for my students. Each day, the calendar contains the Essential Question(s) for the lesson, the Essential Problem we will do in class, the Prepare for Class assignment, book pages for reference, and such things as scheduled quizzes, tests, and school events.

Activity 1: Prepare for Class (PFC)

Format: assigned daily – done at home

Rationale: College instructors want students to be prepared for class. To a high school student, “prepare for class” means “do your homework.” To a college instructor, it means, “read ahead.”

Description: Students are taught to use a Cornell Notes form at home to read ahead in their textbook, take notes, write questions they do not understand, and write a summary of what they learned. The readings are carefully chosen to scaffold the study-ahead habit necessary for college success. In class, students use their PFC forms during group work, while the teacher is presenting content to the class as a whole, and to ask clarification questions of their peers and the teacher.



Ruben, Michelle, and Zenadia (front) use the results of their class preparation to get ready to report on their learning. Learning to prepare in advance for class time is a vital college readiness skill.

Activity 2: Collaborative Work

Format: assigned daily in some way – always done in class

Rationale: Research shows that students learn best from each other

Description: The teacher prepares or finds a number of problems that follow from the PFC work done the previous evening. Using only their PFC forms, they work all problems on the sheet. The number of problems should match the number of groups. They first review the problems and have a chance to ask for clarification from the teacher and the class. After all problems are worked, one problem is randomly assigned to each group. Students are then given just a few minutes to prepare chart paper with the work from their assigned problem. Groups are chosen to present their assigned problem to the class. Students must take notes from the presentations and ask questions of the presenters and the class, not the teacher. Students, not the teacher, answer all questions.

Activity 3: What's Essential?

Format: Essential Problem done most days – done in class

Rationale: Students learn by doing and teaching; not by watching the teacher do and teach.

Description: The teacher writes or finds at least one assignment that requires previous knowledge to be used along with new knowledge and is an essential product. To judge understanding the Essential Problem must be worked independently first. This is followed by collaborative sharing and reporting. The difference in Activity 2 and Activity 3 is in the type of problems chosen. For the first round of collaborative group work following the PFC, the problems are focused on the new knowledge and skills just learned. The work helps students master the new material. Essential Problems, on the other hand, include previous knowledge and help students integrate and synthesize their learning across lessons. The important thing is that the teacher identifies the most essential problems and products for the course and then systematically and purposefully ensures that students have mastered them.



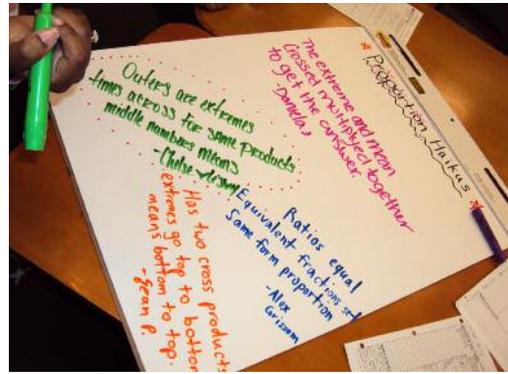
Sean, Daniela, Alex, and Chelse collaborate on problems they will later present to the class. Frequent use of collaborative group activities, writing to learn, and problem formulation help develop cognitive skills essential for college success.

Activity 4: Poetry Isn't Just for English Class

Format: done periodically – usually in class but may be a project prepared outside class

Rationale: The use of poetry can be a powerful tool for students to use to summarize concepts or learn vocabulary.

Description: Working collaboratively, students are challenged to write a poem that captures the essence of the concept they are learning and/or illustrates the use of essential vocabulary. Being a math teacher, I start with an adaptation of the Haiku, what I consider the most “mathematical” poetry form. Other forms, such as the diamante, cinquain, and “I Am” poem may effectively be used in all subject areas.



Haikus written to learn proportion vocabulary in geometry class are displayed on chart paper. Students are taught to use “Writing to Learn” in the daily study.

Activity 5: Brain Organizer Form

Format: used for the Essential Problem – used in class and sometimes for homework

Rationale: Writing to learn is a research-proven method of helping students think about what they are learning and define that learning in writing for the sake of learning, rather than for the sake of writing.

Description: This activity provides a structure for writing to learn that I have designed with my students. It is useful for math problem solving. My kids like to call it a “brain organizer”. They are asked to follow 5 steps in solving any complicated problem, such as their Essential Problem of the day or test problems.

Brain Organizer Form (BOF)

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. Observe

Write what you see & recognize in the problem. What is given?

