SMALLER
LEARNING COMMUNITIES
PROGRAM

Beyond Survival: Off-Track High School Students Can Succeed in College and Career

Leslie Rennie-Hill
Amy Parkhurst

Academy for Educational Development

This paper was prepared for the U.S. Department of Education (ED), Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Smaller Learning Communities Program under Contract Number ED-07-CO-0106 with EDJ Associates, Inc. in Herndon, VA. The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent the positions or policies of ED, nor do references to trade names, commercial products, services, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. government.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

The federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 increased accountability and pressure to improve low-performing schools. The conventional wisdom generally accepted today confirmed that everyone needs some education after high school to be able to earn a living wage. But the current environment does not seem to serve all students—particularly "off-track" high school students and dropouts.

Responding to the evolving demands of the global economy and honoring America's promise for upward mobility and equal participation in our democracy, educational leaders and policymakers have called for significant secondary system reforms over the past decade—reforms to ensure each young person can move from high school to college and career success. Such aspirations are easy to embrace and difficult to achieve, particularly in the face of tight state budgets, a volatile economy, and a high school system originally designed to organize students into college *or* work pathways. Students who are more than 2 years behind their peers in reading and math skills, young people who are off-track to high school graduation, or who have dropped out entirely often pose the greatest challenges to educators and can land at the bottom of the priority list[1]. Their needs can seem insurmountable, their costs too high. The result? Off-track students get unintentionally "pushed out" of the system while teachers and administrators sit uncomfortably with a sense of failure about a problem that can seem unsolvable. The intent of this paper is to offer practical, credible strategies to successfully prepare youth for college[2] and career, strategies that can point the way toward more equitable results for off-track students.

This paper identifies competing commitments within which educational leaders operate, blending recent research and descriptions of the everyday realities faced by educators. The paper then distinguishes among different situations faced by off-track youth, describes a solidifying consensus around the essential components of any effective path from high school to college and career, captures snapshots of promising practices, and suggests ideas for integrating program elements that are producing encouraging early evidence of success in high school system reforms.

[1] Criteria used to determine whether or not a student is off-track to graduation vary across states and districts. Generally students are first identified if they are 2 or more years behind normal grade level achievement on standardized achievement tests in reading and math. Once enrolled in high school, students are off-track if they do not pass core courses and fail to earn the proscribed number of credits each year.

[2] Throughout the paper, *college* refers to "any accredited educational institution beyond the high school level, including apprenticeship, certificate, associate's and bachelor's degree programs" (National College Access Network (NCAN) definition as noted in Lieber, 2009).

New Goals Plus Old Habits Equal Unintended Consequences

Despite years of public distress about the situation, the high school dropout problem persists with frustrating stability. Approximately 1.2 million students fail to graduate, an average of 65 to 70 percent of our high school students earn a diploma within 4 years, and only 50 percent of our African American, Hispanic, American Indian, and Asian American students do so (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010).

In many school districts, existing dropout programs based on a deficit-model (i.e., focused on what students are *not* doing: attending school, completing assignments, or behaving properly) coexist with new college readiness/access programs for all students, leading to contradictory commitments and policies. Within the pressure cooker of higher standards and accountability and competing commitments for resources, the relief valve can be an unintended slide into tracking as school leaders concentrate resources on the students deemed more likely to benefit from postsecondary options at the expense of spending at least some of the resources on aggressively supporting the development of the students who usually get left out.

Who Are We Talking About?

Disconnected. Disengaged. Dropped out. Many times people assume students who fail in high school are just less intelligent and/or unmotivated to do the work. In the past, dropouts were painted with a broad brush, basing generalizations on media images or the story of a single young person known to have left school. Fortunately, the finer grained analyses of off-track students conducted over the past decade help us better understand who these students are and what they need to succeed. We now have more accurate ways to describe young people who are not making it on the traditional path to a high school diploma and even more ways to explain why they have veered off-track (Bloom, 2010; Brock, 2010).

Typically, students are considered off-track if they are more than 2 years behind their peers in high school. They may have accompanying truancy issues, behavior problems, learning needs, difficulties or demands at home, and other socioeconomic challenges.

Data analyses by urban districts (e.g., New York City, New York; Boston, Massachusetts; and Portland, Oregon) conducted through contracting with consulting organizations (e.g., Parthenon Group and Bridgespan Group) have revealed distinct categories of students who need different pathways constructed for them (Stid et al., 2009; Colvin, 2010; Allen, 2010). Districts are finding it helpful to distinguish among the following student categories:

- Young and Far—ages 16–18 with few high school credits earned;
- Old and Far—ages 19–21 with few high school credits earned; and
- Old and Close—ages 19–21 with only a few high school credits needed.

What Works: Solidifying Agreement Around Essential Components

Practitioners who have studied off-track students and the programs and policies designed to meet their needs recognize essential components of the path from high school to college and career. Jobs for the Future, an acknowledged leader in the field, clearly identifies three phases of necessary supports to help off-track students complete their secondary education and make successful transitions into postsecondary education or training.[3]

1. Enriched Preparation: Remedial and accelerated preparation for off-track high school students integrates instructional best practices with a firm grounding in the tenets of positive youth development driven by relentlessly high expectations for all.

