Concurrent Enrollment Tool Kit, Week 2: Syllabus Review

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Time Frame 10 minutes

Essential Question(s)

Why is it important to review the syllabus?
The syllabus can be considered a roadmap for the course, but not all students know to look at it this way. By encouraging students to give the syllabus a thorough look, we can guide them toward the most important parts of a course. Students can use the syllabus to plan for things such as major assignments in the course, reading course texts (which may require more time), and general course expectations.

Summary

Week 2 of the Concurrent Enrollment Tool Kit is designed to guide students in the way they look at syllabi for their university-level courses. By encouraging thoughtful questions and close reading of the syllabus, students are better equipped to navigate their course(s).

Learning Goals

- Assist students in identifying the purpose of the course syllabus.
- Guide students in determining how information in the syllabus can be used to prepare for success in the course.

Attachments

- CE Tool Kit, Week 2.docx
- CE Tool Kit, Week 2.pdf

Materials

- CE Tool Kit, Week 2 (attached)
- Course syllabus (paper or digital copy)
- Student planner (recommended)
- Highlighter
- Pen/pencil

Guiding Notes

Begin the meeting by greeting the student by name and inquiring about their classes and how they are going.

Make sure the student has either a paper or digital copy of their course syllabus and their planner if they have one.

After explaining the importance of conducting a close-reading of the syllabus, work with the student to identify and highlight any key dates for assignments or exams. If they have a planner, help them enter this information into it. This is also a good time to review and required materials or textbooks listed and general expectations for the course. These can include things like attendance requirements and guidelines for class conduct.

Once the student has gone over the syllabus and noted all the important components, make sure they don't have any outstanding questions and end the meeting.

For this conversation, it can be helpful to consider how you might have thought about syllabi as a university student:

- Are there any tips that you wish you'd known?
- Did you consistently refer back to the syllabus as a student?
- What is something valuable about a course syllabus that your students may not have considered?

Discussion Starters

Consider starting the discussion by asking:

- What do you think of your course so far?
- Is there a specific thing you find exciting about the course?

Discussion Questions

To guide this week's discussion, consider asking some of the following questions:

- Did the instructor review the syllabus with the class?
    - Did the instructor emphasize any parts of the course while going through the syllabus?
    - If not, have you read the syllabus?
- How might you use the syllabus as a guide for this course?
- Does your syllabus explore major assignments?
- Do you have any questions about the course?

Next Steps

To prepare for next week, ask students to:

- Review the syllabus again for their class.
- Bring any questions they might have about course expectations.
- Track how much time they spend studying outside of class over this next week.

Research Rationale

Research shows a clear and strong link between concurrent enrollment and increased student academic performance (Jones, 2014; Dingess, 2018). Several studies have also found that students who participate in concurrent enrollment have time to acclimate to the college environment and thus earn higher grades in their postsecondary careers (Allen & Dadgar, 2012; Dingess, 2018). This opportunity to build momentum also provides an avenue for those students who might carry complex social and educational challenges from high school as they transition into the university setting (Wang et al., 2015). A consistent concern with students as they transition from high school to PSE is that many of them might have difficulty in fully acclimating to the rigor and expectations of university-level coursework (Taylor, 2015; Vargas et al., 2017). This is especially apparent when looking at students who identify as first-generation college students, as they might feel overwhelmed by everything from student support to the specifics of financial aid (Lee et al., 2022). Concurrent enrollment offers a bridge between the familiarity of high school and the frontier of higher learning, building on the initial benefits of concurrent enrollment in high school to build toward greater academic momentum fueled by a smooth transition from high school to university (Wang et al., 2015).

To expand on the inherent benefits associated with concurrent enrollment programs, these programs are most successful when students are provided with extra guidance in how to navigate this new academic environment (Witkowsky & Clayton, 2020). Though students in concurrent enrollment programs might be high-performing, it is helpful to remember that they are still high school students and stand to benefit from “wraparound” services that counselors can provide as a bridge between high school and university-level expectations (Witkowsky & Clayton, 2020). Whether partnering directly with specific higher education institutions as part of the concurrent enrollment program or not, wraparound services can still be designed with the university course expectations in mind.

These tool kits are designed as conversation starters to provide the kind of ongoing support that allows concurrent enrollment students to be most successful (Johnson et al., 2021; Lile et al., 2018). Spanning a range of topics between goal setting and writing expectations, each conversation serves as an opportunity for relationship building and mentoring with students. For students who might not know which questions to ask or which resources to look for, these tool kits can help concurrent enrollment coordinators set a foundation for success for students to draw on after high school.

Resources

Allen, D., & Dadgar, M. (2012). Does dual enrollment increase students' success in college? Evidence from a quasi-experimental analysis of dual enrollment in New York City. *New Directions for Higher Education*, 11-19.

Dingess, E. (2018). The impact of the number of dual enrollment credits on racial minority students' completion time at five Virginia community colleges. ODU Digital Commons. https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/efl_etds/68

Johnson, J. M., Paris, J. H., Curci, J. D., & Horchos, S. (2021). Beyond college access: An exploration of the short-term impact of a dual enrollment program. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory, & Practice*, 1–23.

Jones, S. (2014). Student participation in dual enrollment and college success. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, *38*(1), 24-37.

Lee, J., Fernandez, F., Ro, H. K., & Suh, H. (2022, January 4). Does dual enrollment influence high school graduation, college enrollment, choice, and persistence? *Research in Higher Education, 63*, 825-848. https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007/s11162-021-09667-3.pdf

Lile, J. R., Ottusch, T. M., Jones, T., & Richards, L. N. (2017). Understanding college-student roles: Perspectives of participants in a high school/community college dual-enrollment program. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 42*(2), 95–111. https://doi.org/10.1080/10668926.2016.1264899

Taylor, J. L. (2015). Accelerating pathways to college: The (in)equitable effects of community college dual credit. *Community College Review, 43*(4), 355-379. https://doi.org/10.1177/0091552115594880

Vargas, J., Hooker, S., & Gerwin, C. (2017, November 1). Blending high school and college can sharpen the focus of each. *Phi Delta Kappan, 99*(3), 13-18.

Wang, X., Chan, H., Phelps, L. A., & Washbon, J. I. (2015). Fuel for success: Academic momentum as a mediator between dual enrollment and educational outcomes of two-year technical college students. *Community College Review, 43*(2), 165–190. https://doi.org/10.1177/0091552115569846

Witkowsky, P., & Clayton, G. (2020). What makes dual enrollment work? High school counselor perspectives. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 44*(6), 427-444.