What questions need to be answered? Number as you list.

4. Do the Math

5. Explain What You Did

Now solve and explain. Follow your plan.

2. Question

3. Plan

What does it mean you must do? Must have at least one step for each question.

CHECK FOR COMPLETE

To view and download the template for all these activities, go to <https://sites.google.com/a/middlecollegedallas.org/ms-zeares-classes/mcnc-files>

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RESIDENCY *(Continued from page 1)*

of their own setting and develops structures that make sense for them. It is distinctive in that it provides visiting principals with images of what is possible. The Residency provides a block of time for self-reflection and examination. It deliberately provides the luxury of time, a block of a few days to give principals time for self-reflection, conversation with peers and exposure to new ideas.

Participants observe various academic classes, an early college seminar, an inquiry based lesson, House/Advisory, and developmental group. They could serve as a member of a student's graduation portfolio panel, participate in a staff meeting or a professional development workshop, and sit in on a teacher's peer evaluation review panel. They can meet with a group of teachers to learn how they plan classroom activities, assess students or participate in school governance and meet with a group of students to ask them questions about the school.

Finally, the visiting principal is asked to write a self-reflection. This allows the visiting principals to think more deeply about their experiences and to explore ways to apply what was learned during the Residency to their own schools. It models and promotes the importance of reflective writing as an essential part of instruction and professional development at the school level.

THE RESIDENCY AS AN EXTENSION OF THE DESIGN PRINCIPLES

The Residency experience grows out of and is embedded within the MCNC Design Principles. They state our beliefs on how to create schools that best serve students. More than three decades of working with students and teachers have enabled us to develop and refine these principles. Data driven research has helped us test the validity of our assumptions. With over thirty schools in the consortium, these principles are now serving schools in every region of the country and in communities that span the rural, suburban, and urban spectrum. Transcending local contexts and cultures, these Design Principles include: the Power of the Site, Teaching and Learning, Student Assessment, Student Support, Democratic School Governance, and Professional Development.

In their self-reflections Principals commented on all elements of the Design Principles. Part one of this article focuses on three of those principles. In the next issue we will complete the remaining Principles, describe the evaluation of the program, and reveal some next steps for the Principal's Residency.

REFLECTIONS ON THE DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Teaching and Learning: Schools engage students in rigorous, in-depth academic work, using active intellectual inquiry and sustained writing and revision in all classes. Learning is meaningful, engaging, and celebrated.



Principal Michael Sinclair

At all three schools, two elements stood out the most. One was the blending of grade levels. The second was the blending of content areas such as the math and science and humanities. Due to the tight restrictions in my state, the flexibility apparent in NY may not be possible, but the concept is. I will be arranging the subject areas to mix sciences and humanities of similar grades. Planning periods will also be arranged to allow subject areas to plan together. (MS)

The New York articulations of excellent instruction for a particular type of student population, as well as the good supports necessary for these students to thrive, are exemplars, from which to take much good wisdom. In particular, the time in New York reinforces that depth of understanding ought to trump breadth of knowledge 99 times out of 100; and that the supports we offer students in order to be successful need to be systematic—structured, but easily redesigned as each student's needs change. (EM)

I observed a teacher provide a different approach to the study of vocabulary. He produced various sounds while students had their eyes closed and they were to write the sound they heard. This was great for listening and mentally visualizing words, and just the association between the two. (DB)

What the school is as a community of teachers and learners is evident in the work on display throughout the entire school. The aesthetic quality of the school is characterized by student work. The kids' art, writing, research, etc. (which were are tangible representations of their thinking) fill the school. I remember thinking that I could "see" the students' minds as I moved from classroom to classroom because there were carefully crafted protocols in place that allowed students to engage in true intellectual discourse and produce quality work. I think that pushing pedagogical structures to be more inquiry-based is a need at our school; an example is training in strategies like Socratic circles that challenge

students to converse with each other in ways that build their critical thinking skills. (MB)

Student Assessment: Schools design assessments that provide multiple opportunities for students to show what they know and can do; the assessments grow out of classroom activities; and provide on-going feedback to the school community.

