



# CollegeEd®

## Creating a College-Going Culture Guide



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# Foreword

The College Board would like to thank the schools, district personnel, and the many other users of CollegeEd for sharing what they did successfully to create a college-going culture for their students.

Their honest input, unique questions, ideas, and shared experiences have helped us to shape CollegeEd as a practical academic and career planning curriculum for grades seven through twelve.

As always, we encourage all to continue sharing by writing us at [colleeedinfo@collegeboard.org](mailto:colleeedinfo@collegeboard.org) and reviewing our other guides on [www.collegeboard.com/colleeed](http://www.collegeboard.com/colleeed).

A college-going culture builds the expectation of postsecondary education for all students—not just the best students. It inspires the best in every student, and it supports students in achieving their goals. As you can imagine, the key ingredient in creating a college-going culture is dedicated educators like you.

## Why Have a College-Going Culture?

If there is any doubt about the benefits of a college-going culture, the most current Bureau of Labor Statistics demonstrate the importance of a college education:

- A person with a Ph.D. earns an average of \$1,214 a week.
- A person with a master's degree earns an average of \$1,174 a week.
- A person with a bachelor's degree earns an average of \$983 a week.
- A person with an associate degree earns an average of \$834 a week.
- Unfortunately, a person with only a high school diploma earns an average of \$507 a week.

If those statistics don't catch your students' eyes, these will:

- Currently 0.9 percent of people with a Ph.D., 1.6 percent of people with a master's degree, and 1.8 percent of people with a bachelor's degree are unemployed. Those with just a high school education have a 3.5 percent rate of unemployment. Getting a college education cuts one's chances of being unemployed roughly in half.
- Half of all college students attend community colleges because they are affordable, close to home, do not require an extensive application process, and can serve as a transition step to a bachelor's degree. Unfortunately, only 1 in 10 students actually transfers and successfully completes that bachelor's degree.

Why is it necessary to encourage a college-going culture? The shocking fact is that very few students are likely to complete even an associate degree:

- For every 100 students in the United States who begin ninth grade, 67 of them will finish high school in four years, 38 will go to college, and only 18 will earn associate degrees within three years or bachelor's degrees in six years.

These statistics are not surprising for those of us who know how important a college education is in order to have a life of options rather than a life of limitations. Students who have the parental, school, and community expectations that college is the next step after high school see college as the norm. However, the idea that college is the next step after high school may seem unrealistic for those students who are from one or more of the following groups: low achievers, middle- to low-income levels, underrepresented minorities, disabled youth, and families where no one has attended college before.

In fact, to many students regardless of their background, merely graduating high school is a challenge.

Studies have found that students who are from the groups mentioned above are more likely to face college planning obstacles because of social and language barriers, less access to information and guidance, less exploration because of low expectations, decreased access to the Internet, and underestimation of the amount of financial help available. The result is that the education gap in our country increases. According to the Pathways to College Network, a national organization committed to creating a college-going culture, "Of high school graduates, those from high-income families enter college at rates 25 percent higher than those from low-income families." Enlightened educators are dedicating their schools to balancing this percentage. Throughout this handbook, you will meet students like those mentioned above to help put a face on this mission.

Educators at high schools across the country see the current trends toward the necessity of college, evaluate their students, and ask: How do we make our school and our community one where students are **expected** to attend college? This is the first and most crucial question of any school desiring to shift its school's culture to a college-going culture, where students appreciate academics, have a desire to succeed and a drive to attend college, and become lifelong learners. Before this change occurs, schools need to determine if this shift to college as the next step helps meet school and district goals. They should then assess the needs of the school, train staff members, research any outside support systems and programs and, most important, welcome and engage parents into this culture. Final assessment should be done to determine if the shift has been successful.

According to the Pathways to College Network, college-focused schools do the following:

- ✓ Expect that all underserved students are capable of being prepared to enroll and succeed in college
- ✓ Provide a range of high-quality, college-preparatory tools for students and families
- ✓ Embrace social, cultural, and varied learning styles when developing the environment and activities at the school
- ✓ Involve leaders at all levels in establishing policies, programs, and practices
- ✓ Maintain sufficient financial and human resources for this mission
- ✓ Assess policy, programs, and practices regularly to determine their effectiveness

These goals may seem idealistic, but it is possible to turn idealism into reality, as evidenced by countless high schools across the country that have achieved this college-going culture. Others argue that the emphasis and expectation of college for any student should come from the family, not the school. Collaboration between school and parent is

vital, especially in families where college is virtually foreign territory. This guide will give support and resources for your school to use in this important cultural shift to one where public education is viewed as K–16 and college is the next step.

Meet Corey Paytes, an Ohio ninth-grader who is bored with school and has no plans to attend college. His district has reorganized its 9,000 high school students into a collection of small high schools where students get individualized attention from teachers and students. By midyear, Corey is becoming interested in school and has actually admitted to enjoying poetry.

—*The College Track TV series, [www.collegetrack.com](http://www.collegetrack.com)*

## How Does a College-Going Culture Help Meet School Goals?

In the age of accountability, schools across the country have a lot of experience with setting measurable goals and standards for themselves and their students and changing those goals based on measurable results. Although each school has different goals based on its community and students, there are some common categories:

- A. State test scores (e.g., “Eighty-eight percent of our students will be classified proficient on their mathematics, English, and science state test scores, up 2 percent from 2004-05.”)
  - B. National test scores (e.g., “We will maintain adequate yearly progress on our ACT scores.”)
  - C. State standards (e.g., “Eighty-five percent of our students will master the state standards for Algebra I” or “100 percent of our English classes will focus on literacy.”)
  - D. Curriculum decisions (e.g., “Our administration will continue to monitor how we can use an integrated English/history program to help 85 percent of our students pass U.S. history.”)
  - E. Graduation requirements (e.g., “Our graduation rate will increase by 5 percent.”)
  - F. School climate (e.g., “Ninety-five percent of our students will be classified as ‘safe and healthy’ on our district’s Safe Kids Survey.”)
  - G. Attendance (e.g., “We will increase our daily attendance rate from 90 to 95 percent.”)
  - H. Parent communication (e.g., “Our school will increase the percentage, from 50 to 60 percent, of parental involvement through more forums, conferences, and the PTO.”)
  - I. Personalization (e.g., “Ninety-five percent of our students will have at least one teacher as a confidant and mentor.”)
  - J. Professional development (e.g., “Our faculty meetings will have a 95 percent attendance rate.”)
- A school with a college-going culture would look at this list of school goals with a sense of satisfaction, knowing that each category is strengthened in some way by the emphasis on college as being the next step. On the other hand, imagine how difficult a time a school with the sole focus on graduation would have with some of these goals. By starting to create a college-going culture, each of these goals becomes more attainable:
- A. State testing: Students concerned with admission to universities will care more about how their high school is rated compared with other high schools in the state, thus increasing the motivation and effort on state tests.
  - B. National testing: Students with aspirations and realistic college goals will be more motivated by higher scores on national tests and feel supported by the curricular efforts of teachers and counselors.
  - C. State standards: Students who expect to attend college will challenge themselves in high school by taking a more rigorous curriculum, subsequently mastering subjects beyond the state standards. In discussing state standards, high schools may start conversations with colleges about K–16 standards.
  - D. Curriculum decisions: Schools with a college-going culture typically spend more time creating curricula that will help more students succeed by increasing the choices and avenues for each student. Studies have shown that a rigorous high school curriculum is the greatest predictor of college completion, regardless of socioeconomic status or race.
  - E. Graduation requirements: As more and more students attend college, peer pressure encourages others to follow.
  - F. School climate: If students feel successful and have expectations, their self-respect and confidence will also increase.
  - G. Attendance: In order to be college focused, the overall atmosphere becomes more academically rigorous as students take more responsibility and become more prepared.
  - H. Parent involvement: The support of a student’s family is crucial for college attendance.
  - I. Personalization: Because each student’s college goals are individualized, college planning has to be individualized as well, leading to more one-on-one meetings with counselors and teachers to discuss college issues.
  - J. Professional development: Because of the ever-changing college world and the shift in culture in the school, an increased amount of time will be spent brainstorming, teaching, and having discussions with colleagues.

