

NORTH
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INNOVATOR

April 30, 2013

Welcome to INNOVATOR, an update on school change from North Carolina New Schools. Our newsletter aims to inform practitioners, policy makers, and friends of public education on innovation, research and success stories from schools. Please [contact us](#) to provide feedback and suggest article ideas.

Pace quickens for work-based learning

Education and business leaders in North Carolina are working together to solve a key challenge shared across the nation: ensuring that all high school graduates have the opportunity for meaningful careers that pay a living wage, without limiting options for students.

But North Carolina is beginning to overcome one of the biggest obstacles in creating a seamless system between school and career. Educators and business representatives are sitting down to hammer out practical solutions.

Last week, leaders of two regional workforce development organizations in the state met with the planning group for a career-development initiative known as Pathways to Prosperity to talk strategy and focus.

David Hollars, executive director of the Centralina Workforce Development Board, said there's a need for common goals and a desire to work across various interests. Steve Hill, executive director of STEM East, said career-development efforts must begin as early as middle school to help students begin to think in terms of careers.

The overarching goal of the Pathways effort is to demonstrate in key regional labor markets that many more young people can complete high school, attain a postsecondary credential with currency in the labor market, and get launched in a career while leaving open the prospect of further education.

Education Week reports that momentum is building at both the state and national levels for greater emphasis on career-focused education.

The April 24 [article](#), "New High School Pathways Emerging," cites the 9-state Pathways to Prosperity initiative, which includes North Carolina, as a leading example of the new focus

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on increasing the number of good options for students, along with more active involvement of businesses.

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Study: Early college graduates advance

New findings from an ongoing experimental study of North Carolina's early college high schools show that students who enrolled in the innovative schools were more likely to have progressed in postsecondary education compared to a similar group of students who enrolled in other high schools.

Among about 700 students who started 9th grade in 2005, 2006 and 2007, preliminary results show that 86 percent of early college students had ever enrolled in postsecondary education, compared to 65 percent of students in a control group. In addition, the study found that a higher percentage of early college students were enrolled in a 4-year college or university six years after 9th grade (32 percent), compared to 22 percent of the control group.

In terms of college completion, preliminary findings show that 28 percent of the students in the "treatment" group had earned an associate degree, compared to just 1 percent of the "control" group students.

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Technology hub to help link educators

Leading global information technology services provider HCL America is collaborating with NC New Schools to create an online technology hub to support the organization's work in its partner schools and beyond.

HCL America will design an online technology hub which will serve as a central gathering place for featured content and discussion among teachers, principals, counselors and other NC New Schools' partners as well as others interested in similar work. NC New Schools will leverage HCL America's services for content creation and management for the collaborative, online community offering access to tools and resources to accelerate systemic, sustainable innovation in schools.

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Column highlights New Schools' efforts

*The following column by Christopher Gergen and Stephen Martin was recently published by **The News & Observer** of Raleigh and **The Charlotte Observer**:*

Meet an Innovator



Stefanie Buckner

Math teacher Stefanie Buckner thought teaching in a large traditional high school was fine, but something about it just didn't fit for her.

"I felt like I was putting myself in a box, that I wasn't the teacher I wrote about in my education philosophy classes in college," Buckner says.

When she interviewed for a position at Buncombe County Early College six years ago, everything clicked.

"I was in teacher heaven, like I was becoming the teacher I imagined I would be in college," Buckner says. "The constant support from the staff and coaches at NC New Schools and the environment of the early college is truly invigorating. I wanted to make kids think, investigate, explore math. I wanted them to learn because they experienced it and not because I told them so."

Truly preparing students for jobs in the 21st century

This spring, approximately 91,000 North Carolina students will graduate from high school. More than three-fourths say they plan to move on to a two- or four-year college or university. But by the time they reach their mid-twenties, trends suggest, only half of them will have earned a college degree.

Alert to similar statistics nationally, the Harvard Graduate School of Education last year published "Pathways to Prosperity: Meeting the Challenge of Preparing Young Americans for the 21st Century" - a report that challenges the premise that all students should seek a four-year college degree. It argues that we need to create additional pathways that combine rigorous academics with strong technical education to equip young people with the skills to compete for tomorrow's jobs (many of which don't exist yet).

The report led to the launch of the Pathways to Prosperity Network, a collaboration between Harvard, Jobs for the Future and six states (including North Carolina) committed to helping create these alternative learning pathways.

Even before the launch of this initiative, Raleigh-based non-profit North Carolina New Schools was working with government, businesses, and higher education in the development of a network of STEM schools across the state. With the goal of providing high school graduates "the ability to design and communicate solutions to real problems with confidence, ingenuity, and thoughtfulness," this network of schools provides students with powerful minds and hands-on teaching and learning in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). In other words, ensuring students have the skills to compete for tomorrow's jobs.

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Support matters ...

A study presented at a national research conference this week found students were more likely to ask for help in math classes they considered emotionally supportive and those in which the teacher pressed students to understand the material, *Education Week* reports.

Students were less likely to seek help from the teacher in classes where they felt less emotionally supported, and those in classes focused on test performance and academic achievement rather than understanding. Moreover, when they sought help from friends, students in these classes were more likely to seek superficial, expedient help to solve an immediate problem.

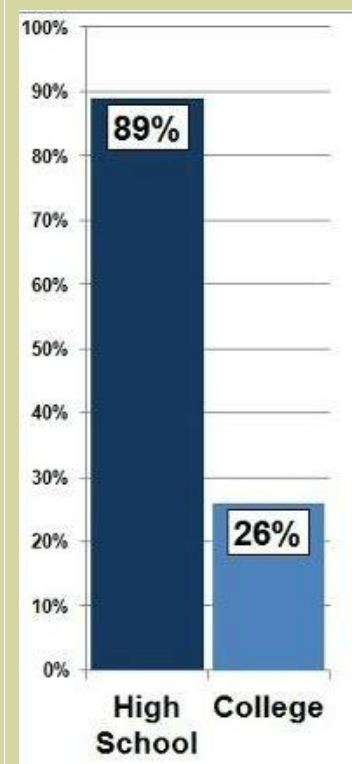
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Data snapshot

A recent national [survey](#) by ACT found that high school teachers and college instructors differ significantly in their assessment of how well prepared high school students are for first-year college courses.

While nearly 90 percent of high school teachers said their students left their courses "well" or "very well" prepared for college-level work, about a quarter of college instructors shared that opinion.



Source: [ACT National Curriculum Survey 2012](#), released April 2013