The structures of Student Assessment—portfolio requirements, rubrics, and energies invested in waiving superfluous testing—certainly enhanced achievement. More than that, however, was the consistency among classrooms of assessment talk among students and teachers. Someone taught these students to want to know what they know. That interest seemed to lead to infinite variety of ways in which students could demonstrate their learning. Students are exceptionally present to their summative exhibition, their intermediate demonstration of knowledge and skill, and to filling their portfolios. Teacher guidance helps to keep these requirements in mind. (EM)

Oral Defense is a culminating experience for each student who is completing their high school requirements. This process involves students defending their learning before a panel comprised of faculty and administration. In the student's defense literacy and multi-communication skills were embedded throughout. She had to prepare with research papers, PowerPoint (technology), visuals, listening skills, grammatical skills. (DB)

Student Support: Small schools and small classes help create a learning community for students and teachers and provide for flexible and innovative structures to support students academically and emotionally. All students are well known by the adults because the school values and makes time to foster strong student-teacher relationships.

I learned a great deal at both Middle College High School and International High School on the area of student support. The advisory sessions were instructive to hear about and witness school counselors hosting/teaching thematic sessions. Although I would say we currently provide intensive student support, advisory has always been a conundrum. Making this time meaningful for students is our aim, of course, and so we look forward to addressing this subject with colleagues at the summer institute and next year in contact with sister/brother schools. (GB)

Visiting seminar was very helpful to my understanding the importance of this time for students in the college classes. It gave them a chance to study with a Middle

College teacher and to ask questions, update the teacher on work, and commiserate with other students. Seminar also can serve as a vehicle for high school staff and college faculty to interact and know better the dynamics of each setting, and the expectations of each, in order to help serve the students better. Later, when reflecting on this with Director Cunningham, she stressed the importance of teachers being active participants in this process in terms of connecting with the college faculty member of each student's class, getting routine updates, and always being available for contact. (GB)

I participated in seminar, which is the student support piece in place for Early College students. The seminar leaders had established a blog where students discussed scenarios that related directly to issues they may face as high school students in college classes. There was a true productive buzz amid the room as students worked in small groups on college assignments, completed their blog activities, and worked with the seminar leader on college assignments. Since retuning from my visit, we are reviewing our school's master schedule to see how we can organize this type of structure in the schedule. (MB)

The time set aside for groups of freshmen and sophomores to meet with the guidance counselors was impressive. These students were open and supportive of one another during the session I visited. In a school such as ours, building community is important. Our district is very large, and our students represent each area of the district. (MS)

CONCLUSIONS

The sharp relief in which I see this life-changing work with and for students challenges and inspires me to hold up to the light my school, my leadership, and my thinking. Of course, this seriousness is sustained by grand humor and celebration. MCNC Director Cece Cunningham reminded us that good adult learning demands space, connections, and respect for the experience and investment that adults have brought to this learning opportunity. Coupled with the breezes, cool and warm, gentle and sharp, that come from student interactions, this most important work energizes and fulfills like no other. (EM)

I am honored and inspired by the cadre of schools that make up the consortium. We are all continuously moving forwarding in doing the dogged work that it takes to make high school right for students. (MB)

For more information on participation in the Principal's Residency, contact brosenberg@mcnc.us

THE MIDDLE COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL NATIONAL CONSORTIUM

was founded in 1993 to foster cooperation among member schools, disseminate information about the MCHS concept, create a forum for professional growth and promote dialogue about effective education. **The Consortium** gratefully acknowledges the support and funding of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the Carnegie Foundation, the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, the DeWitt Wallace Readers' Digest Fund and the Pew Charitable Trust.



THE CONSORTIUM SCHOOLS

The Academy at Illinois Central College, East Peoria IL
 The Academy of the Canyons at College of the Canyons, Santa Clarita CA
 Brashier Middle College Charter High School at Greenville Technical College, Greenville SC*
 Brooklyn College Academy at Brooklyn College, Brooklyn NY*
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 Challenge Early College High School at Houston Community College, Houston TX*
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 Genesee Early College High School at University of Michigan, Flint, MI
 Great Path Academy at Manchester Community College, Manchester, CT*
 Greenville Technical Charter High School at Greenville Technical College, Greenville SC*
 Greer Middle College Charter High School at Greenville Technical College, Greenville SC
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 Truckee Meadows Community College High School, Reno NV
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 Williamson County Middle College High School at Nashville State Technical Institute, Nashville TN

* Early College grantee

Conferences

Technical Assistance Conference
 February 10, 2011
 Newport Beach, CA

Winter Principal Leadership Conference
 February 11 - 13, 2011
 Newport Beach, CA

Student Leadership Initiative
 April 27 - May, 2011
 Rocky Mountain, NC

Summer Professional Development Institute
 July 7 - 10, 2011
 Jersey City, NJ

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