

BUILDING
EDUCATIONAL
SUCCESS
THROUGH

COLLABORATION IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY

Partnering to Create College Going Cultures:
A Resource Guide

Melissa Friedman MacDonald and Aimée Dorr, UCLA



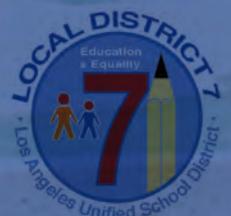
CENTINELA VALLEY UNION
HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

USC
ROSSIER
SCHOOL OF
EDUCATION



LACOE.edu
Los Angeles County Office of Education

UCLA
Academic
Preparation &
Educational
Partnerships



Partnering to Create College Going Cultures: A Resource Guide

Melissa Friedman MacDonald and Aimée Dorr, UCLA

Practical Suggestions Developed by Partnerships for Partnerships

“All students college ready,” the mission of Los Angeles Unified School District, Local District 7, is a vision shared by many districts across Los Angeles County. Regional educators are combining efforts to improve the college preparation process in public high schools located in LA County so that all students have equitable and adequate opportunities to become eligible for college. Prepared as part of the *Building Educational Success Through (BEST) Collaboration in Los Angeles County* initiative, this report is meant to serve as a resource for local educators aiming to build and maintain partnerships geared toward cultivating college going cultures in their schools.

The content of this report is based on the work of the “Building on Our Partnerships to Create a College Going Culture” conference held on November 2, 2006. Conference participants consisted of seven successful partnerships of public school districts and institutions of higher education from across LA County. Specific information regarding the “Building on Our Partnerships to Create a College Going Culture” conference is provided in an evaluation report that can be downloaded from the *BEST Collaboration in Los Angeles County* initiative web site at <http://aep-bestla.gseis.ucla.edu>.

This resource guide is intended to provide practical information for all districts and institutions of higher education involved in partnership work. However, the majority of the data collected from the conference reflect the perspectives of district and school site personnel. As such, the content of this report is focused largely on the suggestions that these practitioners had for what they themselves have done or should be doing to build capacity for college going cultures at the school level. This information is instructive for IHEs because it can increase their understanding of school level functioning and can therefore inform efforts to build sustainable relationships with school sites. All conference participants contributed useful information about existing college preparatory resources in the Los Angeles Community; these programs, with contact information, are described at the end of this resource guide.

Partners in the Process: Big Picture Issues and Operation Level Details

Developing and maintaining effective partnership work is a complex process that requires equal attention to macro level conceptual issues as well as micro level practical strategies. These issues and operations must be considered at two levels: in relationship-building with institutions of higher education (IHEs) and on a school site level in creating a college going culture.

Building Relationships with Institutions of Higher Education

Building and sustaining partnerships geared toward creating a college going culture is a multi-faceted process that includes establishing contact with an appropriate IHE, developing a vision for a meaningful collaboration, and ultimately forming an agreement about how to conduct partnership activities.

- ✳ When deciding which partnerships to pursue, consider the match between the vision and needs of the school site and the opportunities afforded by the IHE.

Strategies for initiating IHE relationships include:

- ❖ Find a key contact person at the college/university and work from there
- ❖ In the absence of established contacts, call the admissions office
 - Introduce yourself as a K-12 educator and explain your needs and interests
 - Request the names and contact information for additional people who might be able to help you
 - Be patient and persistent, and ultimately you will get in contact with the appropriate representative

Building effective relationships with IHEs involves:

- ❖ Clearly establishing roles and responsibilities from the beginning
 - Determine what role the IHE will play and what the responsibilities of various school site stakeholders are, particularly the administration
 - Provide IHEs with information about the systems, protocols, and expectations of the local district office and implications for operations at the school site
 - Draft a memo of understanding to document the definition of roles and responsibilities
- ❖ Providing the partner a space or office on school campus
- ❖ Creating networking opportunities for all IHE partners to be involved at the school site
 - Plan social events for IHE representatives and volunteers
 - Present opportunities for IHEs to gain knowledge about the other initiatives occurring at the school, because this information can allow IHE partners to gain a holistic understanding of the issues the school is facing which often results in increased investment in partnership work
- ❖ Maintaining consistent communication with IHE partners
 - Hold monthly meetings that include principals, assistant principals, IHE representatives, and teachers
- ❖ Developing a reciprocal relationship with the IHE so that the university also benefits from partnership work
 - Present opportunities for the IHE to conduct research on partnership activities
 - Create opportunities to use research results to inform program practices and to identify areas for change

Sustaining Partnership Relationships: School Level Strategies

Once a relationship is established with an IHE, maintaining the partnership and related activities can be a challenging endeavor. School site issues such as staff turnover and the coexistence of multiple programs at the school can create obstacles for the smooth continuation of partnership work.