2. Bridge Programming: A strategic range of available activities (e.g., high school courses that also award college credit, exposure to college campuses, and assistance with financial aid applications) supports students as they learn to anticipate a more successful future and go back and forth over the on-ramps to college and career.

3. 1st Year Supports: These programs extend the safety net beyond the handoff from high school to college and career: This can include the academic and social wraparound assistance in the 1st year of postsecondary education students need while they test out and build up their academic skills and question and reaffirm whether they truly belong and can succeed in postsecondary situations.

[3] Jobs for the Future developed the three-part framework with funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's United States Special Initiatives, which supports a partnership with YouthBuild USA and the National Youth Employment Coalition to build college-connected designs for off-track and out-of-school youth.

Table 1: Back on Track Three Phases
Developed by Jobs for the Future (2010)

Phases	Exemplary Components
Phase One: Enriched Preparation	• Explicit college-going culture • Curriculum aligned with/designed to build skills needed for entry in 1st-year credit-bearing courses • Computer- and web-based tools that provide skill-building support and facilitate "anytime, anywhere" learning to supplement classroom instruction • Focus on literacy across the curriculum • High-level reading and writing material and increasingly challenging assignments needed for college success • Extended program time to give students the opportunity to develop higher academic skills • Social and emotional supports
Phase Two: Bridge Programming	• Early use of college placement tests to help students place into credit-bearing courses • Supported Dual Enrollment • Assistance with college-ready skill development, including study skills, time and stress management, financial literacy, and college navigation • Provision of college IDs to give students access to college facilities such as the library, gym, and cafeteria • Intentional career exploration and planning that takes into account students' career aspirations and helps drive college program of study
Phase Three: 1st Year Postsecondary Supports	• Sheltered 1st-year gatekeeper courses • Dedicated counselor/case manager • Provision of emergency funds to cover books, transportation, and housing needs • Connection to campus resources such as TRIO-funded programs, which support first-generation college-goers • Creation of on-campus alumni groups to make mentors and advisors available to help students stay on track • Development of performance-based incentives to motivate students to accomplish personal and academic benchmarks

This paper uses these three phases as lenses to view two snapshots of partnerships that exemplify different approaches to helping off-track high school students. The collaborations described—between school district and community-based organizations and between school district and community college—show how partners have set their sights on college success for all students and have deployed asset-based strategies to get there. Both partnerships demonstrate Back on Track phases, adding their own

signatures to the variety and intensity of the components. Firmly committed to the higher goal of postsecondary persistence and success, both examples have planned backward to design their programs and are actively monitoring what is working to help students achieve their goal. None claims to be the perfect answer; all persist in their efforts to get the systems on-track, aligned and coordinated within their own organizations and at points of vulnerability where students transition from one level to the next. After discussing the partnership models, the paper considers the added benefits derived from the incorporation of work-based learning opportunities into an off-track student's high school preparation, and it highlights some programs building a more effective bridge to college including examples from both collaboration models described in the paper. The work-based learning examples show the power of connecting off-track students to hands-on, real work experiences that make classroom learning relevant and career goals reachable.

Model A. School District—CBO Partnership: West Brooklyn Community High School

Overview

By most performance measures, West Brooklyn Community High School (WBCHS) in Brooklyn, NY, looks like a solidly successful school: meeting state Adequate Yearly Progress "Safe Harbor" benchmarks in good standing; scoring "A" on its New York City (NYC) Department of Education overall score, student performance score, and student progress score; doing as well or better than its peers serving students of comparable needs; noted for its exemplary gains in credit accumulation and Regents Diplomas earned by its mostly overage and undercredited student population.[4] Yet Principal Liliana Polo is anything but complacent when she states, "our success is defined by what our students do when they leave, and even though many go on to postsecondary education, not enough go—and not enough make it in college once they're there." [5]

Positioned in the Office of Multiple Pathways to Graduation in the NYC Department of Education, WBCHS opened in 2006, one of the newly created transfer schools intended to be key components of the NYC plan to raise high school graduation rates by 20 percent. Reaching out to students ages 16 to 20 who have been excessively truant or dropped out after initially enrolling in ninth grade and who may have attended two to four different high schools already, WBCHS meets its overage and undercredited

[4] The NYC Department of Education employs a mix of quantitative and qualitative assessment measures of its schools. For more information, refer to http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/default.htm.

