

Building a College Culture

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College Access: An important economic policy issue

- We are facing a shortage of 14 million college-educated workers by 2020.
- Six out of every ten jobs in our economy depend on workers with at least a two-year college degree.

Federal Initiatives

- The Obama Administration is making “an historic investment to make college more affordable and accessible and to help more students succeed” in college.
- Pathways to College Act currently in the Education Committee
- Designed to increase the number of low-income and first-generation students enrolling and succeeding in college.
- Would provide grants to high-need school districts to improve school counseling and increase students’ access to postsecondary planning and information.



Your Educational Journey

What was your educational journey?

What messages did you receive (or your child), both negative and positive, about your ability and your potential to go to college?

From whom?

What high school preparation did you or your child receive?

Did you or your child have a choice of preparation?

What generation college are you or your child? 1st in family or so many you can't keep track?

Who paid?

Key Predictors of College Attendance

- Having college plans by the 7th grade
- Attending a college-focused high school



Improving College Access

- Lower financial barriers to college affordability
- Ensure better academic preparation for college
- Encourage counselors to advise students for college and focus schools on their college preparatory mission
- Increase the quality and quantity of college entrance and financial aid information
- Engage families as college preparation partners

Lower Financial Barriers

- Unmet financial need is increasing, college costs are rising, student loan debt is mounting, and merit aid is increasing.
- 22% of low-SES, academically-qualified students don't attend college because of affordability concerns.
- Children given information about need-based financial aid were more likely to say that *they would study for longer that day and expected to do better in school* than students who were told about college expenses but not aid.

Better Academic Preparation

- No better predictor of college enrollment and completion than the rigor of high school courses, specifically advanced mathematics.
- Raising student achievement helps K-12 educators meet increasing demands for accountability
- Current P-12 accountability systems like exit exams and achievement tests are misaligned with college admissions requirements

Families As Partners

- Family encouragement stimulates students forming college plans.
- Family support and early educational plans predict
 - developing and maintaining college aspirations,
 - sustaining motivation and academic achievements, and
 - actual college enrollment.

Students and Families Need

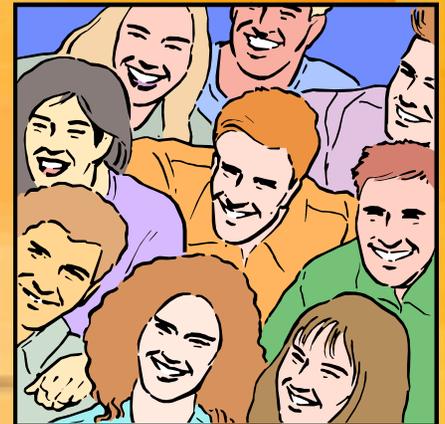
- Adequate information, received early enough to complete the necessary prerequisites for college.
- Low-SES students and students of color are the least likely to receive this information by eighth grade, in time to enroll in college prep high school classes.
- Clear, accessible information about affordability, received repeatedly, with increasing complexity.
- Only 18% of all high school students and 30% of parents report having information on college costs

Teachers As Partners

- Teachers affect academic preparation, self-esteem, motivation to achieve, and opportunities to learn.
- Teacher quality accounts for much of the opportunity gap from which minority and low-income students suffer.
- Teachers' expectations of students are influenced by beliefs about race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status.
- Teachers' assessments of students' ability and motivation affects: how they interact with and support students, whether and how many opportunities they provide to students to learn and excel, the advice they give students, and their interactions with students' families.

High School Counseling

- Few resources are devoted to college counseling
- Counselor-to-student ratio nationally is 1:477, and in the largest cities it averages 1:750.
- Most counselors are not trained in college or financial aid advising and don't have accurate, up-to-date information



Primary Counseling Tasks

- Scheduling
- Testing
- Discipline
 - Dropout Prevention
 - Suicide Prevention
 - Drug Abuse Prevention
 - Pregnancy Prevention
 - Crisis Counseling
 - Personal Counseling



Maybe if there is time, college counseling!

