

All P-TECH 9-14 schools need to incorporate a comprehensive and coherent system of supports that address the full array of students’ academic, social and emotional needs. Some of the ways that P-TECH 9-14 schools support students are described below. This document serves as one key tool related to the P-TECH 9-14 model.

SUPPORTING STUDENTS IN COLLEGE CLASSES

Student support is an essential element of the school program and involves *all* the adults in the school. Helping students meet the high expectations of their high school, college and work experiences requires the efforts of everyone: teachers, administrators, community and college personnel, and parents.

P-TECH schools should require students at risk of falling behind academically to participate in appropriate supports that have been intentionally designed by the school. It is important for the advising team at the school, including the Early College Liaison, to communicate clearly to college instructors what the P-TECH 9-14 school’s standards are for conduct, attendance and lateness. College instructors, the College Liaison, and high school staff must collaborate to track students’ progress.

Collaborative Planning

Supporting students in college classes begins with the development of a thoughtful Scope & Sequence. Each course should help build skills and knowledge that students will need to be successful in future endeavors. High school courses should explicitly prepare students for the demands of their college courses, and Workplace Learning experiences should reinforce lessons learned in academic courses and prepare students for the expectations of the world of work.

P-TECH 9-14 schools should arrange for frequent, deep collaboration between high school and college faculty. College courses, particularly “gateway” courses, should be carefully analyzed for their level of rigor, expectations of students, grading policy, frequency of feedback, reading load, and style of delivery. High school teachers should sit in on the first college course in their content area sequence, and college professors teaching the first college course should sit in on the high school classes preceding it. High school and college faculty should together define the skills that students will need to master in order to be successful in the college course, and map those skills back into the high school curriculum so that students are exposed to note-taking, listening to lectures, complicated problem-sets, and other typical college-level pedagogy. In this way the faculty can work together to make sure that students do not experience an insuperable difference between their high school and college coursework.

Courses designed to support students

Many schools will elect to include Student Support Courses as part of the overall Scope & Sequence. These support courses may be stand-alone experiences or paired with college courses or workplace experiences. For example, students in a college course that meets on Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 10:00 am may be scheduled for a college seminar or support course on Tuesday and Thursday at the same time. Alternatively, students participating in an internship may be scheduled to participate in a weekly support course with others

who are also engaged in internships. These courses provide an opportunity for students to discuss common challenges that can arise in their college courses or internships. The high school teacher who leads the support course must be aware of the expectations and activities in the college course or internship. In the best scenario, the high school teacher works in tandem with the college professor, and is able to reinforce and support the activities taking place in the college course. Course time may also be used for individual conferencing with the teacher, tutors or mentors. Student study groups may also be scheduled during these courses. Many support courses also incorporate a curriculum designed to help students develop study skills and other “habits of mind” that can help students succeed.

Advisory program

Many P-TECH 9-14 schools will incorporate an advisory course as part of each student’s program each year. Advisories are a primary vehicle for creating a more personalized learning environment where all students are well known by at least one adult. Advisory provides a structure and a set of practices for monitoring and supporting students’ academic progress and college and career readiness throughout their high school career. Often, a student’s advisory teacher (or advisor) is the primary point of contact for that student (and his/her family) as they navigate the P-TECH 9-14 school program. The advisor reviews grades and progress reports with students on a regular basis. Advisors collect feedback from other teachers and help students cope with academic, social, emotional and other challenges as they arise. In the most successful advisory programs, teachers use a well-crafted curriculum and receive training and ongoing support to assist them in this role. Advisory curricula help students develop key life skills, such as setting academic, career and personal goals; effective communication; and critical thinking.

Study Groups

Peer-to-peer study groups can be beneficial to a wide array of students, helping them develop group learning, communication, and study skills. Study groups can be “safe” spaces for students to explore issues that may be confusing or challenging in their courses. However, students will often need explicit instruction in how to make the most of the study group structure. Teachers in support classes or advisors can provide lessons in the ways that students can work together to master difficult material. Many P-TECH 9-14 schools will assign students to study groups based on their common course load, and will take attendance and collect feedback to ensure that students are participating.