Most college-focused schools in communities with high expectations and high college attendance rates focus at least one of their school’s goals on college. This is an excellent model for any school to follow. Here are some examples:

*“The number of graduates meeting the entrance requirements for our state university will increase by 5 percent.”*

*“We encourage 75 percent of our students to take one class beyond the graduation requirements for each year.”*

*“In preparation for admission to a public university, our students will take four years of math and English.”*

*“By graduation, every senior will take at least two AP® courses.”*

*“100 percent of our graduates will apply to and be accepted by at least one college.”*

## How Can You Assess Your School’s Current Culture?

It will take time for a new culture shift to occur. Some measurable change may happen sooner, while other factors may take years. Before starting on this journey, be sure that your high school has measurable goals like the ones above for achieving a college-going culture. In that case, the evaluation of your plan will be meaningful.

Carisa Hall is an Ohio twelfth-grader at a high-poverty school where expectations are low and guidance from counselors and teachers is slim; however, she wants to attend college. She joins Upward Bound, which helps give her support and mentoring, and is accepted to Bowling Green University.

— *The College Track TV series, [www.thecollegetrack.com](http://www.thecollegetrack.com)*

## SAMPLE TIMELINE

<b>Months 1–3: Current Culture and Community Input</b>	<b>Months 4–6: Research and Finalize Best Practices and Programs</b>	<b>Months 7–10: Implementation</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Gather data on current culture through the questions 1–19</li> <li>2. Use needs assessment surveys (see questions 1–19)</li> <li>3. Form a committee of diverse members dedicated to this goal</li> <li>4. Compile data from surveys</li> <li>5. Introduce “College-Going Culture” goals to staff</li> <li>6. Hold parent and staff forums to hear ideas and comments</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Research best practices of “college-going” high schools</li> <li>2. Research outside programs and resources</li> <li>2. Finalize the decision on large- or small-scale programs and ideas (may require school board approval)</li> <li>3. Create a document for staff and parents that details all the goals and activities of the committee</li> <li>4. Continue professional development with staff</li> <li>5. Start to inform parents of changes through a “college culture” event</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Continue with professional development, especially if a large-scale program will be used</li> <li>2. Continue to seek support from and provide information to parents</li> <li>3. Enact small-scale changes</li> <li>4. Prepare resources for large-scale programs, waiting for an appropriate transition date to enact the actual program (beginning of school year)</li> <li>5. Maintain committee and occasional community and staff forum schedules to assess success of strategic plan</li> </ol>
<p><b>Months 11–?:</b> Allow for continual evaluation and reassessment of goals, programs, and ideas</p>		

In months 1–3, gathering information about the current culture of the school is crucial to provide a starting point. There are many factors, statistical and anecdotal, to analyze to see how your school is creating its present culture. Before jumping ahead to implementation of any ideas you or your school may have, explore issues surrounding a college-focused community:

1. What is our graduation rate?
2. What is our college application rate?
3. What is our college acceptance rate?
4. How many of our staff members have undergraduate or graduate degrees?
5. What percentage of parents hold undergraduate or graduate degrees?
6. What are our school counselor's top three priorities, and how are his or her year and day structured?
7. What percentage of our students take the SAT®? ACT? PSAT/NMSQT®? PLAN?
8. How many AP or college-level classes does our school offer?
9. Do all of our students have access to all teachers and classes?
10. What is our faculty's attitude toward the notion that every student at our school can succeed in college?
11. Do we emphasize college advocacy during our hiring and evaluation practices?
12. Does our school provide leadership opportunities?
13. Is academic rigor encouraged for all students?
14. Are students often assigned to classes based on factors other than their potential?
15. Are we reaching parents with information about college culture?
16. Is our school more focused on getting students to graduate high school or getting students to attend college?
17. Is one of our school improvement goals related to the issue of college?
18. How often do our administrators, counselors, and teachers consult college professors and administration about curricular decisions regarding student preparation or ask for data on the performance of graduates?
19. What do we do to promote college information sessions?

Some schools can assess their current culture without having to ask these questions; one need only read the announcements, glance at the walls in the hallways, watch the students in both advanced- and lower-level classes, look at the course offerings, count the parents at conferences, and talk to the teachers. Other schools should form a committee after answering these questions to find a focus before beginning the cultural change. The committee will also want to interview students, faculty, and parents, or send out a needs assessment survey, for a more personalized commentary on the present culture to see current needs and future goals.

The following survey can be sent out to a limited cross-section of parents, staff, and students, and each question can be revised for each group (e.g., “My parents expect me to attend college” can be changed to “I expect my child to attend college”). Analyzing both the factual data and the data from the surveys will give your committee a starting point and a framework for your goals and programs. A change in culture does not happen overnight, but with proper planning, a supportive staff and parent community, and a well-focused goal, you will notice change soon.

Only about half of African American and Latino ninth-graders graduate high school in four years, compared to 79 percent of Asian Americans and 72 percent of whites.

—**The Pathways to College Network**

Antonio Barnes is an eighth-grader at a Georgia inner-city school with limited resources. Project GRAD changed the curriculum of the school and the culture, promising college scholarships to students who had high grades. Antonio thrives now and focuses on the goal of going to college and studying mechanical engineering.

—**The College Track TV series, [www.thecollege-track.com](http://www.thecollege-track.com)**

## SAMPLE NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY FOR STUDENTS

We value your opinion and will make specific changes based on these results.

