Scaling Education Pathways in Illinois (SEPI) Analysis
Key Findings | August 2021

Pathway Implementation

- Education pathway implementation varies widely within and across the seven SEPI collaboratives. Some are enhancing long-standing models, many have worked quickly to launch or adjust new coursework, and a few are at the beginning stages. The process is driven by a variety of organizations including high schools, postsecondary institutions, and Regional Offices of Education.

- Some high schools are shifting from an early childhood pathway geared toward childcare to a more robust education pathway aimed at a professional educator license.

- Several programs are looking to combine students' passion for specific subjects with teaching experiences so students can explore teaching the subjects they love.

Student Recruitment

- Recruitment practices vary widely, with some schools using extensive outreach including videos and social media, some prioritizing identification from teachers and counselors, and others relying on career fairs and student word-of-mouth.

- Some schools are having success recruiting underrepresented populations to the pathway through targeted one-on-one outreach and supporting them through practices such as structured interactions with Black male teachers and assignments involving celebrating diversity.

- Currency for obtaining an education pathway endorsement such as a scholarship from a postsecondary partner is a strong recruitment tool, particularly for low-income families.

- Many programs help students understand the variety of non-teaching education-related careers to attract students not interested in teaching.

Dual Credit

- Larger schools are more able to offer dual credit courses in the building during school hours since they are more likely to have enough students to fill a class and to have more teachers/administrators with qualifying credentials to teach the courses.

- Experiences with online learning during the pandemic introduced the possibility of sharing dual credit courses among several communities.

- The pandemic disruption forced community colleges to deliver courses online, which eased the burden of time and transportation for many dual credit students.

- There is a tension between making dual credit courses accessible to high school students and ensuring students have sufficient support to engage with college-level content.

Career Experiences

- Schools without proximity to observation and internship classrooms struggle with transportation and finding time in student schedules. Some schools found innovative ways to overcome these difficulties using the pandemic's virtual school format.

- The pandemic disruption spurred some programs to create new experiences, including short, pop-in virtual observations followed by class discussion and online alumni guest speakers, which were so successful that teachers plan to continue to implement them.

- Educators involved in pathway implementation emphasize that it is important to recruit high-quality, invested cooperating teachers for student career development experiences because "that partnership has a profound impact on students."

Student Voice

- Students appreciate the ability to investigate education as a career before enrolling and investing in a program of study in college.

- Teachers say the most impactful experience for students is spending classroom time as teachers.

- Students value the opportunity to build relationships with younger students.

Intermediary Support

- Building currency for a pathway endorsement is an important and appreciated function of an intermediary organization.

- Educators value the opportunity to meet with peers at other districts to share their pathway experiences, challenges, and successes.

- Intermediaries can help collaboratives build the structure and dynamics to leverage more and larger funding streams.