

DOUBLE duty

Concurrent enrollment programs provide academic challenges for high school students and also provide a strong foundation for career and technical education programs.

The state of Utah is one of the leaders in concurrent enrollments, providing funding for high schools to adopt such programs across the state, and Weber State University in Ogden, UT, is one of the first partnership programs accredited by the National Association of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships.

Principal Leadership: What does the concurrent enrollment (CE) program at your school look like, and how many students take advantage of it?

Drake: The Weber High School program currently has 35 courses that are aligned, most of them with Weber State University. We also are aligned with three other universities to a smaller extent. When Weber State University cannot accommodate a particular course, we approach another university that can give us that comparable course work—Utah State University, Salt Lake Community College, and Utah Valley State College. So we have partnerships with them as well. But our biggie is Weber State University with 35 courses.

The first semester this year, we had 917 students who received concurrent enrollment credit. There are also some yearlong classes,

and then there's a whole second semester program that just started. Last year, 1,057 students were involved in concurrent enrollment programs, with 2,044 hours of college credit earned. Some of those might be duplicates—in fact, the majority of students are participating in more than one concurrent enrollment program.

Nielson: Davis High School is very similar to that. We have 25 to 30 concurrent enrollment classes here. We have partnered with Weber State, and like Weber High School, there are other universities that Davis is able to deal with.

One of the things that's interesting for us here is that we have two types of classes: open enrollment and closed enrollment. In an open setting, our teachers here use their own curriculum and are granted the ability to give college credits. In the closed program, the college prescribes the textbooks we should use, tests we should take, and it's more college-based—they have more of a say in what the curriculum is going to look like.

Principal who are looking at this need to know that there are two different kinds of classes, so that they understand that some classes have more freedom and others have less freedom.



A Conversation With Pamela Drake and Scott Nielson

By Robert Farrace

The principals of two schools that have partnered with Weber State—Pamela Drake, the vice principal for curriculum at Weber High School in Ogden, and Scott Nielson, the vice principal for curriculum at Davis High School in Kaysville—discuss how students at their schools benefit from the partnerships.

We've used the concurrent enrollment program to help that group of students who has not been able to generate all the AP credit that they need to, and we've been very successful with it.

PL: Focusing specifically on career and technical education, do you find that there is any change in the quality of or the perception of the career and technical education [CTE] program at your school, given that it's aligned with a four-year university?

Drake: It has really increased and validated the technology programs. I think that within the facility and among the staff, there's always been a mutual respect for whatever another teacher teaches. But I think that the big difference is parents' perception that a technology program is an acceptable program and might actually be of benefit to their child, instead of assuming, "My child is going to be a doctor" or "My child is going to be an educator." Now parents see that there could be other careers in the technology area that are just as acceptable and financially rewarding as other more traditional, professional careers. So I think that that parents' perception is probably the biggest difference that I've seen.

Nielson: Originally, many of the classes that we had in concurrent

enrollment came from the CTE area, and I think our academic areas saw the benefit, and like Pam says, they gained a new respect for some of our teachers in the CTE area. Now we have classes in almost every one of the areas that can help students, so I think everyone has realized the difficulty that CE teachers had to overcome to become certified to teach a CE class, and our CTE teachers have become certified also.

PL: What specific training do teachers receive before they teach the CE programs at your school? Do you find that there's any kind of benefits to the rest of the faculty for having that training for a subset of the teachers?

Drake: I think the demand for rigor and the updating of curriculum that is demanded of our concurrent enrollment teachers actually

creates a type of synergy within the departments, so there could be concurrent enrollment teachers in the English department that are sharing that rigor and who need to continually be updating and matching their curriculum with perhaps a new core curriculum that the university has created. And I think that this continual renewal and the need to keep current on things has really created a synergy within our faculty as a whole.

Nielson: There's no question that the rigor of the curriculum across the board has increased, because of the relevance that these classes play in the students life. Students know that they can take a class, but if it's not in the field that they're going into, it doesn't serve them or give them a benefit. CE has really caused teachers and parents and students to stop and look at a relevant sequence of classes and ask, "What classes do I need if this is what I'd like to do with my career? And how many of those can I work on here while I'm in high school?"

And I think that, like Pam says, our other teachers have seen the rigor and the relevance of that, and I think it's approved curriculum across the board.

PL: Are there particular kinds of students who take the concurrent classes?