**SA=Strongly Agree A=Agree D=Disagree  
SD=Strongly Disagree**

- |  |           |
|--|-----------|
| 1. I plan to go to college after graduating.   | SA A D SD |
| 2. I do not want to go to college after graduating.  | SA A D SD |
| 3. I do not think I CAN go to college after graduating.  | SA A D SD |
| 4. I have not even thought about college.  | SA A D SD |
| 5. I feel my teachers believe I can succeed in college.  | SA A D SD |
| 6. My teachers talk about college issues like requirements and majors.                         | SA A D SD |
| 7. I know what the SAT and ACT are.  | SA A D SD |
| 8. My counselor has talked with me about my future after high school with college as the goal. | SA A D SD |
| 9. I am challenged in my classes.  | SA A D SD |
| 10. My parents expect me to go to college.   | SA A D SD |
| 11. I know at least five people who graduated from college.                                    | SA A D SD |
| 12. My family cannot afford college.   | SA A D SD |
| 13. I wish our school had more college resources.  | SA A D SD |
| 14. I can make more money if I have a college degree.  | SA A D SD |
| 15. List five colleges and/or universities of which you have heard:                            |           |

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**Thank you for your honesty. Please return to the front office by 9/1.**

## How Can You Create a College-Going Culture?

The hardest part of this process is effectively using the information from the needs assessment surveys. Plans can be very formal with extensive programs that make serious demands on a school's resources, or they can be informal, using trial and error with fairly flexible programs and suggestions. Ideally, your committee will decide if the college-focused goal requires a large-scale program, a small-scale program, or a combination of the two. We will explore both large-scale and small-scale suggestions for schools that have different financial resources and staff. The goal for both large- and small-scale ideas and programs is to shift the school from one whose goal is that students *graduate* from high school to one where students *continue* their education after high school.

In a general sense, creating a college-going culture requires a change in attitude on a global scale. As a school, behave as if you expect all students to achieve at a high level, actively work to remove barriers from learning, and teach students and families how to help themselves. Work collaboratively with all school personnel, offering adequate training and support that promotes high expectations and high standards for all students. Challenge the existence of low-level and unchallenging courses, and debunk negative myths about who can and who cannot achieve success in rigorous courses. When working with your community, organize activities to promote supportive structures for high standards for all students regardless of background, welcome parental involvement at all levels, and share resources with each member of the community.

Every well-intentioned program or idea can backfire if the staff of your school does not support it. It helps to follow the suggested timeline because teachers will not be surprised by any new shift in culture. They will also have time to express their opinions and comments and to ask questions. If your school has decided to implement a large-scale program such as AP or CollegeEd<sup>®</sup>, it is crucial that your administrators outline how the program will affect teachers' everyday lives, expectations, roles, schedules, evaluations, pay, and contracts. Usually extensive programs like the ones listed above require both a "point person" and a committee of people supporting the program. Make sure everyone supports and understands how the program works, how it helps students, and what is expected from the teachers. This will require in-service trainings and continual staff development.

If your school decides to implement a small-scale program that will not affect the teachers each day, it is still important to outline how the program will affect the school and what will be expected from the faculty. For a successful culture shift, you will need to keep everyone in the school informed, focused on the same goal, and speaking the same college language. Finally, remember that the following programs are suggestions based on research of best practices from other schools. Sometimes the best ideas of how to change any individual school's culture come from within: value the

ideas of teachers and staff who know your students and their families best. To utilize the expertise of your own staff, you may want to have your staff complete the following:

### STAFF INPUT SURVEY

We are planning to make our school more college focused and college preparatory. Please answer the following honestly so we can properly support you.

**SA=Strongly Agree A=Agree D=Disagree  
SD=Strongly Disagree**

- |   |           |
|---|-----------|
| 1. I believe our school can be more college focused.  | SA A D SD |
| 2. I believe every student at our school has the potential to earn a degree post-high school.   | SA A D SD |
| 3. I am knowledgeable about the ACT and the SAT.  | SA A D SD |
| 4. I know the entrance requirements for our state university.   | SA A D SD |
| 5. I know about the local community college and its programs.   | SA A D SD |
| 6. Our school benefits from (or would benefit from) an AP curriculum.   | SA A D SD |
| 7. I regularly mention college issues in my classroom.  | SA A D SD |
| 8. I believe that college counseling is the counselor's job.  | SA A D SD |
| 9. I would be willing to alter my curriculum on a small-scale basis to make my classroom more college friendly.                       | SA A D SD |
| 10. To make our school more college focused, we need to adopt a large-scale program such as AP or CollegeEd.                          | SA A D SD |
| 11. I know at least five people who graduated from college.   | SA A D SD |
| 12. If we are to make our school more college focused, I would like at least one faculty meeting a month dedicated to college issues. | SA A D SD |
| 13. I have a specific idea on how to make our school more college focused:  |           |

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**Thank you. Please return to the principal's mailbox by 10/1.**

"On a recent spring morning in Kathy Cho's first-grade class, Jeremy Bun was studying his ABCs. A, in this case, was not for 'apple.' It stood for 'admissions.' B was for 'book.' And C was for 'counselor,' as in college counselor, the kind of person Jeremy plans to meet with one day. 'D is for dormitory,' Jeremy said. 'That's the place where you sleep. It's where I'm going to sleep because I am going to college.'"

—"Fast Forward to College," University of California, Berkeley, 2005

Most likely, your committee can obtain program ideas from your own staff from these surveys, and you can also judge how much time to put toward professional development in order to achieve the most support from your faculty. However, in case your staff does not suggest ideas specific to your school, the following chart outlines some small- and large-scale programs that have worked for motivated schools. Be sure to evaluate the effectiveness of these programs compared to the current atmosphere, administering surveys and looking at your school's college acceptance and application rates. There is no right or wrong order in which to adopt these ideas. It depends on your school's current culture, staff participation, parent involvement, financial resources, school board acceptance, and availability of administrators to dedicate the school to either larger or smaller plans like the ones shown on the following pages.

