Exploring effective strategies for helping high school students succeed on the Graduation-Required Assessments for Diploma (or GRAD) tests in language arts and mathematics

Session 1  November 13, 2008:  High Stakes Graduation Testing:  A National Perspective
Presenter:  Dr. John Robert Warren, Associate Professor of Sociology, University of Minnesota
Description:  Dr. Warren's research focuses on the effects of state-mandated high school exit examinations, course requirements, and other policies on graduation rates, student achievement and performance in the labor market after high school.  In this session of the Solutions Series, he will provide an overview of the arguments for and against high-stakes graduation testing, and will share the conclusions of his own ongoing research on the subject.

Session 2  January 21, 2009:  What’s Happening with the GRAD test in Minnesota
Presenter:  Dr. Dirk Mattson, Director of Research and Assessment, Minnesota Department of Education
Description:  Dr. Dirk Mattson oversees the development, administration and reporting of statewide assessments at the Minnesota Department of Education.  Dr. Mattson will provide participants with an overview of the approach that Minnesota is taking to high school exit examinations, and will engage them in a discussion of the knowledge and skills that students must master to earn passing scores on the GRAD tests in language arts and mathematics.

Session 3  February 18, 2009:  Strategies for Accelerating Achievement in Reading
Presenter:  Dr. David O’Brien, Professor, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, University of Minnesota
Description:  Dr. David O’Brien’s research focuses on the literacy practices of K-12 learners, including the role of motivation in engaged reading and how teachers develop the instructional and leadership skills that enable them to meet the needs of all students.  Dr. O’Brien will engage participants in a discussion of both short and longer-term strategies for ramping-up the reading skills of struggling high school students.

Session 4  March 25, 2009:  Strategies for Accelerating Achievement in Mathematics
Presenter:  Dr. Tamara Moore, Assistant Professor of Mathematics/Engineering Education, University of Minnesota
Description:  Dr. Tamara Moore’s research focuses on the use of contextual problem solving and modeling to increase the number and diversity of students who are interested and successful in the STEM disciplines (science, technology, engineering and mathematics), and who go on to postsecondary study and careers in those fields.  Dr. Moore will discuss both short and longer-term strategies for helping struggling students meet state graduation requirements in mathematics.

ALL SESSIONS 3:00-5:00 PM
Coffman Union-Mississippi Room
University of Minnesota
300 Washington Ave, Minneapolis

A map with parking information can be found at:  http://www1.umn.edu/twincities/maps/CMU/

NOTE:  Participants are asked to register for the entire series & to make every effort to attend all 4 sessions.  Schools and districts are strongly encouraged to consider sending small teams of 3-5 people to the series to facilitate local dialog and planning.  CEU credits are available.

To register for the 2008-2009 Solutions Series, Getting Ready for the GRAD, please e-mail ppg@umn.edu or contact Amanda Brown at 612-625-7517.  Provide your name, title, organization & email address.  Spaces will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis.  Other than parking fees at Coffman Union, there is no cost for participation in the series.

Co-sponsored by the University of Minnesota-College Readiness Consortium and the College of Education and Human Development’s Professional Practice Group and the Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals.