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COLLABORATION IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY

**Creating a College Going Culture
A Resource Guide
October 2006**

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and Aimée Dorr, UCLA**



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Creating a College Going Culture A Resource Guide

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A Practical Guide Created by Educators for Educators

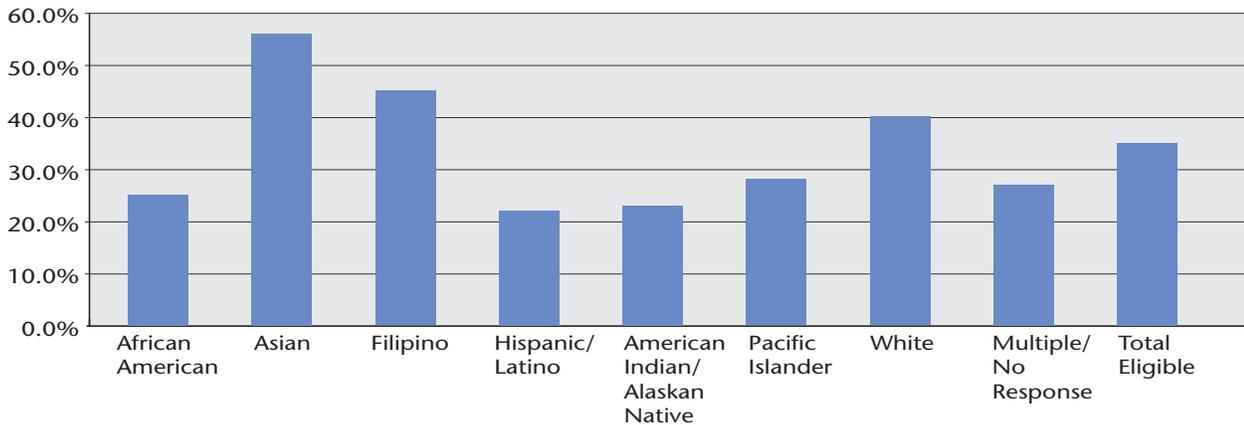
Regional educators have been combining efforts in order to ensure that all students in Los Angeles County have equal opportunity to adequately prepare for college. Prepared as part of the *Building Educational Success Through (BEST) Collaboration in Los Angeles County* initiative, this report is meant to serve as a resource for regional educators striving to create and/or improve college going cultures in K-12 schools.

The first part of this report is based heavily on the work of Dr. Patricia McDonough, an expert in college access and Professor of Education at UCLA's Graduate School of Education & Information Studies. Dr. McDonough facilitated a "Creating A College Going Culture" conference held in June 2006. Participants were K-12 educators and members of higher education institutions from across Los Angeles County. The specific suggestions for practice that are described in this report, particularly in the section "Implementing a College Going Culture: Action Steps and Activities," were provided by conference attendees.

Disparities in College Readiness

According to the California Department of Education, a little over a third of students graduating in 2003-04 from public high schools in this state had completed the UC/CSU entrance course requirements. College going is associated with significant increases in income and opportunity. Too few California high school students graduate prepared to go to a four-year institution, and marked racial disparities highlight the critical need to improve the college preparation process in our public high schools.

CSU/UC Eligibility Rates by Ethnic Group 2003-04



Note: This chart is adapted from EdSource's 2006 Resource Cards found online at www.edsource.org/sch_stu_elig.cfm

Achieving College Readiness

The caliber of a student's academic experience in high school has important implications for college enrollment and completion. A quality college preparatory program is multi-faceted and takes place in classrooms, counseling offices, and at home.

Important factors that contribute to college readiness include:

- Rigorous high school courses
- High teacher expectations
- Consistent, high quality college counseling
- The timely provision of admissions and financial aid information
- Parental involvement in the college process

Meaning of Culture in the Context of K-12 Education

Culture consists of the underlying values, beliefs, and meanings which are deeply held, static, and enduring.

Responses to these three key questions can help identify a school's culture:

- All students who attend this school are expected to _____?
- All counselors who work at this school are expected to _____?
- A person cannot walk down the hallways of this school without seeing _____?

A College Going Culture

The overarching goal of cultivating a college going culture is for all students to be prepared for a full range of post-secondary options through structural, motivational, and experiential college preparatory opportunities.

College going cultures are likely to exist in schools where:

- Students are expected to achieve high academic standards in a college preparatory curriculum
- The school staff is collectively committed to students' college goals
- College is a visual reality
- Informal and formal communication networks promote and support college expectations

Fundamental precursors to creating a college going culture include:

- A commitment from the school leadership team and staff
- An understanding that all teachers and counselors are college counselors
- A dedication to a partnership model of college preparation that includes active involvement from teachers, counselors, administrators, and parents

Nine Critical Principles of College Going Cultures

Cultivating a college going culture is a multifaceted process that requires a concrete action plan. Dr. Patricia McDonough has identified nine critical building blocks of an effective college going culture. Definitions and indicators for each critical principle are provided in the table titled *Nine Critical Principles for Creating a College Going Culture* (on page 5). A close consideration of these principles can lead schools through the process of developing a relevant action plan that when implemented will result in a comprehensive college going culture.

Use the Nine Critical Principles to Create an Action Plan

Schools that want to change their college going rates can develop an action plan for achieving a balanced implementation of all nine critical principles. This process should begin with an honest inventory of existing programs and resources and can then progress to the development of a comprehensive college preparatory culture. Dr. McDonough has developed a planning template. *Action Plan for Building a College Culture* (on pages 6 and 7) presents part of a high school action plan being developed as part of the *Building Educational Success Through (BEST) Collaboration in Los Angeles County* initiative. The name of the school that developed the plan and the names of specific school staff have been changed to [school] and [school person/people].

Nine Critical Principles for Creating a College Going Culture

Critical Principle	Definition	Indicators
College Talk	Clear, ongoing communication about college so that all students develop a college-going identity.	Newsletters, newspapers, posters, College Club for middle school students, essay contest based on college application questions.
Clear Expectations	Explicit goals of college preparation must be defined and communicated clearly, consistently, and in a variety of ways by families and all school personnel.	School mission statement, four-year plans for all students, frequent communication with students about their college options, ongoing opportunities to discuss college preparation and define goals.
Information and Resources	Students must have access to up-to-date, comprehensive college information and schools must build college knowledge infrastructure.	College-related periodicals, PSAT/SAT/ACT materials, financial aid materials, college catalogs, workshops on test prep and financial planning.
Comprehensive Counseling Model	All counselors are college counselors and all student interactions with counselors are college advising opportunities.	All high school counselors attend state college conferences, counselors at all grade levels have ongoing collaboration, counselors distribute college information to all students, faculty, and staff.
Testing and Curriculum	Students must be informed about necessary tests, must be given the opportunity to prepare for these tests, and testing fees must be taken into account.	PSAT given on school day to all 10th graders, with fees waived (Contact College Board), master schedules changed to make more college prep classes available, students learn organizational skills.
Faculty Involvement	Faculty must be active, informed partners with counselors, students, and families and professional development opportunities must be available.	Classroom decorations and “college corners,” College Talk in class time, mathematics teachers work with PSAT-takers, teachers understand their roles in college prep, teachers visit counseling office.
Family Involvement	Family members must have opportunities to gain college knowledge and understand their role.	College Fairs for students and their families, evening/weekend parent workshops to learn about college preparation, financial planning, parents supported in their belief that their children are “college material.”
College Partnerships	There should be active links between K-12 schools and local colleges and universities that can lead to field trips, college fairs, and academic enrichment programs.	Students at all grade levels have visited local college campuses, college dress days, door decoration contests, guest speakers, tutoring programs, pen pal program with college students.
Articulation	Students should have a seamless experience from Kindergarten through HS graduation, with ongoing communication among all schools in a feeder group, and work at one school site should connect with activities at other levels.	Students hear a consistent message at all grade levels, middle schools connect with students as young as fifth grade, as early as kindergarten students should see themselves as college material, high school and middle school counselors are pooling resources and making connections.

Note: “Creating a College Culture” is a UCLA Project directed by Professor Patricia McDonough.

Action Plan for Building a College Culture

College Talk						
Activity and Related Principle	Lead Person and Key Individuals	Committee or Other Groups Involved	Support Needs (Logistical, material, etc.)	Timeline for Implementation and/or Completion	Measure(s) of Success	Priority Level
Visuals: Decorate benches w/college logos; Murals with inspiring college dreams; College banners	[School person] Students /gang members who hang out at specific benches on campus	Students/ taggers	Anti-graffiti paint Involvement of students for specific benches - if involved from the beginning on decorating benches and favorite colleges in their area, they'll be less likely to tag	Do painting off-track		
Teachers talk about their college experience in class	All teachers	Staff	Getting word out to teachers on the importance of sharing college experiences	Minimum: weekly; as occasion arises		
Clear Expectations						
All students informed about A-G classes, AP, elective courses; all tests needed for CSU and UC admission	[School person], Counselors, Career Center	Leadership students	Compare actual A-G and courses offered at [School] Buy AVID A-G posters for every classroom			
School leadership is committed to building a college culture; All school personnel provide a consistent message to students that supports their quest for college prep	Teachers, counselors, Administration	Students, staff	Teacher leaders and admin sent to additional trainings; attend consortium conferences	Every day		
Information and Resources						
College Fairs: open to MS and HS #1 Inspirational • A-G info, courses needed for college track • Lots of excitement about going to college (music, skits, etc) • Upper level electives offered #2 Informational College recruiters come to give information of financial aid, college apps, support for SAT, college essays, specific college info and majors, partnerships with schools	Admin, HS College Counselors, MS and HS AVID Coordinators #2 - college recruiters	-[School] alumni coming back to talk about college -AVID students as inspirational models -Leadership students	-Photos of college trips -Posters showing salary contrasts between non-college grads and college grads, -Booths with different careers represented	#1 - Early in 1st semester #2 - later in 1st semester (before college apps are due) Each Fair TWICE, to hit all tracks		
CSAT College-going culture plan	Contact Laurie Wiebold, AVID LACOE Dir 562-922-6818 <i>Email:</i> Wiebold_Laurie@lacoed.edu	Teachers and staff	CSAT plan from AVID for college-going culture			
Comprehensive Counseling Model						
College counseling training			Attend AVID Counselor trainings; UC, CSU			
Getting undocumented students into college	Suzanne Farley, presenter 310-453-2323 SuzanneK Farley@aol.com All counselors SLC leads	SLC leads, counselors, AVID teachers; Key Admin AP Coord	Training on ins and outs of how to get them to college, legislation, how to GET them documented, which colleges take undocumented students and give scholarships			

Testing and Curriculum						
Activity and Related Principle	Lead Person and Key Individuals	Committee or Other Groups Involved	Support Needs (Logistical, material, etc.)	Timeline for Implementation and/or Completion	Measure(s) of Success	Priority Level
Training in rigor and student engagement	AVID teachers, UCLA coaches, SLC leads	All teachers	-AVID LACOE has been working with Alhambra, content training - defining rigor, how do we help students engage in rigorous content -KAGAN workshops for student Engagement strategies			
Create a REAL intersession program to get kids ready for college	College Culture committee, Counselors, SLC Leads	All students	New A - G courses initiated: not just remedial	For 2007-08		
Faculty Involvement						
College Café: collaboratively talk about college	[School person]	AP Teachers and Students	Invitations, bring kids who are college bound, guest former students	August 21		
Write Path AVID Training for all teachers at [School]	[3 School people]	All teachers and Counselors	Organize through Carmen Serret-Lopez, AVID Program Specialist at [School] Cell: 562-760-0920 Serret-Lopez_Carmen@lacoed.edu	July and August?		
Family Involvement						
Parents invited to attend monthly College-Culture Committee meetings	Parent Center personnel, admin, Bilingual office	Parents	Multiple ways to inform and support parent attendance	After school in college center		
College Info Parent Meetings by track Importance of college Applying to college, becoming college savvy Financial Aid applications Undocumented student issues	[School person], counselors, Spanish presenters	All incoming freshman parents; SLC Leads, College Culture Committee	Message: ALL kids can go to college Bring AVID in Meet before to plan meetings Get AVID Parent Meeting CD Parents will come if you make them feel welcome, counselors are always available	In English and Spanish, two different locations; In the evening; 6pm – 7:30pm, parent center		
College Partnerships						
Make strong contacts with nearby UCs and CSUs for speakers, fieldtrips Plan trips based around SLC theme and near-by colleges	[3 School people]	Students, teachers	\$ for buses, lunches Develop “two-fers” - trips that involve both a college component and a content connection (e.g., USC and African-American Museum of Culture)	Plan for one college trip per SLC per year = 4 college trips by senior year		
Use UCLA coaches and Center X staff for targeted PD’s	[4 School people]; CenterX staff	[School] teachers and staff	PD time and support	This year		
Articulation						
College Board Vertical Team Teaming w/MS	[School person], ELA, Math and History VT trainers	Start small - science??	Work with [Feeder middle school and elementary schools]	2-day initial training; 2-3 follow-ups		
Articulation Fair - invite MS’s to [School] -College emphasis -A-G courses available -Elective choices	Counseling, College-Culture Committee, Career Center	Feeder MS students and staff	Calendar and planning time	2nd semester, before sign-ups for HS		

SLC = Small Learning Community

Implementing a College Going Culture: Action Steps and Activities

Ensure That All Students Have Access to A-G Courses

In order to be eligible for college, all students must have opportunities to enroll in and successfully complete A-G courses. For this reason, schools should ensure that all students are aware of and have access to prerequisite courses that prepare them for enrollment in A-G courses. It is especially important that students attend to A-G requirements early in their academic career so that they have more options later when it comes time to apply to college.

Schools can promote student awareness of and enrollment in A-G courses by:

- Engaging in ongoing efforts to develop new A-G courses instead of allocating time and resources to remedial and non-college preparatory classes
- Contacting the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) which can provide curriculum consultants to aid schools in their efforts to improve their A-G course offerings
- Displaying in classrooms, hallways, and common areas A-G posters that list the school courses that satisfy each A-G requirement

Make Available Multiple Advanced Placement (AP) Courses

AP courses have important benefits for high school students. Taking these courses both exposes students to the content and structure of college level classes and also can result in college credit should a student earn a 3 or higher on the respective AP subject test.

Developing and implementing quality AP courses involves:

- Creating pre-requisite courses that teach the necessary skills (e.g., note-taking, writing, study habits) for successful performance in Advanced Placement classes
- Ensuring high caliber instruction by working at the department level to identify rigorous criteria for selecting AP teachers
- Improving teacher training for AP courses
- Providing teacher incentives such as stipends for additional AP test preparation workshops
- Allowing for a more flexible master schedule so that more students have access to AP courses
- Preparing students to take the AP subject test and actively encouraging them to do so using classroom strategies for increasing test-taking such as:
 - Recognizing those students scoring 4s and 5s
 - Soliciting and leveraging student perspectives about how AP tests can be promoted

Provide Effective College Counseling

Students must have access to comprehensive college counseling. College counselors must play an active role in students' academic trajectories beginning in their freshman year.

Effective college counselors are those who:

- Set clear expectations for students and provide them with timely information about A-G requirements and the classes that fulfill these requirements
- Push students to enroll in A-G courses instead of endorsing the frequently held attitude that most students will “only” go to community college
- Inform students about Advanced Placement (AP) courses and the significance of such coursework for college admissions
- Provide information regarding important admission tests including registration deadlines, test dates, and study materials
- Invite personnel from local universities to conduct student workshops on application procedures, essay writing, and financial aid
- Schedule test preparation workshops and seminars on how to research colleges
- Adopt a “which college do you want to go to” attitude and promote all types of colleges as options (e.g., community colleges, state universities, private colleges)
- Keep students informed of their course progress and the admission requirements for the colleges that students are interested in attending
- Are aware of and prepared to deal with special issues facing particular student groups (e.g., special education students, undocumented students)

Utilize the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) Program

This program is available for middle and high school students who are academically “in the middle” and have the potential for success in a college preparatory curriculum.

AVID students:

- Enroll in the most rigorous curriculum a school can offer and are motivated to complete a college preparatory path
- Receive support for success in this rigorous curriculum through the AVID elective class, a regularly scheduled elective within the normal school day

Students Must See, Hear, and Talk about College on a Daily Basis

College must be a tangible reality for all students. This means that all teachers should act as college counselors in the classroom. School staff must make a concerted effort to ensure that all students develop a college-going identity and consider higher education to be a relevant choice.

On a classroom level, teachers can integrate “College Talk” into daily classroom discourse by:

- Sharing their own college pathways with students, including their decision making process and any factors that shaped their academic trajectory
- Setting expectations about college going by incorporating discussions about college admissions and attendance into daily learning
- Working with a professor from a local university to identify a sample college-level assignment and then implementing and discussing the assignment so that students gain an understanding of the format, content, and expectations of college classes

On a school level, staff can increase college awareness by:

- Holding regular brown bag college lunches at which teachers, alumni, and other staff discuss their alma maters and college experiences
- Conducting college fairs at the school site
- Planning college visits to local institutions of higher education
- Implementing college essay contests
- Scheduling college talks by school alumni currently enrolled in college, parents, and/or university personnel
- Including important college facts and admission reminders (e.g., test registration dates, application deadlines) in the daily bulletin and/or school newsletter
- Displaying college information (e.g., university posters, testing information) in classrooms, hallways, the lunchroom, and administrative offices
- Encouraging door decorating contests in which each homeroom or advisory group selects and researches a college and then prepares an informational poster for display on the door or entryway of the classroom

Build a Collective Commitment Among Staff to Promote College Going

Faculty buy-in and support are essential components of promoting a college going culture. All school staff should be partners in promoting college going and can work together to formally and informally provide important information, resources, and support in the college process.

