

THE COLLEGE ROLE IN TECH PREP

The idea of linking secondary and postsecondary institutions to create more coherent programs is the heart of the TECH Prep vision. When TECH Prep was first proposed, the importance of creating a smoother transition between high school and college was stressed. Emphasis is placed on articulation agreements, a 2 + 2 curriculum bridging the two, and joint staff development for instructors. Therefore, the essential kernel of TECH Prep is viewed as the **collaboration of secondary and postsecondary institutions around occupational preparation.**

The most frequent collaboration between secondary and postsecondary instructors has been the process of specifying competencies necessary in postsecondary courses, laying the foundation for articulating secondary and postsecondary courses. These activities prepare students to enter colleges better able to do college work, or less likely to need remedial education. This collaboration involves postsecondary faculty in particular academic disciplines working with their secondary peers with the purpose of developing “career pathways” or majors that generate coherent programs that integrate academic and applied technology for high school students. Additionally, college instructors can help articulate the demands of the workplace and the importance of key competencies, both academic and non-academic.

Articulation agreements have been the heart of Miami-Dade County Public Schools and Miami Dade College’s TECH Prep programs, offering benefits to students. The agreements established in a variety of areas, give students college credit for courses taken during high school, thus shortening the period of time necessary for completing a certificate or Associate degree. In most cases, students can move directly into college-level courses and avoid the need for remediation.

Another benefit is the special counseling TECH Prep students receive in high school to help them to think earlier and more deeply about their occupational interests and goals and to see the value of completing high school and entering postsecondary education. At the college we see the benefit of a larger number of more focused students, with more concrete goals, more accustomed to active and applied approaches to learning, and better prepared to transition into college work. We believe that the purpose of this connection is to stress that all students, when they graduate, have the options of continuing their education, going into employment, or combining further schooling and employment. It allows students to engage in “parallel career planning”, where they can envision both postsecondary education and back up employment.