[5] All quotations in the paper are drawn from phone interviews conducted in June, July and August 2010 and interviewees are listed in the references.

students where they are. The school must ensure students earn 44 New York City credits, complete five New York State Regents exams, and graduate with a high school diploma within 18 to 36 months. Students' demographics have remained generally consistent over the past 4 years. The most recent data shows that 66 percent of students receive free or reduced-price lunch and that the population is 22 percent African American, 53 percent Latino, 6 percent Asian, and 18 percent White (New York State Report Card Accountability and Overview Report, 2008–2009). Serving close to 200 students in grades 10–12, almost half of the student body now graduates each year (this translates into 73 percent of enrolled students graduating within 6 years of originally entering high school) and most graduates go on to postsecondary education.[6]

How has WBCHS succeeded with students who have failed repeatedly elsewhere? There is no single magic strategy: The school combines the elements initially identified as key to new small school designs—strong leadership, an elevating shared mission, activities that excite teens, high expectations, quality teaching, mechanisms for frequently tracking student progress, and opportunities to give back to the community (Colvin, 2010). In addition, it adds more bridge programming and support to boost students' confidence that they too belong in college, deserve to succeed there, and can do so. Finally, the school leaders and staff stay relentlessly curious about what is working or not working, how each student is doing, and how they can improve as a school. On a regular basis, they reflect on their work and adjust their strategies accordingly through activities such as biweekly assessments of class lessons, reviews of students' daily class "exit tickets," and many other departmental and issue-based professional learning community (PLC) meetings.

Building a Strong Community-School Partnership

WBCHS partners with Good Shepherd Services (GSS), a local community-based organization with a long-standing, respected history of success with off-track students. GSS provides a network of services in youth development, education, and family services ensuring that quick connections can be made with providers that can address students' nonacademic needs. The two partners divide responsibilities carefully, playing to each organization's strengths. Rachel Forsyth, director of transfer schools for Good Shepherd, echoes Polo's urgency to accomplish more: "We're not there yet but are pushing hard because too many high school graduates still need remediation, at the college level—so that's our next hurdle to leap."

The Good Shepherd staff knows how to engage youth and work with families. They take the lead, recruiting the target student population. By maintaining a focus on positive student behavior and attendance, ensuring the availability of the right social and

[6] Polo reports that in each of the past 2 years, 65 to 85 students graduated out of a total annual enrollment of 175 +/-, and each year 50 or more graduates transitioned directly to postsecondary education. Other school statistics can be verified through the Office of Multiple Pathways website at http://schools.nyc.gov/SchoolPortals/15/K529/AboutUs/Statistics/default.htm.

emotional supports, and mediating the academic connections between work and postsecondary education, Good Shepherd can shoulder half the load to free WBCHS teachers to use their professional expertise to structure and support excellent classroom learning activities that move students forward. Stephen Marcus, Good Shepherd Program Director at WBCHS, leads the team of advocate counselors, the youth internship coordinator, and college access counselor. Teamwork between the two partners has grown stronger and more strategic over the past 4 years, largely because school leaders convene weekly, or more often if necessary, and schedule individual organization and joint planning times around student work and issues. The advocate counselor team fulfills three key functions:

- ensures continuous student progress by establishing goals and benchmarks across academic and social-emotional dimensions;
- provides academic mentoring that helps students stay focused on their academic progress in spite of the daunting social, emotional, and economic problems that inevitably arise; and
- expeditiously connects students to appropriate social service supports for problems such as housing, pregnancy, gang-related issues, or depression.

Students are known at WBCHS; there is nowhere to hide. Intentionally creating a family-like community, maximum student-teacher ratios are 25:1, and counselors are 35:1. Staff and students know one another's names; staff members analyze students' strengths, weaknesses, and preferred learning styles and interests. All strive for healthy relationships within inviting, safe, and open classroom environments. Students meet twice weekly in Community Leadership, an advisory-type class in which they can strengthen interpersonal and conflict resolution skills, set goals, monitor progress, and prepare for success at the next level beyond high school. Polo clarifies the delicate balance adults must achieve in their relationships with students: "Our school needs healthy relationships where our students are known, appreciated, and able to learn. But, it is important that being known not be confused with being buddies."

The partners recognize the importance of building trust with students who often enter feeling disengaged, bewildered, and oppressed by previous school failure. They know that students need to belong and feel safe before they can opt for new, riskier choices to "buy into" school. Teachers and administrators understand that helping students who struggle means having higher expectations than anyone else, balancing tight structure with flexible empathy, encouraging questioning but arriving at answers, and helping staff and students see the reasons behind rules and requests (Rothman, 2010).

When they transfer to WBCHS, students and their parent(s)/guardian(s) start by reflecting on what went wrong previously and how the future will be different. This gives students a chance to begin the process of reimagining a new personal path and connection to learning, a chance to begin to believe they can now meet high

expectations. Teachers and students discuss, among themselves and with each other, what high expectations look like: They establish norms for class communities and hold all accountable, conduct rigorous frequent assessments empowering students to know what they have done right and what they must do next, and do not waiver from publicly stated beliefs that the students will graduate and go on to college and career.

The WBCHS and Good Shepherd partners strive to infuse strength-based youth development principles that foster resiliency from the transfer process onward. Believing *every student can succeed*, teachers and counselors use rigorous, relevant, engaging curriculum and integrate youth development principles that respect student voice and leadership, respond to student interests and differentiated learning needs, and provide honest feedback and advocacy.