## SMALL-SCALE IDEAS TO MAKE YOUR SCHOOL COLLEGE FRIENDLY

<b>Appearance of school grounds</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Hang posters and brochures from community, two-year, and four-year colleges on walls</li> <li>- Use college pennants as décor</li> <li>- Announce upcoming college entrance exams and test-preparation classes with flyers in bathrooms, hallways, and the cafeteria</li> <li>- Utilize computer labs by having college resource Web sites bookmarked to allow students to use the Internet to apply for admissions, financial aid, scholarships, etc.</li> <li>- Arrange for labs to be open at night for families, especially near FAFSA deadlines</li> </ul>
<b>Appearance and attitude of staff</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Encourage staff members to wear apparel from their alma maters every Friday</li> <li>- Post pictures of each staff member in a main hallway, including where they obtained all their degrees</li> <li>- Inform staff members about any changes in college admissions, graduation requirements, basic college entrance requirements, testing, and courses at your school through a “College Corner” newsletter and faculty meetings</li> <li>- Make sure teachers share the message that college is possible and is what is next for ALL students, not just the honors students</li> </ul>
<b>Course handbook</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Start an AP class or curriculum if your school does not already have one</li> <li>- Expect ALL students to take one AP or college-level course before graduation</li> <li>- Motivate students to sign up for classes based on potential rather than on other factors</li> <li>- Avoid including any fees in the prerequisites for advanced classes</li> <li>- Outline the difference between your school’s graduation requirements and a college-focused curriculum by creating a model college-preparatory, four-year plan for students</li> <li>- Offer SAT and ACT preparation classes during the school day or a required College Issues class for juniors and seniors</li> </ul>
<b>Counseling office</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Hold individual conferences with each student, regardless of academic level, frequently, especially during junior year, to monitor their future plans</li> <li>- Invite local college graduates to speak</li> <li>- Hold a Career Day, or have a College Fair</li> <li>- Become friendly with local admissions officers; invite them to come to your school</li> <li>- Host college information sessions with admissions officers during lunch periods</li> <li>- Send a “College Corner” newsletter to parents detailing any college information</li> <li>- Discuss a college-focused issue in every set of announcements</li> <li>- Create a “College of the Week” profile, complete with pictures</li> <li>- Attend college conferences and campus visits</li> <li>- Restructure the counseling office into a college center where students and parents can find information on scholarships, financial aid, applications, and specific colleges</li> <li>- Become aware of programs like College Goal Sunday that aid families with financial aid forms</li> <li>- Ask for donations of college brochures and college guidebooks</li> <li>- Lead small-group sessions on college issues: writing essays, getting recommendations, preparing for tests, applying for financial aid, transitioning to college life, living in a dorm, and planning for careers</li> <li>- Repeat these sessions as parent nights, using translators if language is an issue in your school</li> <li>- Compile a graduate directory of alumni and the colleges they attended</li> <li>- Celebrate students’ acceptances publicly!</li> <li>- Organize sessions for teachers to learn about college counseling and how to write recommendations</li> <li>- Change the name of the department to “Counseling and Postgraduate Planning”</li> </ul>

<p><b>Curricular ideas</b> <b>MATH</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Utilize every opportunity to apply concepts to college and beyond. Here are examples related to various math courses:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Prealgebra—Ratios/Proportions:</b> “If two-thirds of the students at U of I are in the School of Engineering and U of I has 35,000 students, how many are engineering majors?”</li> <li>2. <b>Algebra—Linear Functions:</b> “Here is the tuition data from U of I for the last 10 years. Graph the data and write an equation for the line of best fit. Predict tuition in 2050.”</li> <li>3. <b>Geometry—Pythagorean Theorem:</b> “If my dorm is 35 steps east and 100 steps west of the English department, how many fewer steps would it take if I cut through diagonally?”</li> <li>4. <b>Algebra II—Systems of Equations:</b> “Write an equation modeling the spending patterns of the average freshman and compare it to the profit equation from a work-study job. What is the break-even point?”</li> <li>5. <b>Precalculus—Exponential Functions:</b> “Using compound interest, how much money would my parents have had to invest (in a college savings account compounded quarterly at 5 percent) when I was born for me to go to U of I for \$9,023 a year from 2006 to 2010?”</li> </ol> </li> <li>- Use curricular resources on <a href="http://www.achieve.org">www.achieve.org</a>, a bipartisan nonprofit organization aiming to raise school accountability and standards, in their “Workplace Tasks”</li> <li>- Include SAT and ACT preparation as part of the curriculum in junior and senior classes</li> <li>- Discuss strategies for standardized tests, creating assessments in a similar style and fashion</li> <li>- Discuss college majors and jobs involving math, constantly reiterating the expectation: “When you are in your college math class...,” and if appropriate, discuss financial aid</li> <li>- Organize field trips to college campuses</li> </ul>
<p><b>Curricular ideas:</b> <b>LANGUAGE ARTS</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Again, utilize every opportunity to apply concepts to college and beyond:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Create a portfolio system within your school where future college freshmen will learn how to write formal thank-you letters to those who wrote college recommendations for them, begin journaling about significant events in their lives, and practice self-reflection in a verbal format as if in a college interview. The portfolio culminates in junior and senior years, when actual college essays are assigned once a month for a writing grade.</b></li> <li>2. <b>Quiz students on vocabulary and/or spelling words based around a college-culture vocabulary (e.g., accredited, associate degree, cooperative education, credit, deferment, grant, orientation, registrar, scholarship, etc. A complete list can be found at <a href="http://www.thecollege-track.com">www.thecollege-track.com</a>).</b></li> <li>3. <b>Include public speaking opportunities and collaborative writing at every level of the curriculum.</b></li> <li>4. <b>Assign journalism projects that include interviewing staff about their college experiences.</b></li> <li>5. <b>Use college newspapers and journals as primary sources to analyze or use as models in a journalism class.</b></li> <li>6. <b>If the curriculum is centered around narrative short stories, use resources like “Hear Us Out” from students at West Hills Jr. College in California, who detail their struggles in becoming college focused (<a href="http://www.thecollege-track.com">www.thecollege-track.com</a>).</b></li> </ol> </li> <li>- Use curricular resources on <a href="http://www.achieve.org">www.achieve.org</a>, a bipartisan nonprofit organization that wants to raise school accountability and standards, in their “Workplace Tasks”</li> <li>- Include SAT and ACT preparation as part of the curriculum in junior and senior classes</li> <li>- Discuss strategies for standardized tests, creating assessments in a similar style and fashion</li> <li>- Discuss college majors and jobs involving English, constantly reiterating the expectation: “When you are in your college writing class...” This search can be done in MyRoad™ under “Explore Majors.”</li> <li>- Organize field trips to college campuses</li> <li>- Assess students’ writing abilities as much as possible, emphasizing the importance of writing (and reading) in college classes</li> </ul>

There are many resources for schools that choose to integrate small-scale ideas into their college-going culture:

1. **[www.thecollege-track.com](http://www.thecollege-track.com)**

The College Track’s free resources can help your school through this transition by providing two interesting programs: a three-part video series titled “Who’s In, Who’s Out: America’s Sorting Machine,” dealing with college admissions and requirements and college success (specifically for those underrepresented at a college campus), and

the Community Connections Campaign, which offers free materials to help in your school’s parent recruitment.

2. **[www.collegenext.org](http://www.collegenext.org)**

College Next is an organization formed by university and college presidents of California schools who are committed to building a better future for the students of California by encouraging them to attend college. Many of the resources on this Web site can be applied to any school in the country.

3. **www.pathwaystocollege.net**

This alliance of national organizations is, like the two previous resources mentioned, dedicated to increasing college access to underserved students through providing educators with research on best practices. This Web site contains an extensive outreach database of all the large- and small-scale programs that your school could use, as well as tips on how to start a “College-Going Culture” campaign. Also available is an excellent research-based mission available as a PDF file, “Shared Agenda,” that details actions for every partner in your process.

