


DOINGWHATWORKS

 **AUDIO**
3:53 min

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Getting Students in the Right Spot

Jefferson Davis High School, Texas
April 2011

Topic **HELPING STUDENTS NAVIGATE THE PATH TO COLLEGE**

Practice **FOSTER COLLEGE ASPIRATIONS**

Highlights

- » Teachers and administrators at Davis High School work to help students determine the best plans for their future.
- » It is important to align course placement and student support to individual needs.
- » Davis administrators help students prepare for large public universities, prestigious Ivy League schools, or technical training at a local community college, depending on what is the right fit for each student.

About the Site **Jefferson Davis High School
Houston, TX**

Demographics

- » 89% Hispanic
- » 10% Black
- » 1% White
- » 92% Free or Reduced-Price Lunch
- » 15% Special Education

(Houston Independent School District, District and School Profiles, 2009-10)

Jefferson Davis High School implements multiple strategies to ensure all students graduate fully prepared to pursue their postsecondary goals:

- » Staff use middle school student achievement and nonacademic outcome data to monitor students' progress toward graduation and postsecondary readiness, providing interventions for struggling students and those at risk
- » A ninth-grade mentoring program provides students with supportive adult relationships
- » Students can enroll in programs that provide tutoring, family support, college workshops, counseling, and dropout recovery success
- » To foster a sense of community among students, the school sets high expectations, holds students accountable, and celebrates their successes

Full Transcript





🔊 00:04 My name is Ruth Kravetz. I am the Davis High School dean of instruction (I also teach AP Calculus) in Houston Independent School District in Houston, Texas.


🔊 00:14 The entire time that a kid is at Davis High School, we are working to help them, in an age-appropriate way, figure out what they are going to do with their life—what career will be useful for them, what college they need to be thinking about. When you look at a kid, you want to help make sure that you know exactly where they are going to be best.

🔊 00:32 What we do is we talk to kids and we say, what kind of kid are you, are you a kid who needs to be a big fish. If you need to be a big fish, we are not going to be pushing you to Bowdoin or Beloit or Kalamazoo or UVA or Cornell. And I am saying all these schools because these are schools that students from Davis High School are currently attending or have attended and graduated from. And we want to make sure we get the kid in the right spot. And when you come from


a school—a large comprehensive urban high school—even if you have been working very, very hard and even if you have passed several AP classes, you are about to be deposited in an Ivy League college and you need to be ready for that. So we help that particular group of kids, we help identify that group of kids, and then they go off and they are successful. And every single kid that we have sent to these universities, they ended up successful because we helped them choose right.

 **01:27** Then there are other kids who, in their hearts, they need to be bigger fish, so we send them to schools that are slightly less selective. So we send them to Sam Houston State University or to Texas State University, public universities in the State of Texas that provide very, very good valued education, and they go off and they graduate and they do wonderful things.

 **01:47** Then you have kids who, for a variety of reasons, aren't ready to go to college right now, so we help the kid who is in his fourth year or third year or second year think about the realities of the 21st century. There aren't any jobs out there without any training, so we help them understand that they should consider the local community college for some technical training, whether it's plumbing or electrician or EMT or whatever it is. So just because a kid says, "I don't think I want to go to college," doesn't mean the kid shouldn't become a graduate of a four-year university. So we connect them with Houston Community College, which is really, really close, and we connect them with counselors there so they know what's available for them and what fits their needs, their interests, their family dynamic, and all those other things.

 **02:33** The idea is that when a child graduates from high school, hopefully in four years, they go to college or they have a route that works for them. Although we want all of our students to have the most powerful life they possibly can have, and in this day and age that generally means a college degree, we know that not all of our students are going to go to a four-year university. So for the entirety of the time that they are here at Davis High School, we are cognizant of the

tracks that a child might take. They might go to college and then go off into the workforce. They might graduate from high school and go to a technical program, and then go into the workforce. And they might graduate from high school and go straight into the workforce. So what we try to do is teach lots and lots and lots of stuff, teach them so that they are knowledgeable and thoughtful and educated and aware.

 **03:27** We also try to connect at all times. The relationship that a child has with a teacher, a power figure, is the same relationship that they are going to have with somebody in the workplace, so we try to get the children ready for work. We try to do it by personalizing the experience, helping children understand that they are people, and we try to help people figure out who they are going to be.