Strategies for preventing a breakdown of the partnership relationship due to staff turnover include:

- ❖ Creating a paper trail for all partnership relationships and activities
 - Maintain a folder with all IHE contacts and key program information
- ❖ Grooming on-site people to fill a position that is about to be vacated
 - Ensure that there is some overlap between staff with partnership history and new staff so that there is a seamless transition
 - Require the employee who is leaving to brief the rest of the staff about the status of partnership activities
- ❖ Ensuring that principals and assistant principals participate in partnership relationships in order to maintain some level of consistency
- ❖ Distributing knowledge about the partnership work
 - Create a steering committee/team with representatives from different programs and groups so that there are people who can continue the work should someone leave
- ❖ Designating a liaison to keep track of who and what is on the school campus
 - Select someone very familiar with the school, students, and community to be the partnership liaison
 - Ensure that this liaison serves as a key contact person for all partnerships
- ❖ Keeping external partners invested in the school by providing regular opportunities to observe the results of their time, resources, and/or funding
 - Hold open houses and other social events for partners to interact with students and/or visit the classroom

Getting Students to Go to College

This question lies at the heart of all efforts to create college going cultures in high schools. There is no doubt that rigorous curriculum and quality college counseling are important factors in preparing students to be college ready. Parental involvement and student awareness seem to be critical motivating influences that push students to become interested in college and to pursue a path to higher education.

Parental Involvement

Informed parents who are actively engaged in the college process can help prepare and motivate students to attain college readiness and ultimately to apply to college. All parents must be encouraged to participate in the college process and schools should provide consistent opportunities for parents to do so. An example of an existing program that is successfully engaging parents in their students' academic experiences is the *USC Neighborhood Academic Initiative*, a program featured at the November 2, 2006 conference.

Making the College Process a Family Affair: The USC Neighborhood Academic Initiative

USC Neighborhood Academic Initiative



USC's Neighborhood Academic Initiative is an outreach program that provides low-income, minority, middle and senior high school students living in the neighborhoods surrounding the USC campus the opportunity to receive a full scholarship to USC upon graduation from the program. Conceived in the late 1980s and first implemented in the early 1990s, NAI identifies local, low-income, minority students who display the determination and desire to attend and succeed in college. NAI currently partners with three LAUSD District 7 public schools, all of which are designated Title One, with up to 90% of their student populations qualifying for the federal school lunch program. Students drawn from these schools are largely second language learners and almost exclusively the first in their families to attend college. Many are the first in their families to graduate from high school.

USC NAI grounds a set of outreach strategies in a theory of action drawn from research regarding college-preparedness. These strategies have been further refined by our own experiences over the last fifteen years and are as follows:

1. **Create a College-Bound Culture** – where parents and scholars come to see attending college as attainable and expected, and where all participants come to share in the effort, persistence, and values required to attain this goal.
2. **Implement Rigorous Academic Curriculum** – that is firmly rooted in the California State Standards and A-G requirements and enhanced with honors and AP courses, intersessions, and access to cultural learning.
3. **Cultivate a High-Quality Teaching Staff** – of dedicated individuals capable of engaging students at the highest levels of learning.

4. **Provide Intensive Academic Support** – with after-school tutoring, SAT preparation, the NAI Saturday Academy, college admissions and financial aid coaching, and beyond the classroom mentoring.
5. **Generate Parent / Community Involvement** – with parent events and seminars on aspects of college preparedness, healthy living, and academic networking.

The Family Development Institute

Research has demonstrated that when parents are more involved with their children's education process, attitudes toward learning become more positive, school attendance is improved and overall grade point averages are higher. As a consequence, parents/guardians or advocates of scholars enrolled in the USC NAI are required to participate in the Family Development Institute, which in conjunction with the Academy's Counseling Component, offers a variety of workshops designed to enhance and develop parenting skills, educational awareness, and overall human potential of the parents.

The primary activities of the Family Development Institute are the FDI seminars, held on the USC campus on approximately sixteen Saturdays (roughly eight per semester during the C-track academic year), from 8:00AM to 12:00PM. Seminar topics are developed with input from parents, staff, and teachers. Topics are usually clustered into general areas with three specific seminar topics under that area. Topics have included adolescent/child development, effective communication, creating a positive learning environment in the home, fostering educational success, navigating the public school system, conflict resolution, and topics specific to the parents of the seniors which center around the college application process, financial aid, and the successful launching of the scholars into the college of their choice.