Phase 1: Enriched Preparation

To provide a safe and predictable learning environment, WBCHS establishes clear schoolwide practices that help students succeed in their classes: a consistent grading policy, a consistent classroom format and routines with a common language, shared commitment to college for all, defined progressive levels of consequences for negative behavior, and family recognition for incremental positive behaviors.

Both Polo and Forsyth attribute the improved academic achievement record at WBCHS to its adoption of a continuous improvement culture where staff members routinely conduct needs assessments, take action, and reflect. This approach fosters collegial creativity and problem solving and allows staff to make thoughtful, strategic adjustments as frequently as the situation demands. Within the NYC system that centrally determines learning standards to be met and mandates the administration of periodic assessments by all schools, WBCHS teachers exercise their creativity as they align their lessons with standards and adjust to the pace of student learning. Teachers identify benchmarks and develop classroom lessons, assessments, and biweekly progress reports. This essential yet difficult scaffolding of learning takes time and is a work-in-progress at WBCHS.

WBCHS resists academic tracking by intentionally scheduling students heterogeneously into classes. Within classes, particularly English and math, teachers often organize fluid smaller groups in which students can move in and out according to their skill development. For example, an English class may have three different groups reading books at various instructional levels, yet all groups address the same learning targets. In science and social studies, again the learning objectives remain the same while materials available at a variety of reading levels allow all students to access the content. English language learners and special education students receive one period per day of separate instruction; otherwise, they join other students in integrated classes.

Professional learning communities (PLCs) provide the structure where this instructional planning and differentiation occurs. Polo tries to limit full staff meetings to times when it is necessary to revisit the school vision and goals, protecting designated staff time for PLCs to collaborate in content areas and/or when organized around a common interest or issue. During the last period of the day, students participate in art electives or community leadership (advisory) classes while teachers can meet for PLCs. Staff also meet before and/or after school. Curriculum departments, the WBCHS cabinet, and support specialists meet weekly; formal professional development occurs monthly; and PLCs for special issues meet as needed. This PLC flexibility combined with the laserlike focus on student needs and performance drives the school's instructional culture and places teachers behind the wheel.

Accelerating learning requires special attention to literacy across the curriculum with a particular emphasis on developing student skills to think critically and understand nonfiction material. Frequent professional development and reflection as well as systematic documentation of progress reveal evidence that the staff is challenging itself to think deeply about what it means for students to be truly college ready (Rothman, 2010). Staff curriculum leaders readily reference college readiness focus areas (Conley, 2005; 2007) as a touchstone for curriculum development and assessment. They have initially focused on literacy, analytic reasoning, and meta-cognitive skills, with a gradual shift to incorporating greater emphasis on writing skills, research skills, and study skills (Rothman, 2010).

Staff turnover, approximately 25 percent during the first 2 years and reduced to 5 percent most recently, presents an ongoing professional development challenge-especially because this is such deep, demanding professional work. Polo attributes the turnover to the highly challenging and accountable nature of the work: For teachers, WBCHS is an intense environment where practice is public to peers, weekly lessons are submitted for review, and relationships with students, families, and colleagues must be built and sustained.

Polo reports that to retain and support teachers they tried to apply the teacher induction model from the New Teacher Center at University of California, Santa Cruz, but found they needed to "go organic and create their own system." Polo goes on to explain, "The framework of the New Teacher Center felt a bit rigid and the mentor role with its implied assumption that a mentor is a knower seemed to be at odds with the school value that everyone at WBCHS is a learner." Additionally, Polo found not only new teachers need support: Many 2nd- and 3rd-year teachers requested individualized attention. The WBCHS homegrown solution calls for an instructional support person (a teacher with a reduced class schedule) to partner with new teachers, offering transition support over their 1st year. Implemented in 2008, this approach has shown encouraging results in improved staff retention and satisfaction measures.

As it strives to accelerate and enrich students' high school experience, WBCHS faces another conundrum requiring creativity: how to help students earn credits in a more limited timeframe. They have made progress by implementing the following strategies: redesigning schedules on a student-by-student basis to maximize student opportunities to earn credit; offering evening and summer courses with strict attendance requirements; clarifying make-up policies and independent study policies that enable the school to grant credit for rigorous learning despite initial struggles with behavior or attendance; and facilitating communication with sending schools to make it possible for students to recover credits without duplicating seat time for work already done.

In evening courses for credit recovery, teachers use high-interest, multidisciplinary, project-based learning activities that are individually tailored to allow students to earn the credits needed. For example, a student assignment to create a unique Marvel comic book with characters, setting, and storyline can go in several directions. If a character can "walk through walls," then science credit can be recovered by studying physiology and physics. If social studies credit is needed, the student can focus detail on the setting and historical context. Throughout the entire multiweek assignment, all students regularly write and conduct research. Another afterschool example shows the priority WBCHS places on real-world connections to academics: In a juvenile justice class, teachers partner with Medgar Evers Community College as students examine policy and recommend changes, creating a video record of their work and linking student internships to academics. Opportunities for summer credit recovery (some required based on earlier test or course performance, some optional) also emphasize writing and research. Options range from Regents math class to English, science, art, or gym.