Drake: Our program has been going on long enough that I think that our students almost feel entitled to participate. I think that it's accepted that if they want to challenge themselves and participate in those courses, they are allowed to do so. They're encouraged by their parents to participate.

Nielson: Utah has always maintained the high standard that schools were college preparatory. There's still a lot we need to do to make sure that we help all students get what they need to go to college, but a lot of students across the area have taken advantage of these classes. The new round of small learning community grants that came out focuses on increasing populations of students, especially the sub-populations, such as AP and IB and CE. And so, in conjunction with Weber State University, we are constantly looking for ways to help nontraditional students who would not normally have taken these classes get into college,

Photo courtesy of Pamela Drake



Pamela Drake [center]

whether that's some additional training; or some additional tutoring; or even telling them, "Yeah, you can do this, and you're going to be OK."

Drake: And I think the sheer diversity of the types of courses that we offer is a draw. Some of the courses are in the agriculture areas. Some are in the hands-on areas, not just the core curriculums, although we certainly have good representation in the math, English communications, and foreign language areas as well. But I think just by the sheer virtue of having a variety of courses, we are able to encourage students of all interests and ability to participate.

Nielson: These classes are all part of a sequence, at least at Weber State University, to help students get their associate degree more quickly. And if a student can take foundations of nutrition in our high schools, that counts as a science credit at the college, part of their general requirements. Students who have used the concurrent enrollment program to their advantage are well on their way to finishing their associate degree at the college sooner than those who didn't take advantage of it.

PL: So has concurrent enrollment made the senior year a more meaningful experience for students?

Drake: I think not only more meaningful but it also keeps students motivated and challenged and makes for an easier transition to their work after graduation, whether it be into a university, a technical college, or the actual workforce. It creates a meaningful experience so that they see it as being worthwhile.

Nielson: A lot of things that are state requirements here in Utah we've traditionally tried to pack into the sophomore year and then less in the junior. Seniors traditionally have had a little more leeway in selecting classes. With the addition of the concurrent programs, students are

choosing to take more rigorous classes in their senior year, classes that will generate college credits for them, and they really are getting a jump on where they hope to end up.

Drake: And a lot of balance is created between students who go into AP programs. We have 16 different AP programs here, and most of the students who are taking concurrent course work during their senior year are balancing the two curriculums and finding that it gives them a big jump start toward completing an associate degree or getting the qualifications that they need to go straight into the workforce.

Nielson: One of the best advantages is that students in business classes here are connecting with the business department at Weber State University because of the concurrent program, and students appear to have less of a difficulty transitioning into college because they've met some of the professors. We've had them come to our school to speak, and our kids have gone there, and that connection is critical as students transition out of the secondary system and into postsecondary.

Drake: It has also created a sense of planning for the senior students. They're more conscious of the pathways that they need to follow, and they realize that they need to thoughtfully choose their courses. They know that just because they're going to get college credit for a course doesn't make it a course that they should take without careful planning and coordination with the university, the school counselors, and the applied technology individuals who work within our school. Students are able to actually plot their four-year plan and continue it into the college and the university years, so that the course work that they're taking is meaningful.

Nielson: One of the things that the state did a few years back was create a scholarship for students who graduated from high school early. And students, for example, who have earned enough credits to graduate by the end of the first semester of their senior year are given a voucher at any of the in-state schools for \$500 toward their first experience in college to help defray the costs. And because of concurrent enrollment classes, students are finding that they can have enough credits to get out of here, finish with high school, and begin their college experience even before their graduating class leaves.

Drake: And many of them are choosing to remain at the high school and take concurrent classes, rather than take advantage of that \$500 scholarship, because they're getting and earning more college credit by remaining in the high school and earning additional credits, even though they don't need them, specifically, for graduation.

PL: Where are the additional expenses that principals might expect if they were to begin concurrent enrollment programs in their schools?

Drake: Financially, we pass that on to our students, because we still feel it's a bargain. It doesn't cost our students anything to take the classes, but they are personally responsible for textbooks and materials that might be associated with the class, as much as they would be if they took the course on campus. We do have classroom sets, and so students who are on fee waivers and the like can still participate, but they aren't allowed to mark in the books.

But the upfront cost of just the textbooks and things can be costly and so can the coordination allowing time off for our teachers to coordinate with the departments at the university to ensure that it's a "like" experience. We have a closed type of concurrent enrollment program: students use the same syllabus, do use the same textbooks, take the same tests, and have the same attendance requirements as they would have if they were attending the actual class on the university.