Counselors Greatest Impact

- In structuring information and organizing activities that foster and support students' college aspirations, their academic preparation, their college decision-making;
- In assisting parents in fostering and supporting college aspirations, setting of college expectations, and motivating students;
- In organizationally focusing the school on its college mission

Actively advising (not just disseminating information) results in increases in four-year college enrollments. This improved counseling increases college attendance especially for low-income, urban and rural students as well as students of color.

What is a culture?

An organization's underlying values, beliefs, and meanings which are deeply held, static, and enduring.

Culture influences daily operations through: expectations; assumptions; language; flow of information; content of information; and specific options highlighted or downplayed

Creating a College Culture



- Changes school structure and culture for all
- Involves long-term, systemic change
- Has broader implications
- Requires full “buy in” and additional resources

College Culture Goal

All students are prepared for a full range of post-secondary options through structural, motivational, and experiential college preparatory opportunities.



College Culture Objectives

- School leadership is committed to building a college culture
- All school personnel provide a consistent message to students that supports their quest for a college preparatory K-12 experience
- All counselors are college counselors
- Counselors, teachers, and families are partners in preparing students for college



Principles of a College Culture

- College Talk
- Clear Expectations
- Information & Resources
- Comprehensive Counseling Model
- Testing & Curriculum
- Faculty Involvement
- Family Involvement
- College Partnerships
- Articulation



College Talk

Clear, ongoing communication about college, so that all students develop a college-going identity.

Indicators:

- Newsletters, newspapers, posters
- “Your Educational Journey” campus-wide
- 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.

Indicators:

- School mission statement
- Four-year plans for all students
- Frequent communication with students about their college options
- Ongoing opportunities to discuss college preparation, define goals



Information & Resources

Students must have access to up-to-date, comprehensive college information and schools must build college knowledge infrastructure.

Indicators:

- College-related periodicals
- PSAT/SAT/ACT materials
- Financial Aid materials
- College catalogs
- College choice guides
- CD ROMS on college planning

Workshops on test prep, financial planning, and high school coursework planning.



Comprehensive Counseling Model

All counselors are college counselors and all student interactions with counselors are college advising opportunities.

Indicators:

- 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

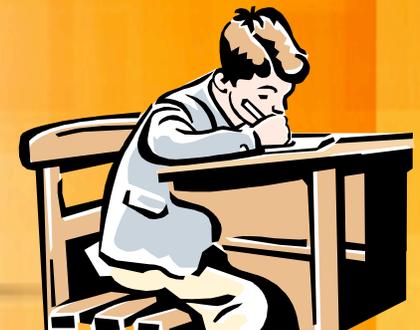


Testing & Curriculum

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.

Indicators:

- PSAT given on school day to all 10th graders in a district is free
- 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.



Indicators:

- 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.

Indicators:

- 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”

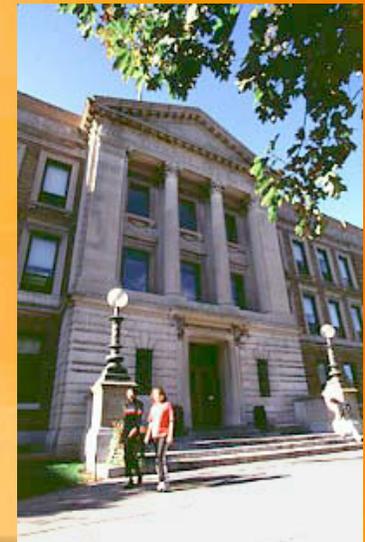


College Partnerships

Have active links between K-12 schools and local colleges and universities that can lead to field trips, college fairs, and academic enrichment programs.

Indicators:

- 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.

Indicators:

- Students hear a consistent message at all grade levels
- Middle schools connect with students as young as fifth grade
- As early as kindergarten, students are seeing themselves as college material
- High school and middle school counselors are pooling resources and making connections



Keep in mind...

- All nine principles are interrelated
- Remember to build on all nine principles
- Every school has existing resources to draw upon
- Think BIG, but remember the details

Action Steps

- Request college financial aid officers to speak at your schools.
- Bring more teachers and counselors to college campuses.
- Request undergraduates from local colleges to volunteer at your schools, preferably from service learning courses where you know they will have some training and support.