Phase 2: Bridge Programming

While students are still at WBCHS they need simple, visual reminders of what they have accomplished, what remains to be completed, and the time it should take to get there. From enrollment to graduation, these initially off-track students need realistic yet optimistic guidance from adults who believe in their ultimate success. Advocate counselors meet weekly with their students to review goal sheets; lists of graduates are publicly displayed in hallways throughout the school year. At WBCHS, the advocate counselor who serves as a student's primary go-to person collaborates with the Good Shepherd-funded college access counselor to guide and stretch the student's self-perception of who he/she is, where he/she belongs, and what he/she is capable of accomplishing.

The college access counselor (a position that has been in place for 2 years) is responsible for maintaining relationships with WBCHS graduates and continuing to support their transition to college and work. Exposure to college, assistance with financial aid and applications, smoothing the bumps on the road to college—the work of the college access counselor is defined by a "whatever it takes" attitude. Polo reports one instance where a talented basketball player was accepted to a college in upstate

New York and the college access counselor went with the student to the registrar's office and then took him to meet the basketball coach—all to make certain the student felt connected and at home in his new school.

Anecdotal data from former students suggest that they struggle with writing, time management, self-advocacy, collaboration with other students, and financial aid systems once they transition from WBCHS to college. Forsyth reports recent focus group[7] comments where former students talk about the challenges of resisting the pressures of college life, staying organized, and understanding what "I am my own keeper" means. WBCHS is exploring ways to create social networks among the high school graduates—similar to the Posse Foundation[8] model—in which students can lean on each other, especially as they stretch the circle farther from their home base.

The need for actionable data about student performance at college is prompting a new area of exploration. Plans are emerging to develop partnerships to share data with the City University of New York—where the majority of WBCHS students enrolls—and to investigate the possibilities available through the National Student Clearinghouse database. In addition, Good Shepherd Services has been partnering with Jobs for the Future to develop strategies that bring the lessons of early college high schools to its network of multiple pathways schools.

Polo and Forsyth believe the bridge programming necessary for college and career readiness will always be a work-in-progress. They appreciate the invaluable support derived from their shared collaborative approach to school improvement over time. They attribute any success to the entire school team: students, families, staff, and community partners and their shared commitment to their students' futures. When asked what gives her the greatest sense of success, Polo paused thoughtfully and said, "When I see what staff are able to provide, and how we bring the families in, I feel proud of our school. But what means the most to me is watching the journeys our students take—seeing their transformation and success."

---

[7] Student focus groups are conducted twice yearly and staff hope to increase the frequency if possible. Data are seen as highly credible. In fact, according to Polo, the shift to intensified writing instruction was sparked by graduates stating they wished they had been asked to write more.

[8] Posse is a college access and youth leadership development program that identifies, recruits, and selects student leaders from public high schools and sends them in groups called Posses to some of the top colleges and universities in the country. A Posse is a multicultural team made up of 10 students. It acts as a support system to ensure that each Posse Scholar succeeds and graduates from college. Posse Scholars receive 4-year, full-tuition leadership scholarships from Posse partner colleges and universities. Retrieved on July 19, 2010 from http://www. Possefoundation.org/quick-facts/#whatisposse.

Model B. Bridging High School and Post-Secondary Education: Gateway to College

Overview

Gateway to College (GtC) empowers high school dropouts and students on the verge of dropping out to get back on track through a Dual Enrollment program in which students can work simultaneously toward a high school diploma and college credits. GtC leaders stand committed to their goal to decrease educational inequalities: They actively seek to provide a path to postsecondary success for traditionally underserved youth—particularly students of color and/or from low-income households.

Portland Community College (PCC) developed the initial GtC model in 2000, and in 2003, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation invited PCC to become an intermediary of the Early College High School Initiative. Headquartered in Portland, Oregon, the GtC National Network is now an independent, expanding nonprofit organization serving more than 27 colleges in 16 states and partnering with more than 110 school districts. See appendix 1 for the GtC National Network map.

Located on a college campus and existing within a college infrastructure, all GtC teachers are college faculty. GtC's Dual Enrollment programs receive elementary and secondary education funds that follow the student. Through agreements with local K–12 school districts (via memoranda of understanding or contracts) or charter agreements, districts pass through a portion of per-pupil expenditures to pay for student tuition and books. The GtC program is proving to be an economical, locally sustainable model. Costs per student vary across the Nation according to state and local funding formulas with an average range of $4,000 to $6,000 per student per year.

To meet the increased demands inherent in the program's rapid expansion, leaders in Portland established the Gateway to College National Network in 2008. With Network membership, partner colleges receive support through professional development, technical assistance with curriculum alignment and program implementation, data analysis, and program evaluation.