As per the NAI agreement, parents must commit to attending 80% of all of the FDI seminars for the child to be eligible for the NAI scholarship. There is some flexibility in that if parents are unable to make it to a meeting due to work or other obligations; they may send an advocate to represent the scholar. An advocate needs to be an adult who is involved with the child at some level – an aunt or uncle, grandparent, adult sibling, neighbor, Godparent, or friend.

Further information:

For more information about the NAI program visit <http://www.usc.edu/ext-relations/nai/> and/or contact Kim Thomas-Barrios at thomasba@usc.edu.

Strategies for engaging parents as partners in the college process include:

- ❖ Advertising college-preparatory programs and information in “parent friendly language”
 - Translate all college materials into different languages
- ❖ Conducting a parent orientation specifically on college readiness at the beginning of each school year
 - Invite AVID specialists from the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) to meet with incoming freshmen and families about the course requirements for eligibility for admission to CSUs and UCs (A-G courses), college applications, and financial aid
 - Provide parents with a document that describes existing college preparatory programs and resources available in the local community
- ❖ Scheduling regular parent seminars to discuss A-G courses, college admission tests, and college readiness
 - These meetings can include smaller groups of parents (15-20) throughout the year so as to provide accessible, ongoing information about college going
- ❖ Holding “mini conferences” with parents to review information that is sent home
 - Change the culture of parent conferences from a “culture of compliance” to a “college readiness” focus
- ❖ Implementing a district wide college fair where parents and students can participate in a variety of college preparatory workshops
- ❖ Inviting parents of students who have gone to college to come to talk to other parents about the college process
 - Facilitate the development of a network among local parents with young people in college and young people preparing for college
 - Use experienced parents and students as a motivation and information source for other parents new to the process
- ❖ Identifying existing parent groups that have a strong presence at LA County high schools
 - Use these groups as a resource to learn about strategies for starting a parent group at your school
 - Have the existing parent group address your parents and/or lead outreach efforts to help to create a partnership/network of parent groups across the County
- ❖ Creating other types of opportunities to talk to and involve parents who are resistant/uncomfortable coming to school
 - Call these parents at home and/or visit their home if possible

Student Awareness: College as a Visual, Tangible Reality

Students need to be academically and socially prepared for college. In addition to the appropriate coursework and college counseling, students need various opportunities to experience college life. Increasing student awareness of the academic and social aspects of college culture can help transform higher education into a tangible reality for students.

Promoting student college awareness can be achieved by:

- ❖ Providing information about and encouraging students to attend summer residential programs at a local college
 - Ensure that students take college-level courses and participate in campus social life
- ❖ Creating opportunities for students to visit college classes during the academic year
 - Ensure that students experience college lectures, learn more about the style of instruction in higher education, and are exposed to the expectations of college academics
- ❖ Developing a student college council to plan college awareness events on campus
- ❖ Inviting school alumni who are in college to address current high school students in assemblies and in classes
 - Have these students provide personal accounts of college life and share application strategies
- ❖ Asking college professors to teach college courses at the high school during the week, after school, or on weekends
- ❖ Developing college awareness activities for students
 - Have students complete “Adopt-A-College” projects in which each student selects a college, researches the institution, and then designs a t-shirt that displays admission requirements, tuition costs, and other relevant information
 - Stage “College Scavenger Hunts” where students are provided with a list of landmarks and/or buildings on a college campus that they are to find and write about and provide incentives to students who complete the activity
 - Engage the school in a competition to name all classrooms and buildings after colleges and universities and judge students by the amount of information provided about the institution and its application procedure
- ❖ Establishing a College Dress Day for staff to wear university gear from their alma mater
- ❖ Planning Saturday college fairs for local universities to hold workshops at the school site
- ❖ Instituting a college going colloquium during lunch period
- ❖ Working with local businesses and community organizations to provide internship opportunities for students
 - Motivate college preparation with first hand experience with a career they are interested in and for which they learn that a college education is needed

Conclusion

This report is the third resource guide released by the *BEST Collaboration in Los Angeles County* initiative. Each resource guide has documented the work of the three conferences sponsored by the *BEST* initiative over the last year. In the past, two separate reports have been generated for each conference. In addition to a resource guide, the results of the written assessments administered at each event have been documented in a separate report. We encourage those who are interested to review previous reports. All publications released by the *BEST* initiative can be downloaded from our web site at <http://aep-bestla.gseis.ucla.edu/>.