Nielson: Up to this point, Weber State University has not required an enrollment fee or an application fee, but some of the others have. Beginning next year, Weber State will begin to charge each student \$30, which would be the fee to have the student at the high school become a student at the college. Students would eventually have to pay that anyway when they went to Weber State, so they only pay that fee one time, and then no matter which credits they generate at Weber State, they have become a student and enrolled at Weber State.

Part of the funds that are generated by the state go to pay for the credits that are earned at the college level. They're not paid at the same rate that a student would have to pay if they went to college. But in addition to that, some of those funding monies come back into a school, not a large amount, but we use those monies to try and buy classroom sets and help students who aren't able to afford the college credit, so that the program can be open to everyone. And we use those monies to continue to upgrade our programs. Programs in computer technology always require a new piece of software when it comes out or a new textbook. So, there are two ways that we help students and some they have to pay for themselves, and some we use our state monies on.

PL: What steps should a principal who is interested in a CE program in his or her secondary school take?

Drake: First of all, they need to talk to the district so that they're not just the Lone Ranger out there trying to create a program. I think that they should be very proactive, and they should encourage district-level interest and take steps to gain support. A partnership with

the nearest university is essential; visit and see what the potential is for partnering.

It's also important to contact the state office of education. It's just huge that we get funding through them, which actually came through legislation. The state office of education is able to make important contacts that help come up with funding.

I think it's essential to research the courses and the core that you are already teaching, because that's the easiest place to begin. Determining what you are already teaching and doing that matches with university classes creates a logical partnership. And, of course, it's a good idea to visit a school with an existing successful program, where you could actually walk into classrooms; talk with teachers who are involved in it; go to the university; meet with them; and then sit down and ask, "How can I make this work at my school?"

Nielson: There are agreements that each district has with the postsecondary institutions, and there needs to be someone designated at a district level who's going to make sure that the local agreement between the school and the university is maintained. And then, probably some procedures, either adopted from another place or developed for adding a new class and determining the college's ability to say whether they will grant credit or they won't grant credit.

One of the things that's the hardest all the time is to get the board of education and the board of regents, which is the collegiate level, to agree on which classes do and don't count. But everything Pam said is correct, and you're just going to need to develop some policies to have in place so you know how to proceed.

Drake: And to carefully construct a program so that there is verified accountability and quality assurance so that the transcripts that are generated are going to be transferable and useful for them, so that they don't become suspect when a student tries to go out of state to school. That quality assurance piece, which is so highly important with the accreditation of partnering institutions, is key.

Nielson: Absolutely. On a student's transcript, it doesn't say that this was a class taught at the high school; it simply says, "English 10/10," the same class that could be taken at the col-

lege. The ability to transfer that to any in-state school, wherever the student chooses to go, is huge.

Drake: The underlying motivation for anything we do is what's good for kids. And we continually ask ourselves, "What do we need to do that's good for kids?" This is a terrific opportunity for kids to actually say, "I can be successful at the college level; I already know that I can." I think that we enable kids who might not otherwise anticipate college or university work. They've got a heads-up and a start.

Nielson: And I agree. There are students who are afraid, who think "too hard, too difficult, don't have the support at home, can't get into college." And for them to be able to sit in a classroom with some of their peers and be able to do the same course work gives them a new confidence that "maybe this is the place that I can get to, maybe I can make it there."

And I think with the climate for change in education right now, focusing back on individuals and what they've learned, is an opportunity for us to give students an individual look at where they're going and to help us tailor their program of study into something that is very relevant for them that they can move forward. **PL**

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PROGRAM SUPPORT

The National Alliance for Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP) is a professional organization for high schools and colleges that fosters and supports rigorous concurrent enrollment and provides standards for excellence to more than 75 college and university programs.

Institutions must comply with 15 standards in the areas of curriculum, faculty, students, assessment, and program evaluation. A total of 27 institutions have achieved NACEP accreditation, and an additional 8 are currently seeking that status. NACEP eagerly invites a broader representation from secondary school leaders to enhance understanding between the respective educational cultures and improve program administration and delivery.

NACEP Partner Institution members are able to:

- Collaborate and network with educators and advocates from other institutions and organizations participating in concurrent enrollment partnerships
- Access research, data, best practices, and current information about concurrent enrollment
- Enjoy a reduced conference rate and access to the NACEP e-newsletter, e-mail discussion group, and member blog
- Receive support and advocacy resources to bolster state and federal legislative initiatives.

To learn more about concurrent enrollment, please visit www.nacep.org.