In January 2010, GtC received a $13.1 million, 3-year award to expand and improve its national work by adding 15 more sites, conducting new research initiatives, and deepening its work to effect systemic changes of policy and practice. Funders include the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Carnegie Corporation of New York, The Kresge Foundation, and the Foundation to Promote Open Society.

GtC serves youth between 16 and 21 years old who have dropped out of school or are on the verge of doing so and who are undercredited for their age and grade level. Most students fit the Young and Far off-track profile: average student age across the Network is 17.1 years, average high school GPA is 1.65 (on a 4-point scale), and average percentage of high school credits earned prior to entry to the program is 41.4 percent. For GtC students, aiming for a college degree is a major stretch because 74 percent are first-generation college-goers and 26 percent have at least one parent who didn't earn a high school diploma. The national GtC population includes 59 percent students of color and 51 percent males.[9]

Phase 1: Enriched Preparation

Younger students still in high school, hanging on by only a thread, may be identified by their counselor as unlikely to graduate and referred to GtC. Others who have already dropped out and are now interested in getting a college degree often hear of GtC through word-of-mouth. Virtually all students begin the enrollment process with a mix of optimism and vulnerability—they are not really sure they belong and can make it, yet hopeful and determined to do so. According to GtC Associate Vice President Nick Mathern, students cite a variety of reasons for their prior struggles: infrequent attendance, academic problems, difficulties with school staff or peers, challenges at home, health problems, homelessness, or a sense that nobody knew or cared about them. From the outset, students need tailored social-emotional supports available concurrently with academic classes.

Entering students complete a diagnostic assessment to determine basic reading, English, and math skills and must score at the seventh- to eighth-grade level to confirm they are likely to benefit from the program. Once accepted, students are immediately paired with a resource specialist[10] who serves as an academic coach, advisor, and mentor—a go-to guide for everything from goal-setting to crisis management.

GtC takes seriously its responsibility for creating community. Although college classes do not typically have an inherent sense of community, faculty make sure they know the students well and affirm that they are legitimate members of the college program. Sites maintain small student-teacher ratios (25:1) and arrange manageable caseloads for resource specialists (25:1 for new students with a total caseload of up to 60 depending on the number of continuing students) so that students experience stability and get help accessing college resources as they earn a diploma and catch up with their peers.

GtC consciously creates a learning community for new students. During the student's initial Gateway Foundation term, he or she is grouped with 24 other students, and

[9] Data retrieved August 13, 2010 from http://www.gatewaytocollege.org/our_students.asp.

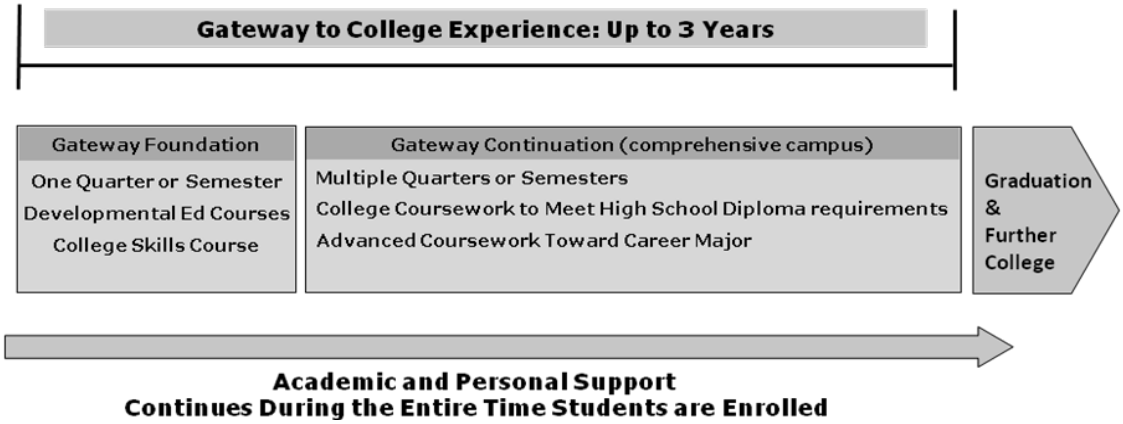
[10] Resource specialists meet the college requirements to teach college skills courses. They have a master's degree in social services, counseling, or an academic discipline.

together they take four thematically linked courses. Relationships build among students and staff, creating connections meant to support students well beyond the GtC program.

GtC's Dual Enrollment program offers academic and personal support for up to 3 years; students are strongly encouraged to complete the program within 2 years. According to Jill Marks, Project Director at Riverside Community College Early College High School, GtC expects students to earn a high school diploma within 2 years because "youth need to see graduation on the horizon and if it's too far out, the momentum really slows—they need to see progress toward an end point." Students are expected to take at least three classes per term. This expectation came about because staff members have learned that a part-time course load too often equals a part-time commitment.

