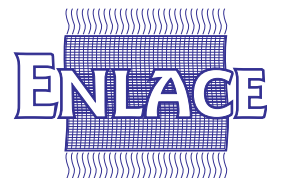




# ENLACE

Supporting All Students to Graduate from School with  
the Requirements for Entering College:

Learning from the ENLACE Experience





## Background on the Issue

Research makes it clear that the critical factor in whether a student succeeds in college is the “quality and intensity” of the curriculum he or she takes in high school. For many Latino students, access to a high-quality, rigorous K-12 curriculum is limited. Minority students are often on a less rigorous curriculum track starting early in their schooling. Without even realizing it, many minority students are graduating high school without taking the “gateway” courses (i.e. algebra 2, certain language arts classes, laboratory science classes or foreign language classes) needed for entrance to the university. The consequence? High rates of remediation, longer stays to graduate from college, and lower rates of college graduation.

Many state-level educational leaders around the country understand that this cannot be framed solely as a K-12 issue. Higher education institutions also need to become clearer in defining what constitutes “college readiness.” A growing number of states are working through P-16 partnerships to implement a default college-preparatory curriculum in K-12. At the same time, they are clarifying entrance requirements for local colleges and aligning them with the statewide high school graduation requirements.

## The ENLACE Experience

In those states where there was an existing movement to align the local P-16 educational pathway, ENLACE partnerships connected with that movement. The policy changes needed broad policy actors at the local level, school district, and state levels. Key questions that were explored included:

- What are the state curriculum requirements for high school graduation and how do they align with the entrance requirements for the community colleges and universities in the state?
- What level math is required for high school graduation? Does that match the entrance requirements for the colleges and universities in the state?
- What science, English language arts, foreign language, and social studies courses are required for graduation? Do they match the entrance requirements for the colleges and universities in the state?

- What percentage of local students are on the pathway of college preparatory courses starting in middle school?
- What percentage of local students are then graduating high school with the requirements to enter the local colleges and universities?
- What percentage of local students take remedial courses in community colleges and universities?
- What percentage of local students are taking Advanced Placement (AP) classes?

The ENLACE partnerships brought a feeder pathway of schools and community colleges and universities that could pilot test policy changes. As an example, Santa Ana ENLACE identified Algebra as the gateway-to-college course that many students, particularly Latino students, were missing when they graduated from high school. A curriculum change was needed to require that all students get on an algebra course sequence in middle school. Before instituting this district-wide change, they pilot tested algebra in a small number of schools first to determine what supports were needed for success. Grant funding was used to improve teachers' instructional skills so they could effectively teach the higher level math, and students were provided tutoring. As a result, despite widening the pool of students taking Algebra, passing grades rose. Following this pilot test and other curricular reforms, the Santa Ana United School District adopted one of the most rigorous high school graduation requirements in the state of California.

In another example, Northern New Mexico ENLACE contributed to incremental changes to the course curriculum by stimulating increased demand for rigorous classes. Using a nationally known model, AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination), Latino students gained study skills and academic skills to succeed in Advanced Placement (AP) courses. In response to the increased demand by Latino students, who had never participated in these college-preparatory courses before, the school system began to offer more AP courses and pre-AP courses.

The ENLACE sites learned that while the core issue of curricular standards is academic, the solutions lie in an integrated approach. These include: changing curricular policies, advocating for a default college-prep curriculum, providing student social and academic supports, and empowering parents and families to help their children get on the college track.



## Resources

Student Success: Statewide P-16 Systems. State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) 2003. [www.sheeo.org/k16/P16.pdf](http://www.sheeo.org/k16/P16.pdf). This comprehensive report describes the key components of a state-wide educational system, from pre-school through post-secondary education, that supports student success.

State Policy Inventory Database Online. Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education and the Pathways to College Network. [www.wiche.edu/Policy/spido/index.asp](http://www.wiche.edu/Policy/spido/index.asp). This database provides a state-level inventory of policies and resources related to student achievement, access, and success in higher education.

To learn more about the ENLACE experience of addressing P-20 curricular reform, please contact the following ENLACE partnerships:

New Mexico ENLACE – Albuquerque, New Mexico  
[www4.unm.edu/enlacenm](http://www4.unm.edu/enlacenm)

Santa Ana ENLACE – Santa Ana, California  
[www.sac.edu/community/partnerships/enlace/](http://www.sac.edu/community/partnerships/enlace/)



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