Tutoring

Some students will benefit from additional small group or one-on-one instruction provided by tutors. Tutoring can be structured in a variety of formats. Some schools may include tutors or teaching assistants in their regular course structure. These tutors work with small groups of students to help ensure they understand the course material. For this model to be successful, teachers must have time to work with tutors during the curriculum planning process. Class sessions are structured so that students have time to work together to practice skills and deepen their knowledge of the subject matter.

In some instances, students may be scheduled to work with tutors on a regularly scheduled basis, usually before or after school. These tutoring sessions can be facilitated by a professional tutoring organization or by high

school or college students. By using peer or near-peer tutors, schools can keep the cost of tutoring low while still providing students with the supports they need in their academic classes. To ensure that regular tutoring sessions are effective, schools should structure opportunities for classroom teachers to communicate directly with tutors, explaining the curriculum and providing feedback on individual students. Attendance should be taken during tutoring sessions to ensure that the students who are most in need are participating.

In any model, tutors must be rigorously trained and demonstrate a high level of academic and interpersonal skills. Additionally, most tutors will need an orientation to the P-TECH 9-14 model, so that they understand the school's values and goals. Throughout the semester tutors should also regularly meet with a coordinator who can help support the effectiveness of the program.

Students enrolled in college courses also have access to college tutoring centers. These centers are often staffed by undergraduate and graduate students who can provide assistance to students in a range of courses. Some tutoring centers have drop-in hours, and others require students to make an appointment. Students should be given a tour or other introduction to the tutoring center when they begin taking courses on the college campus. They should be encouraged to seek support when they feel the need.

Writing Center

Many colleges also offer support through a Writing Center. Well-trained staff, such as college writing teachers and those teaching upper level students, works with undergraduates to deepen their writing and English language skills. Students are able to work with writing center consultants at every stage of the writing process and on any piece of writing except for exams. P-TECH 9-14 school students should be introduced to the Writing Center early in the process of taking college courses, and should be encouraged to use their services when appropriate.

Office Hours

Most college professors schedule office hours, or time outside of class to meet with students. During these hours, students can meet professors or teaching assistants to discuss the material being presented in class or other related interests. Course-related discussions include asking for extra help, seeking clarification of material presented in class and following up on aspects of the class students find compelling.

Most professors do not require that students attend office hours. They expect students to decide for themselves when they need or want to participate. Professors usually announce their office hours on the first day of class or on their print or web-based course material. Teachers and advisors in P-TECH 9-14 schools may coach students about how and when to make use of office hours.

Early College Liaison

Early College Liaisons provide a range of supports to students who are enrolled college courses. The Early College Liaison communicates regularly with college professors to track students' progress in individual classes. When concerns arise, Early College Liaisons may communicate directly with students or they may contact the students' advisor. The Liaison also works with the school leaders to track student progress through the Scope

and Sequence. They help develop and monitor college course eligibility policies and ensure that enrollment decisions are based on students' prior academic performance. Early College Liaisons may refer students to various academic interventions, as appropriate, for additional support.

Proactive Academic Advising

P-TECH 9-14 schools should establish a system for tracking each student's progress through the school. A teacher, counselor, administrator or mentor should meet with students regularly to respond to any issues or questions that may arise. Any student at risk of receiving a grade of D or F in a college course should receive academic and/or socio-emotional support. Most importantly, students and their families must be included in student progress so that a student is fully informed about and supported in their program.

If it is clear that even with additional support, a student is unlikely to pass a class with a grade of C or better, it may be appropriate to assist the student in withdrawing from the course. P-TECH schools can establish a maximum number of withdrawals (such as three or fewer) that students are permitted in their early college careers. It is important to bear in mind that students' early college transcripts and GPA's travel with them later in life. The P-TECH 9-14 school can also use constructive feedback from students about college courses and instructors to continuously improve course offerings.

For more information about the P-TECH 9-14 model, please visit ptech.org