4. **www.ed.gov**

The Department of Education has developed a “Think College” campaign to help students prepare for life after high school, complete with advice on course work and answers to parents’ questions.

5. **www.collegeaccess.org/toolkit**

In its TERI (The Education Resource Initiative) project, this Web site offers a report on how your school can set up a community college access center, such as those already in place in Boston; Louisville, Kentucky; Washington, D.C.; and St. Louis, Missouri.

6. **State Scholars Initiative**

Active in 12 states, this statewide business coalition is determined to increase participation in rigorous college-level courses through total community involvement.

7. **www.collegeboard.com**

As always, check our Web site for information.

If your school, district, and/or school board have dedicated time, effort, and money to this goal of increasing college access, there are several larger-scale programs already implemented at schools across the country:

## LARGE-SCALE PROGRAMS TO MAKE YOUR SCHOOL COLLEGE FRIENDLY

<p><b>Advanced Placement Program®</b> <b><a href="http://apcentral.collegeboard.com">http://apcentral.collegeboard.com</a></b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Begun in 1955, the Advanced Placement Program is a cooperative program between high schools and universities that motivates students to take college-level courses in a high school setting. Students gain college credit by passing an exam and practicing college-level skills. Studies have shown that students who take rigorous course work are likely to complete a bachelor’s degree in four years or less.</li><li>- The AP Program offers 38 courses in 23 subject areas, all taught by highly trained teachers with challenging course guidelines developed and published by the College Board.</li><li>- AP teachers attend summer workshops and Institutes to familiarize themselves with the demanding guidelines and national exams, and some schools have an AP Coordinator.</li><li>- Nearly 60 percent of U.S. high schools participate in the Advanced Placement Program, and over 90 percent of the nation’s colleges and universities offer credit and/or placement for qualifying AP Exam grades.</li><li>- The AP Program offers the following:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• College Board AP Fellows, a competitive grant program that provides scholarships to future AP teachers to become certified and bring an AP class to schools with minority/low-income students.</li><li>• AP Annual Conference Fellows, an invitation-only grant program awarded to teachers and administrators after attending an AP Equity Colloquium.</li><li>• AP Start-Up Grant, a grant for schools that want to start AP programs or strengthen their current program. It funds the cost of professional development, classroom resources, and supplies, and the assistance of a consultant in the first year.</li><li>• Fee reduction, a \$22 fee reduction per exam for students with financial need.</li><li>• APIP, state and federal support to aid your school’s AP program.</li></ul></li></ul>
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<p><b>CollegeEd</b> <b>www.collegeboard.com</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CollegeEd is the only packaged curricular resource designed for ALL students; it comes from the College Board, a not-for-profit membership organization whose mission is to connect students to college success and opportunity. The College Board is most well known for programs such as AP, the PSAT/NMSQT, and the SAT.</li> <li>- The CollegeEd curriculum states that students will understand the following by the end of the course: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Everyone can go to college.</li> <li>• There are many options for making college affordable.</li> <li>• Different types of colleges and postsecondary educational opportunities are available.</li> <li>• Education and training are essential for career success.</li> <li>• Students' choices in high school courses and activities affect their postgraduation options.</li> <li>• It is important to plan for college and careers in middle school.</li> <li>• The involvement of family and/or supporting adults is part of academic planning and future success.</li> </ul> </li> <li>- CollegeEd is a workbook-guided program, available in Spanish, to help students see the benefits and the reality of their own college education. The program is aligned to the standards of the American School Counselor Association and the goals of No Child Left Behind. It also supports the National Education Association's goal of closing the achievement gap and the gap in college admissions. Staff will appreciate the online training, the special-needs modifications guide, and the best practices and lesson resources that come with the package.</li> <li>- The ninth-/tenth-grade edition is currently available for purchase, with the eleventh-/twelfth-grade curriculum coming out in fall 2006. This edition is made up of 10 units (e.g., Personal Goal Assessments, College Choices) with two sections each, access to MyRoad (a career and college interactive Web program), a comprehensive teacher/adviser's guide, and a parent's guide so that parents can stay involved and informed.</li> </ul>
<p><b>AVID</b> <b>www.avidonline.org</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) is a grades 5 through 12 program that encourages largely lower-income, underrepresented, academically average, motivated students to achieve their potential and attend a four-year college.</li> <li>- AVID requires enrollment in an elective class taught by an AVID-trained teacher, enrollment in a school's most rigorous courses such as AP, use of AVID methods of writing as a tool of learning, inquiry-based lessons, detailed Cornell note-taking skills, collaborative learning, and extensive reading.</li> <li>- AVID is not a curriculum but rather a schoolwide program of collaboration, support, and teaching methodology that requires a site coordinator, tutors, staff development, careful selection of participants, and full parent support through a pledge in order to increase college enrollment.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Recognizing the College Dream</b> <b>http://outreach.berkeley.edu</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The University of California's Center for Educational Partnerships has developed this outreach program for schools who want to strengthen their college-going culture through a curriculum guide that increases college access for underrepresented and low-income students.</li> <li>- The lessons in the curriculum, provided in both Spanish and English, help students view themselves as college students and correct many myths surrounding college, including financial ones. It includes a parental involvement guide and newsletters about successful college students.</li> <li>- Other resources include posters about college-preparatory courses and college-going students, as well as grade-level checklists of college "to-dos."</li> </ul>
<p><b>TRIO</b> <b>www.ed.gov/programs</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- These original outreach programs run by the federal government to motivate and support students from disadvantaged backgrounds have been expanded: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Upward Bound: This program serves high school students from low-income families in which neither parent went to college and low-income, first-generation military veterans who are preparing to enter college. Participants receive instruction in math, science, composition, literature, and foreign language, along with counseling, access to cultural events, tutors/mentors, and help with applications, test preparation, financial information, and work-study opportunities.</li> <li>• Talent Search: This program assists disadvantaged students with academic, career, and financial aid counseling. It also assists high school dropouts looking to reenter the system.</li> <li>• Other programs aid current college students and/or adult students.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>GEAR UP</b> <b>www.ed.gov/programs</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Preparation) provides tutoring, counseling, scholarships, and mentor services through a discretionary six-year grant program to states with high rates of poverty and low-income students to help those students attend college by providing K-16 support.</li> </ul>

## What Is a Good Way to Implement a Large-Scale Program?

Many schools across the country have successfully created a college-going culture and implemented large-scale programs with an advisory program. Research from organizations such as the Small Schools Project, Coalition of Essential Schools, and Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development shows that students, especially those identified as high risk, achieve a higher level of academic success and personal growth in school when they are closely known by at least one caring adult. This increases their chances of applying to college.