Regular college going themed professional development opportunities for counselors, teachers, and administrators should:

- Focus on developing rigorous college preparatory curriculum
- Occur on a monthly basis
- Include training on culturally relevant pedagogies for engaging all student groups
- Foster a college going community among school staff which can help address challenges such as lack of teacher buy-in and low teacher expectations.

Engage Parents as Partners in Promoting College Going Attitudes and Behaviors

Family involvement is a critical component of cultivating a college going culture. All parents should be supported in believing that their children are “college material” and must have opportunities to gain college knowledge and to understand their role in the college process.

Strategies for promoting parental involvement include:

- Inviting parents to monthly staff meetings and/or trainings about college going
- Conducting regular parent meetings about college readiness and application procedures
- Creating bilingual parent programs
- Facilitating the development of a parent support group in order to create a stronger sense of community among parents
- Providing parents with opportunities to experience college (e.g., the Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE) or the UCLA Parent Program) in order to understand more about the college experience and how to support their children in the college process

Build Partnerships with Local Colleges and Universities

Establishing active links between schools and local colleges and universities provides opportunities for field trips, college fairs, and academic enrichment programs. These types of activities are important because they provide high school students with tangible connections to college life.

Partnerships with institutions of higher education can create opportunities for:

- Students from all grade levels to visit college campuses, observe classes, and learn about the admission process and eligibility requirements
- College professors and other personnel to visit classrooms as guest speakers
- College undergraduates to serve as inspirational models, mentors, and tutors to high school students, strengthening these students' academic skills and exposing them to the college experience

Create an Early College Awareness in Feeder Schools

Cultivating college going cultures can begin as early as elementary school. It is never too early to set student expectations that college is an attainable choice for all interested students. There must be a seamless preparatory trajectory from elementary school, to middle school, and into high school, with middle school an essential time for ensuring that students are making choices that prepare them to be college ready at the end of high school.

High schools should work with middle schools to build bridge programs that include:

- High school counselors visiting all middle school classes to discuss preparing for high school and college
- High school counselors meeting with 8th grade students to present the AVID program and other college preparatory programs that are available at the high school and in the community
- High school students engaging middle school students in conversations about success in high school and applying to college

Resources

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Contacts

Patricia McDonough, Ph.D.

Dr. McDonough received her Ph.D. from Stanford University in 1992 and is currently a Professor of Education at UCLA's Graduate School of Education and Information Studies. Her research is in the areas of college access, organizational culture, and equity. Dr. McDonough's group works with schools to help them measure and achieve the nine principles of a college going culture.

Dr. Patricia McDonough can be reached at 310-206-2120 or mcdonough@gseis.ucla.edu

The Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE)

A-G consulting services

www.lacoe.edu

AVID program and professional development resources for educators

www.lacoe.edu/orgs/252/index.cfm

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Parent Programs

Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE)

This program provides classes for parents with a specialized curriculum that focuses on topics such as home/school collaboration, motivation and self-esteem at home, communication and discipline, navigating the school system, and college and career selection.

More information about PIQE can be found online at <http://www.piqe.org/>.

UCLA Parent Curriculum Project: A Program for Parent Leadership Development

The UCLA Parent Curriculum Project (PCP) is a professional development program for parents that includes a leadership institute and an overnight residential retreat. This thirteen week leadership institute enables parents to make sense of the complexities involved in preparing urban students for college. Another crucial part of the institute involves parents applying what they have learned by creating tangible plans for parent involvement at their school.

For more information on PCP visit <http://www.idea.gseis.ucla.edu/projects/parentproj/index.html> or contact Laila Hasan at hasan@gseis.ucla.edu.

To learn more about Parent U-Turn, a group of Lynwood parent activists who completed the PCP program and continue to be involved in advocacy and reform, visit <http://www.tcla.gseis.ucla.edu/rights/features/7/parents/index.html>.

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