In the first term's Gateway Foundation courses, students intensively build competencies in developmental education reading, writing, and math classes while also practicing habits and skills necessary to succeed in college-level courses. Subsequent coursework through the Gateway Continuation terms enables students to meet whatever high school diploma requirements remain and connect what they are learning to a career area. Dual credit options vary across sites: Some supplement with online credit recovery or high school-only courses in strategic areas like high school-level economics, but in general courses meet both high school and college-level specifications.

Figure 1: Path of Student Progress



Jill Marks heads one of two official demonstration sites for the GtC National Network (hers is in Riverside, California and the other in San Antonio, Texas) where best practices are in development. School faculties across the GtC Network are welcome to visit the two demonstration sites as frequently as their budgets will allow. GtC now invites college faculty to learn together through on-site and virtual professional learning communities (PLCs), monthly webinars, periodic program director meetings, and annual conferences.

The need to create more meaningful, engaging, relevant curriculum that sets students up for college success after the Foundation term is critical. Jill Marks speaks with enthusiasm about faculty collaborations around integrated themes and project-based learning that grab students' interests and empower them to assess their own learning progress. She noted encouraging evidence (increased course pass rates and favorable faculty survey responses) supporting the premise that carefully chosen integrated curriculum themes give students the chance to gain academic knowledge along with personal insights that support their resiliency in college and life.

Ben Byers, GtC Director of Evaluation and IT, and Jill Marks note Conley's analysis of essential college knowledge as a reference point across the Network. At each GtC site, faculty members select their own preferred strategies to increase rigorous study. GtC sites schedule time for collaborative planning as much as possible but finding time remains an ongoing challenge.

The pressure of traditional college culture where promotion and tenure guidelines tend to favor research over teaching, content knowledge over process or skill development, can run counter to what is needed to serve these nontraditional students. At the 2-year college level, tensions can arise over the question: "Who is responsible for learning, the teacher or the student?" Initial faculty enthusiasm for GtC can be tempered by frustrating student behavior. Where previously faculty could drop a student from class, they now need to keep the student enrolled while patiently and persistently holding onto high expectations, teaching behavior and building student skills. For many instructors, the expectation to maintain more informal relationships with students *and* teach behavior represents a significant shift in college culture. By encouraging opportunities among faculty for respectful, realistic dialogue, GtC leaders hope to resolve some of the inherent tensions in this shift. GtC leaders also aim to hire more full-time faculty who are committed to and talented at working with GtC students—faculty who share the vision and are willing to create and modify curriculum, sustain relationships, teach behaviors, and participate as full-time partners in the GtC learning community.

Phase 2: Bridge Programming

At GtC, high school *is* college; the program's physical location makes the lines of demarcation virtually indistinguishable. Students are studying at college and succeeding in college, while completing high school. In the process, they are shifting their self-definitions, taking risks, and expanding what they believe is possible. Continuing relationships with resource specialists play a key role here: Students need the stability and strengths-based counseling that help reinforce student talents and promote their future independence. As school leaders also confirmed at WBCHS, the importance students place on a consistent go-to person is immeasurable: Students thrive when they can rely on a known adult who serves as an ally and advocate.

With Dual Enrollment, students are banking college credits that they will be able to access later. Progress is not always linear. As students get older, their adolescent issues recede and adult issues take precedence. Sometimes students "stop out and return a few terms later" according to Byers and "we need to understand why—and whether the program can address that or not." All GtC leaders interviewed noted the need to learn from the stories of those who participated but exited before graduation, to understand in greater detail what barriers continue to exist. They look forward to constructing formal feedback loops. For the present, they listen closely to anecdotal evidence gathered through exit interviews at individual GtC sites and via ongoing relationships with former GtC students who stay in touch.

GtC points to three areas of promising practice currently in process across the program:

- maintaining academic momentum through summer enrollment and graduation;
- maximizing student and staff/faculty contact by extending the initial Foundation learning community experience to two terms, extending regular advising contacts throughout the GtC terms, and expanding the roles of GtC faculty; and
- developing more thematic integrated curricula and project-based learning activities.

Studies to measure the effectiveness of these practices are currently in process, but results are not yet available. Anecdotal staff reports are positive. One site implemented many of these promising practices in 2008–2009 and offered technical career certifications as well. The site reported that course passage rates increased by 10 to 24 percent depending on the content area. Although during the same period, average GPA at entry decreased, the percentage of minority students increased, and the average entry assessment scores remained the same. Average high school credit accrual per term increased, official college GPA increased, and early retention indicators showed strong results. New funding is allowing GtC to do more rigorous studies connecting success outcomes to the promising practices.

According to Byer, sites making the greatest progress "are asking questions at every turn." Higher amounts of analysis and reflection seem to be leading to improved results.

