

*We can no longer justify, to our own consciences, let alone to our communities and to the world, graduating students and sending them off to college, when we know, without a doubt, that they are not academically prepared to succeed there.*

We reached this resolution after years of watching students we had supported and taught and grown go off hopefully in pursuit of a college degree, only to return empty-handed—unless you count the debt they and their families had accrued as they struggled to achieve something they were not yet ready to achieve.

We have turned a corner in this country, as far as our perception of college goes—we have established the importance of a college education as requisite to individual success. While some of our students still choose not to go, they all understand that they are choosing to give up an opportunity with great potential rewards. They understand and believe that it would be better to go to college.

What they don't know, and what we absolutely must add in our drive to establish a college-going culture, is an understanding of what a college education means—of the skills and knowledge a student must accrue in order to *be* college-educated. We should strive to send all of our kids to college, but we must first be specific and honest about the levels of performance demanded by post-secondary work. For too many of our students that rigor is ill-defined, ill-discussed, and ill-understood, and this has promoted a high school educational program where a minimum level of effort sustained over a set number of hours, as opposed to an accumulation of successful academic performances, is the benchmark for determining whether a student is ready to move to the next level.

We at HSC have decided to demand of ourselves, and of our students, honesty and specificity in our conversations about academic performance. We believe in rewarding effort and growth, but we are no longer comfortable saying to our families that evidence of effort and growth is enough of a foundation for a successful college career. This year, we have dedicated our efforts to establishing, communicating, and holding students accountable for completing the masteries and the academic performances we believe will prove students' college and career readiness. We have met with students, with families, with colleges, and with the community to talk about the culture of mastery we are striving to create, and we have begun the long process of shifting understanding of what a high school diploma should mean. We have a long way to go, but we believe this transformation of our educational program is essential, and we believe that the flexibility and innovation at the heart of HB 6624 will move us one step closer to establishing and enforcing expectations that will truly help us to move our students toward the success that public education should promise them.

A. Erik Good, Building Leader