Advisory is generally defined as a structured part of the school's schedule in which small groups of students meet for a specified purpose with an adult staff mentor who maintains regular parent communication. Numerous studies have noted improved relationships between students and teachers, lower dropout rates, an increased sense of belonging, and better communication within the school community where the schools have well-organized programs. The purpose of advisory varies from school to school, but it is an ideal place for academic guidance and support and an appropriate venue in which to introduce any of the large-scale programs, especially in a college-focused school.

At Vanguard High School in the Bronx, students have weak foundations in math, reading, and writing; however, they have a 92 percent graduation rate, compared to the 20 percent graduation rate of the large comprehensive high school that used to be open. Mohammed Bhatti had lost his dream of college until he arrived at Vanguard, where classes are small, expectations are high, and teachers know the students.

—*The College Track TV Series*, [www.thecollege-track.com](http://www.thecollege-track.com)

## How Do We Start an Advisory?

Be aware that to create a successful personalized advisory program you need time (8–12 months); an excited research, design, and public relations team; community support and, above all, staff support. What may be optimal in theory may not be feasible for your school, and what may seem challenging may be the perfect option for your advisory program. Ensure the success of your program with a good design. Here are some general tips for designing a college-focused advisory:

- **Routines:** To create a positive atmosphere and a coherent advisory plan, all advisers must stay consistent and on task with the goals set out by the design team. Individual advisers can personalize their advisory with various activities or rituals, but all advisers should be on the same page with the content, focus, goals, and outcomes.
- **Resources:** Any small- or large-scale program can be used in an advisory setting:
  - CollegeEd—Use group advisories to teach curriculum and individual meetings to personally coach each student through MyRoad, a Web-based program.
  - Invite local college graduates to hold a question and answer session with each advisory on the realities of college.
  - Practice SAT/ACT questions with one-on-one assistance and test-preparation help.
  - Research various scholarships and financial aid on the Internet.
- **Grouping:** This depends on your student population, space, and staff numbers, but the most successful groups are 8 to 15 same-age advisees with the same adviser year after year. Your college-focused advisory could have less success with multiage groupings of 25 or more homogeneous students (i.e., all honors students, all athletes, all Hispanic students, etc.).
- **Advisers:** Utilize your entire staff, including administrators and faculty as advisers or cofacilitators. Recruit advisers through an application or volunteer process.
- **Contract Issues:** As this will likely be the main concern for most of your advisers, it is highly recommended that your design team consult with the district and your union. Schools with successful advisory programs that meet during the instructional day compensate advisers with stipends, fewer or traded duties, salary credit, professional development credit, more personal days and, at some schools, even fewer classes or teacher prep time.
- **Location:** Be creative with your meeting spaces. Think of conference rooms, gyms, the library, offices, or even the lunchroom. Most advisories meet at the same time, but your school could always utilize block days or staggered advisory days to help with space.
- **Schedule—Frequency and Duration:** The most productive schedule includes daily short morning meetings (20 minutes) for one-on-one check-ins and longer advisories (45 minutes) for content curriculum or presenters. It also helps to vary the group size, gathering small groups for intimate mentoring and larger groups for presenting information. Regardless of the size or length of your meetings, it is important to maintain a regular and reliable schedule to show students that you value and support their goals and efforts.
- **Evaluation of Advisers:** Some schools report that their advisory program is successful because they have an advisory coordinator who is responsible for providing yearlong training for advisers. Other schools have very informal observations for advisers, so that the advising experience does not go on the staff member's formal and

recorded evaluation. Be sure to have a plan in place for helping a struggling adviser.

- **Evaluation of Advisees:** Just like your staff, your students need to see tangible benefits of their advisory to ensure the program's success and to believe in themselves. Tying advisory and its outcome to a student's transcript or overall credit or making advisees responsible for various projects during the year can help. Some high schools have advisers write college recommendations because of the intense college focus and long-term relationship they have with students. Be sure to have a plan in place for helping a struggling advisee.
- **Evaluation of Advisory As a Program:** Have your college acceptance rates increased?

"Teachers and administrators at Tennyson High School encourage students to focus on their educational future, stressing college as a link to greater opportunities down the line. 'It's backward mapping,' said ninth-grade English teacher Melynda Canales. 'We ask the kids to consider what kind of life they want, then we work backward from there. What kind of job do you want? What kind of house do you want to live in? We look at Census numbers and see how a college degree affects your earnings. We're helping them to think about their future outside of Tennyson.'"

—**"Fast Forward to College," University of California, Berkeley, 2005**

The following worksheet may be helpful for your committee to use while designing its advisory system:

## DESIGN ISSUES

Issue	Decision
Definite, well-stated purpose statement of college focus?	
Consistent routines or routines left up to adviser?	
Flexibility for advisers or common curriculum?	
School-designed resources or prepackaged?	
Phasing in one grade at a time or all at once?	
Small advisories (10–15) or larger?	
Multigrade advisories or single year?	
Co-ed advisories or mixed?	
Students randomly or purposefully grouped?	
Advisers randomly or purposefully matched?	
Individual meetings or group?	
Locations to meet?	
Frequency—daily, weekly, or monthly advisory?	
Length—short (10–20 minutes) or longer?	
Duration—commitment to advisory one year or more?	
All staff as advisers or just classroom teachers?	
Cofacilitated advisories or single adviser?	
Application process for advisers or volunteers?	
Supporting roles for staff uncomfortable with being advisers or unable to be advisers?	
Professional development for advisers?	
Adviser training pre-, during, and postadvisory?	
Resources for advisers or self-selected resources?	
Help for struggling advisers?	
Compensation for advisers (\$, extra prep time, fewer classes)?	
Detailed adviser roles and responsibilities?	
Detailed advisee roles and responsibilities?	
Master contract considerations?	
Budget considerations?	
Master schedule considerations?	
Primary leader of entire program or cofacilitated?	
How to build buy-in?	
Assessment for advisers part of evaluation process or informal?	
Assessment for advisees linked to transcript or informal?	
Options for assessment for the overall program—Met goals? Adviser/advisee checklist? Portfolio? Logs? Observations? Surveys?	
Community assessment (through shadowing, forums) of program or in-school assessment?	
Leadership in assessment or peer observation?	
Process in place for design team to redesign?	

## How Do We Implement the Design?

By the time you present your plan to the school community, your staff should be prepared and ready with resources for the entire year. Being an adviser is a separate job from being a teacher, so it requires its own training. Your school should have advisers as good as its teachers. Any program can fail with inadequate staff development and support. Don't be surprised, though, if after successfully implementing advisory, the morale increases. Be sure to address the following in your professional development:

- Common procedures and policies
- Role and expectations of the adviser
- In-school resources such as the counseling office
- Group facilitation and dynamics
- Specific workshops on college issues such as reading transcripts, the SAT, etc.
- Parent procedures

Building confidence in your advisory or any college-focused program is the hardest design issue to predict, but it is critical to your goal of achieving a successful college-friendly program. Here are some general tips on building confidence:

1. **Time**—Following a 7–10 month timeline can be helpful for staff who naturally plan ahead and do not welcome surprises.
2. **Involvement**—During the design stage, provide staff with focus groups, decision-making powers, information, resources, articles, and ideas to involve them as much as possible.
3. **Incentives**—Advisers need to be rewarded for the commitment and work that they provide. They are essential to any program and should be valued.
4. **Listening**—Staff members sometimes feel as if decisions that directly affect them are made without their input. During the design stage, put a comment box in the faculty lounge, allow time at faculty meetings for question-and-answer sessions, and informally keep your ears open for the buzz in the halls.
5. **Tone**—Encourage your design team's enthusiasm and creativity. Be upbeat, focus on your successes, and have confidence in your goals. Set the tone as a positive one!

