

## **Otterbein Collegiate Institute**

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As a principal working in the elementary and secondary divisions, as well as simultaneously serving as a faculty member in higher education, I was bewildered at how many teachers/professors would share with me a common belief that the previous grade level/course instructor should have done more to prepare students for what was next, in both school and life.

As I conducted formal teacher evaluations across the various grade levels/courses, I observed instructional practices that at times were very rote and traditional. From my observations, these practices only met the needs of some students. On other occasions, I observed forward-focused, highly individualized, and progressive instruction that was indeed meeting the needs of the majority, if not all, students. By teaching through an innovative 21<sup>st</sup> Century lens, I am not referring to instruction utilizing technology; but rather, instructional delivery and assessment that is focused on fostering the skills necessary to be a 21<sup>st</sup> Century college AND workforce ready individual.

As K-12 schools continue to seek ways to ensure its students are ready for what is next, whether it be for the next course, college, and/or work, best practices continue to evolve, especially in light of the new Common Core. The Common Core standards are designed to be robust and relevant to the real world, reflecting the knowledge and skills that students need for success in college, 21<sup>st</sup> Century oriented work, and jobs that are neither known to exist nor yet to be defined.

Therefore, it is incumbent on all educators to prepare students for what is next by contemplating not only what it means to be college ready, but also workforce ready. Among the most important skills often cited by employers include:

- Oral and Written Communications
- Teamwork/Collaboration and
- Critical Thinking/Problem Solving

The Otterbein Collegiate Institute (OCI) provides an opportunity for interested and qualified Central Ohio high school students to take college course work during their junior and senior years of high school. Such a partnership enables K-12 educators and Otterbein University professors to work in concert to ensure that we are preparing our college-bound students for what is next in their life. It is through educators that strive to develop meaningful relationships with their students, while ensuring academic rigor, content relevance, and critical reflection, that we can best foster oral and written communication skills, an appreciation and desire to work as a team, and, in a collaborative partnership with others, apply meaningful critical thinking/problem solving approaches.