Existing College-Related Programs and Resources: A Clearinghouse of Relevant Information for LA County Partnerships

Cal-SOAP, California Student Opportunity and Access Program

The Cal-SOAP is instrumental in improving the flow of information about postsecondary education and financial aid while raising the achievement levels of low-income, elementary and secondary school students or geographic regions with documented low-eligibility or college participation rates, and who are first in their families to attend college. Today, Cal-SOAP projects operate in seventeen locations throughout the state by consortia made up of secondary and postsecondary schools and community agencies. Cal-SOAP works in cooperation with other intersegmental outreach programs to avoid service duplication. Current Cal-SOAP projects include: Central Coast (Santa Maria), Central Valley (San Joaquin), East Bay (Oakland and Richmond), Greater Long Beach Region, Los Angeles, Merced, North Coast (Eureka), North Valley (Yuba), Sacramento College Horizons, San Diego/Imperial, San Francisco, San Jose, Santa Barbara, South County Gilroy, South San Joaquin, and SUCCESS (Solano). Because each project specializes in serving students within its community, the types of programs and services may differ. However, the projects share some common services including advising, tutoring, parent outreach, and college awareness workshops.

For more information visit <http://www.csac.ca.gov/doc.asp?id=77>

College Summit Program

This comprehensive program provides both student workshops and teacher training related to college preparation. Among other things, the four day student workshop allows 40 low-income students to live on a college campus and work through each component of their college applications. The teacher training component instructs teachers on how to write effective college recommendations, how to help their seniors who did not attend the workshop prepare their college applications, how to answer financial aid questions commonly asked of (and by) low-income students, and how to keep their advisory students on track to college using CSNet, College Summit's easy-to-use on-line system.

For more information about this program visit <http://www.collegesummit.org/>

Fulfillment Fund

The Fulfillment Fund is a college access organization dedicated to helping promising, yet educationally underserved and economically disadvantaged students achieve high school graduation and access to and completion of higher education through programs that also produce systemic change. The organization offers classroom instruction, mentoring, one-to-one advising, workshops and field trips.

For more information visit <http://www.fulfillment.org/>

LA Trade Tech College Bridge to College Program

This program provides students with the opportunity to enroll free of cost in college courses while still in high school. Students must be recommended by an administrator or counselor and must have parental permission.

For more information about this program visit <http://www.lattc.edu/lattc/k-12/index.htm>

MESA Schools Program (MSP)

The MSP assists students at middle and senior high schools (and some elementary schools) so they excel in math and science and become competitively eligible for the most rigorous colleges and universities. The MSP partners with teachers, administrators, school district officials and industry representatives to provide this academic enrichment model. Students are selected to participate in the MSP through a process that involves teachers at participating schools and locally-based MESA personnel.

For more information visit <http://www.ucop.edu/mesa/home.html>

TRIO program

The Federal TRIO Programs are educational opportunity outreach programs designed to motivate and support students from disadvantaged backgrounds. TRIO includes six outreach and support programs targeted to serve and assist low-income, first-generation college students, and students with disabilities to progress through the academic pipeline from middle school to post baccalaureate programs. TRIO also includes a training program for directors and staff of TRIO projects and a dissemination partnership program to encourage the replication or adaptation of successful practices of TRIO projects at institutions and agencies that do not have TRIO grants.

For more information visit <http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/trio/index.html>

USC Center for Higher Education Policy Analysis

This research center provides access to publications and reports regarding college going for low-income students. Topics of research and related projects include college access and financial aid. In addition, this center provides information about local college related initiatives, projects, and events.

For more information visit <http://www.usc.edu/dept/chepa/>

Young Black Scholars Program

Young Black Scholars (YBS) is a program dedicated to ensuring college preparation, leadership development, community responsibility and successful life planning. Since 1986, YBS has assisted students in “realizing” the pursuit of a college education. The mission of the Young Black Scholars program is to enhance the academic performance of African American high school youths through enrichment workshops and programs which support and prepare scholars to be competitively eligible for University admissions and success. The Young Black Scholars program is an educational activity of the 100 Black Men of Los Angeles, Inc. who, along with parents, scholars, YBS staff, YBS High School Clubs, High School Faculty Liaisons, community co-sponsoring organizations and a Collegiate Resource Network, make YBS work.

For more information visit <http://www.youngblackscholars.com>