When choosing your team of advisory members, emphasize the value of each student. Each adviser should recognize the fact that each student is a unique individual, living in a complex time and in a competitive environment. Support your advisers with resources so that they can provide students and families with reliable, accurate, and current information about all postsecondary opportunities. With your advisers, build a system that helps students develop research, problem-solving, critical thinking, and evaluation tools that can be

applied to the college admissions process as well as everyday life experiences. Make sure each adviser supports each student's sense of dignity and self-worth through the college process so that a student will remember that one's value as a person is neither enhanced nor diminished by any college admissions decision.

Another resource for creating an advisory system specifically for use with the CollegeEd program can be found on [www.collegeboard.com/collegeed](http://www.collegeboard.com/collegeed).

## What Kinds of Outreach Programs Can We Offer Our Students?

### The College Fair

One of the best ways to show your students that college is the expectation for everyone is to organize a college fair. Students and parents will see that your school is serious about a college-going culture when they have the opportunity to meet with real college representatives from different types of institutions. A college fair can also help students gain confidence and self-esteem when they see their postsecondary options brought to them in their own high schools. They will feel like they “matter” if your school has gone to the trouble of organizing a college fair just for them.

College fairs are organized by single high schools or within a consortium of local schools. Reaching out to other schools has the advantage of attracting a larger number of college representatives, although this may be more complicated to organize logistically. Schedule your fair during the evening, and as with other outreach meetings, offer free child care, refreshments, and translators. Be sure to supply each college representative with a table and chairs and ask them to bring extra materials so parents and students can review the information at home. They will want to bring viewbooks, fact sheets, applications, and information on social life, housing, and financial aid. You may find that some will bring giveaways such as school buttons, pencils, or bumper stickers. Encourage this sense of school pride by displaying each college's name in an attractive manner on each representative's table.

Give yourself plenty of time to schedule your college fair. Many counselors suggest scheduling a fair up to nine months in advance (make plans with college representatives in January for an early autumn fair). Check with other local high schools, your state counseling association, and NACAC to avoid conflicts with other key events. Be sure to avoid conflict with other in-school events, as you may need to use a large portion of your school for the fair.

Invite college representatives from a variety of colleges. Include local community colleges, technical schools, large public universities, and smaller private liberal arts colleges. Some colleges choose to send employees while others prefer to send alumni to speak on behalf of the college. If alumni will attend your college fair, feel free to provide helpful suggestions regarding the number of students you expect to

attend and the kinds of questions you expect them to ask. Ask the representatives to arrive at the fair an hour early so they have enough time to park and set up their materials. Have student volunteers ready to assist.

Make announcements about the college fair in newsletters, school newspapers, flyers in the hallways, and letters sent home. A few weeks before the event, send formal invitations to all junior and senior students and parents. Highlight several different kinds of colleges in your announcements to attract as many different families as possible.

When students and parents arrive, have name tags, small pads of paper, pens, and bags for carrying college materials ready by the door. Student volunteers can help direct families and answer questions. Offer a guidebook or directory that shows each school and its location at the fair. Give a detailed description of the school, including size, location, religious affiliation (if any), most popular majors, and average test scores. Distribute a list of suggested topics for students and parents to ask the representatives, including student features, social life and campus activities, campus facilities, academics, and faculty.

After the fair, provide an evaluation form for college representatives, students, and families to assess the success of your event and help plan for next year's fair.

### **College Majors Night**

Another event that will emphasize the expectation that college is for everyone is a night that presents different college areas of study. Major Mania is a program created by the counselors at Plano West Senior High School (Plano, Texas) that helps students and parents better understand college majors. It includes a general presentation that covers the basics of selecting a major and smaller breakout sessions with meetings led by department heads from several universities to present three sample majors.

Each presentation covers the following:

- Academic strengths students need to succeed in the area of study
- Required courses for the first two years of college (general education and prerequisites)
- The year the student would officially declare his or her major
- The kinds of jobs this major typically leads to, including typical companies
- The employment forecast for graduates in this major
- A variety of career paths open to graduates in this major
- The kinds of career resources available to graduates in this major
- Personal experiences that would be helpful for students considering this major

When organizing a college majors night, survey your students to target the most popular majors and invite department heads in those majors several months in advance. As with any event, provide your speakers with any materials and equipment they need (including audiovisual equipment) and prepare your students with useful questions to ask. Announce your event well in advance and send personal invitations to juniors and seniors. Include freshman and sophomore students as well, to draw them into the college-going culture of your school. Be sure to survey students, parents, and presenters for feedback after your event has concluded.

## **How Can We Engage Our Parent Community in Our College-Going Culture?**

Any program is substantially less effective without parent and community support. In the end, after all the hard work that your school puts into making college more of an option for all of its students, the family structure is the place where any true expectations of college and its financial reality exist. It can be challenging to compete with cultural expectations and emotions, so use any and all resources to support parents and students. Usually the lack of family support for a post-high-school education stems from a lack of knowledge and misconceptions about available options. Here are some suggestions for parents to prepare children of any age for college. Share them with your entire district to strengthen the idea that college is the expectation of the entire community:

- ✓ As early as possible, research, choose, and start contributing to college savings plans such as bonds, bank accounts, 529 plans, or prepaid tuition plans so that your money has sufficient time to grow.
- ✓ Become as involved as possible with your child's school and work.
- ✓ When your child is in elementary school, encourage him or her to pursue academic challenges and develop good academic habits, leadership, and extracurricular interests so that school is a positive experience.
- ✓ Recognize school as a form of work, and discourage any distraction from the goal of going to college. This may include extra monitoring of TV, the Internet, and video games.
- ✓ It is never too early to discuss careers and higher education with your child, especially when younger children have limitless dreams and potential.
- ✓ Make sure your child starts on a college track as early as junior high school, giving your child a strong academic foundation for his or her later classes.

