In *Redefining College Readiness* (Vol. 5, 2007), David T. Conley provides a new definition of college readiness and argues for changes in educational practices in order to prepare students for the rigors they will face in the college environment. The quotes below are particularly relevant to the work conducted by the Region 12 Academic Vertical Alignment Training and Renewal (AVATAR) Project.

The key academic behaviors consist largely of self-monitoring skills and study skills. (12)

[T]he academic program should be structured so that students are required to assume more control and responsibility for their learning as they move through high school. (21)

The result is that students often begin their senior year of high school believing they are ready for college because they have completed required courses. This, in turn, often leads to the development of particularly poor study habits and skills during the final year of high school (Conley, 2001; Kirst, 2000; National Commission on the High School Senior Year, 2001). In this fashion, the lack of a coherent , developmentally sequenced program of study also contributes to deficiencies in other key areas, including study skills and time management. (21-22)

The Region 12 Academic Vertical Alignment Training and Renewal (AVATAR) Project agrees that administrative policies in high schools have a significant and sometimes negative effect on college readiness.  In particular, policies that force teachers to accept late work, that allow rewrites, or that simply prevent teachers from grading to the standards they would prefer have an adverse impact on students both academically and in terms of emotional maturity. The group is particularly concerned about policies that

* allow students to submit late work with little or no penalty.
* force teachers to accept revisions of graded material.
* focus classroom academics on the state-mandated exam to the exclusion of other concepts in the TEKS.
* require a high school to record grades higher than a student has actually earned (e.g., minimum scores on report cards).
* mandate a certain percentage of passing students in a class.
* compromise grading integrity (e.g., ones that restrict penalties for plagiarism or cheating).

Our group understands

* the need to graduate high school students.
* the need for students to pass state-required exams.
* that student success rates are tied to state and federal funding and to other oversight mechanisms.

However, the group also sees a need to consider other aspects of a student’s development. Such policies are inherently unfair to the students who are responsible and submit work in a timely manner. These inequitable practices discourage emotional maturity and development by, in effect, rewarding irresponsibility. To foster development that more appropriately aligns with college and workforce expectations, we provide the following recommendations.

* Eliminate the types of policies detailed above from the standard high school curriculum.
* Consider implementing a program that presents a united front on college and career readiness to the students (i.e., **everyone** works together to encourage students to demonstrate both academic ability and responsible, mature behavior).
* Develop and implement college transition courses for students beginning dual credit courses and those preparing for high school graduation.

Policies that do not reflect the realities of employers’ or professors’ expectations do not serve to prepare students to succeed. As such, policies that erode personal responsibility and evade accurate assessment of a student’s abilities are anathema to education. Such policies are a disservice to students because they misrepresent the actual challenges of the adult academic and workforce worlds.

In sum, all of these proposals are aimed toward the goal of enhancing students’ development and preparedness for the rigors and the requirements of college and workforce expectations. We believe that our recommendations will more accurately provide students with representative experiences that appropriately mirror the requirements and restrictions that they will encounter in college and workforce environments.