

Promoting Discussion among Faculty in Schools, Community College, and University

The purpose of this topic is to creating a forum for ideas that support student understanding of what it means to progress through their education elementary school to college. For many students there are significant discontinuities in educational pathways. For example, many students lose interest in math and science in the transition from elementary to middle school. The high school environment and expectations are sufficiently different from middle school that freshman performance is often one of the biggest issues for high school programs. Some students never recover from this rocky transition. The same is true for the transition to college. Most students will claim they are “going to college” but many are not prepared for the changes in environment and expectations. As a result, they often find themselves unprepared and end up taking remedial classes. They think they are attending college when in fact they are accumulating debt without progressing toward a degree. The transitions in our system create confusion for many students who lose track of vague goals and feel they are not capable of pursuing more education and have no marketable skills. Some aspects of this topic to consider:

- Transition to the workplace.
- What does it mean to have seamless educational pathways? What are the characteristics?
- What are characteristics of transitions that are useful, productive, and contribute to learning?
- What are common issues across ages and institutions?
- What are alternatives to traditional classroom formats for instruction that might provide student support in seeing a bigger picture of their educational pathways?
- Can we do a better job of helping students learn how to learn, i.e. how to participate in and across contexts for learning such as small group discussion, large group lectures, individually online, in out of school settings. This has been referred to as developing “epistemic fluency”.
- How do we communicate and involve students as participants in creating learning contexts for accomplishing instructional goals. How do we communicating to students the purpose of the learning contexts we create to support learning?
- How can we think more creatively about exploiting outside of school learning opportunities?