- ✓ As your child enters high school, build a relationship with the school counselor and meet with her or him early on so that you and your child can map out a tentative four-year college-preparatory plan. The basic college entrance requirements include four years of English, three years of social studies, three years of math, two years of science, two years of foreign language, and one year of fine arts.
- ✓ Familiarize yourself with the counseling office's resources on financial aid, scholarships, and admissions.
- ✓ Encourage your child to discuss college experiences with people they know such as relatives, friends, coaches, scout leaders, and community members.
- ✓ Encourage, but do not assume responsibility for, your child through the admissions process by helping your child research colleges and narrow his or her options. Be honest with your child about any financial or geographical expectations you may have.
- ✓ Follow the College Calendar (on [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)), which includes standardized test dates, application times, financial aid deadlines, etc.
- ✓ Learn all you can about financial aid and scholarships. There are many programs that offer financial aid to families of all economic classes.
- ✓ Celebrate success and continually express your pride in your child's efforts and goals toward college.

—Adapted from *College Is Possible* and *College Next*

You should have a goal of building confidence in as many parents as possible, although some parents may harbor strong attitudes and prejudices. Envision your shift toward a college-going culture as an extensive public relations campaign to the entire community. A successful public relations campaign requires multiple avenues for outreach:

1. **Your most important and often underutilized resource is an active PTO/parent organization full of people committed to the college goal.** Enlist parents to visit homes and apartment complexes, hold information sessions, organize a telephone hotline, write newsletters, and conduct phone calls to educate parents who may be unfamiliar with the college process.
2. **School-sponsored assemblies.** Schedule informational meetings about your small- or large-scale program, financial aid, college admissions, course selection, advice from admissions officers, college choices, etc., around the schedule of working parents. This may require scheduling meetings at night or early in the morning right before drop-off time. Sponsor a tour for parents to the local college, invite local college graduates and representatives to speak at a college fair, and hold a college majors night. Ideally, encourage more parents to attend by providing translators, refreshments, and child care free of charge. You may also want to set up a booth at athletic events or concerts with lots of information on college, course work,

and financial aid. Parents may be more likely to turn out to watch their children at these activities than attend a curriculum night at school, so take advantage of their interest.

3. **Open houses/parent conferences.** Any drop-in, face-to-face meeting between a counselor or teacher and a parent gives the college admissions process a more personal touch that many families welcome. These opportunities can also serve to introduce parents to all the free resources of your counseling center and computer labs, such as scholarships, college guidebooks, financial forms, alumni resources, etc. You can also use this opportunity to walk parents through college Web sites, the FAFSA resources, and other college materials. Often, a personal connection can make all the difference. A family who wants their daughter to be a wife and mother, for example, may think differently about college if you can use a personal conference to explain that higher education may give her more ways to take care of her family.
4. **Newsletters.** A monthly newsletter is less personal but the most efficient way to reach every parent in your school and inform them about any new programs, college information, standardized testing deadlines, parent tips like the ones above, and/or course curriculum. In correspondence, use "parent or guardian." Know that parents or advocates may not be available to meet with you at school, and never require them to do so.
5. **Media: newspapers, radio, TV.** While some schools may opt to never get involved with the media, other schools may want to create a relationship with their local media organizations so that they can inform them of the successes of their college-focused programs. With parents' permission, you may also want to list the colleges of your students to celebrate their successes publicly.

On the front lines with parents, Luisa Colin of Rio Grande Valley, Texas, trains other Latino parents to go out into their community and convince parents of the importance of attending college. "Students cannot do it on their own. A counselor can help at school and so can the teachers, but at home they need a role model. They look up to their parents and basically they do end up doing what the parents want."

— *The College Track TV Series*, [www.thecollegetrack.com](http://www.thecollegetrack.com)

Indiana has created a Twenty-First-Century Scholars Program that offers families, many of whom are totally unfamiliar with the college experience, academic and financial support, and information. The program promises students who keep a C average, take college-prep classes starting in middle school, and choose not to drink or smoke tuition assistance at any Indiana state college.

— *The College Track TV Series*, [www.thecollegetrack.com](http://www.thecollegetrack.com)

On its Web site, the College Track offers the following 10 steps for a successful community connections event:

1. Consider the participants' needs.
2. Choose an appropriate venue for your event.
3. Publicize the event through local media, flyers, and phone calls.
4. Use free publicity materials available on [www.thecollege-track.com](http://www.thecollege-track.com).
5. Make sure all guests are greeted and are given name tags to make the event more personal.
6. Provide food, beverages, and a comfortable atmosphere.
7. Stick to a predetermined schedule and let guests out on time.
8. Dedicate the entire event's focus to the goal of increasing college awareness.
9. Allow time for parents to mingle before and after the event.
10. Always send personal thank-you notes to the guests and thank parents informally for attending.

Parents of all students should feel welcome in their child's school and comfortable talking with their child's counselor and adviser. Prepare checklists or tips for parents so that they feel more at ease with the college process. Distribute a list like this to build a long-term relationship between parents and counselors/advisers:

- ✓ Meet with the school counselor to discuss your child's strengths, weaknesses, interests, and goals.
- ✓ Make an appointment with the school counselor to create a program of study, grades 9–12, that matches your child's academic strengths, interests, and future plans.

- ✓ Contact the school counselor to set up a parent/teacher conference.
- ✓ Call the school counselor with any concerns about recent changes in behavior, attitude, and/or academic performance.
- ✓ Use the expertise of the school counselor, along with resources in the counseling office and/or career center, to assist your child in postsecondary planning.
- ✓ Ask the school counselor for resources within and outside the school to assist with social/emotional issues.
- ✓ Seek information from the school counselor about standardized test results.
- ✓ Attend evening programs sponsored by the counseling office.
- ✓ Read any information sent from the counseling office to your home; it will include valuable information for you and your child.

Changing culture is a daunting task, but one that is necessary if we want to prepare students of all backgrounds for success in today's world. Shifting your school's focus to a college-going culture requires changing attitudes at all levels: administrative, faculty, staff, student, and parent. Maintaining a consistent focus on the variety of available options to your graduates, creating and supporting an advisory, offering and publicizing college information nights to the general community, and cheering on your students' success will go a long way toward your goal of a college-going culture. This can happen whether you choose to make small or large changes. Students deserve options for their future, regardless of their race, economic status, or academic achievement. Congratulations on providing your students with these opportunities through your motivation and dedication to making your high school a place where college is the next step for everyone.

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### **The College Board: Connecting Students to College Success**

The College Board is a not-for-profit membership association whose mission is to connect students to college success and opportunity. Founded in 1900, the association is composed of more than 5,000 schools, colleges, universities, and other educational organizations. Each year, the College Board serves seven million students and their parents, 23,000 high schools, and 3,500 colleges through major programs and services in college admissions, guidance, assessment, financial aid, enrollment, and teaching and learning. Among its best-known programs are the SAT<sup>®</sup>, the PSAT/NMSQT<sup>®</sup>, and the Advanced Placement Program<sup>®</sup> (AP<sup>®</sup>). The College Board is committed to the principles of excellence and equity, and that commitment is embodied in all of its programs, services, activities, and concerns.