Phase 3: First Year Supports

Staying connected matters. After students earn their high school diplomas, they remain in a known world where it is clear they now belong and can succeed. This infuses an everyday reward into the lives of all. Students enjoy extended relationships with teachers and resource specialists—people they have come to trust. Students report that their relationships with program staff have changed their attitudes toward school and changed their lives. Knowing who to go to for what and drawing on a familiar

environment to reinforce their confidence that they can and will earn their degrees and follow their career dreams, students can more effectively navigate the postsecondary world. Jill Marks captures the boon for faculty: "The reward is seeing youth change before our eyes. For faculty, it is rewarding to feel part of something significant and unique. To see students you have known and taught do well in college classes is very powerful."

Recent data validate progress and indicate that GtC students outperform the general community college population enrolled in developmental education courses. Despite very poor attendance in high school, GtC students have an overall average attendance rate of 87 percent in the GtC program. Students pass 78 percent of college courses, including developmental education courses taken in the GtC program. Data across the GtC network confirm completion rates as seen in table 2.

Table 2: Gateway to College Course Completion Comparison[11]

	Developmental Education College Courses		Transfer-Level College Courses	
	English/ Reading	Math	English Reading	Math
High School Dropouts in GTC	82%	70%	72%	64%
Degree-Seeking Community College Students:				
NCES 1995 (2-year public) [1]	72%	66%		
Gerlaugh 2007 (2 year) [2]	76%	68%	69%	58%

[1] Lewis, L. and Farris, E. (1996). *Remedial Education at Higher Education Institutions in Fall 1995*, (NCES 97-584). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

[2] Gerlaugh, K., Thompson, L., Boylan, H. and Davis, H. (2007). *National Study of Developmental Education II: Baseline Data for Community College*. Research in Developmental Education. *20*(4) Retrieved from www.ncde.appstate.edu.

The 2009 GtC Annual Report claims that students graduate from GtC with a high school diploma and an average of 41 college semester credits—putting them well on their way to earning an associate's degree—and 95 percent plan to continue in college after earning their diploma.

[11] Developmental education courses are remedial, designed to build students' skills to a level where they are able to succeed in college courses that are part of a program of study leading to a degree. Transfer level courses are those regular college courses that do count toward a degree. Many students today enter college, take placement tests, and find they must first complete developmental education or remedial courses prior to enrolling in their planned program of study.

Despite encouraging data and early confirmation of the program's value, GtC leaders believe a new set of challenges lies ahead. They believe solutions to the next hurdles lie in collaborations across organizational boundaries and are eager for dialogue with fans and critics. Based on the idea that a positive, powerful, motivating college experience decreases long-standing barriers to off-track student success, GtC knows after 6 years that it is true: The GtC model works. However, GtC leaders resist any hint of self-satisfaction. Mathern describes where they are today:

> *Now we are asking what we need to understand about teaching strategies and how to fold those into the model. Typically, there is little professional development and reward for, or attention to, college instruction. Surprising resistance can come up when new ideas are brought to faculty. We are trying to bridge that divide.*

Byer notes another area involving collaboration where GtC leaders are gaining finer-grained understanding:

> *Students arrive with multiple nonacademic challenges and we do what we can to connect them to supports. We are getting better at meeting their academic needs—our 1-year surveys confirm that—but students tell us that their need to work longer hours or take care of health and family needs pose barriers that GtC can't impact.*

Like WBCHS, GtC views student success in college and career as a community issue, one where partners need to work together strategically to achieve results. GtC leaders actively seek to join with others around a locally driven common mission at each GtC site: the increased college and career success of a community's youth.

Work-Based Learning—Anchoring Learning to Relevant Experience

West Brooklyn Community High School and Gateway to College incorporate work-based learning (WBL) activities because they want to emphasize the real linkages between academics and students' future plans. In both models, WBL fits within the Back on Track Phase 2: Bridge Programming as "intentional career exploration and planning that takes into account students' career aspirations and helps drive college program of study (Jobs for the Future, 2010)." Although they use different strategies, WBCHS and GtC are finding similar positive results: students find work-based learning activities to be motivating, interesting, and a reason to rededicate themselves to their studies, and faculty seek to reinforce WBL requirements in their academic programs for off-track youth (Polo, 2010; Forsyth, 2010; Marks, 2010). In the process, both models are

expanding their understanding of what WBL is and what it can be. Because both WBCHS and GtC have found WBL to be a compelling, high-leverage strategy, this paper delves deeper into what WBL looks like at these two partnership models as well as other encouraging examples across the country.

Overview of Work-Based Learning

In a recent survey of youth who dropped out of high school, 81 percent of survey respondents said that if schools provided hands-on-learning opportunities such as service-learning projects, job shadows, and internships they would have been more likely to graduate from high school (Bridgeland et al., 2006). WBL provides students with the opportunity to connect classroom learning to tasks in a work setting. It is there, where abstract concepts are given concrete applications, that off-track students often thrive—they feel proud about having a job, earning a paycheck, and in many cases, contributing their earnings to family expenses.

Why incorporate WBL in high school*?* In a recent report, *The Silent Epidemic—Perspectives of High School Dropouts*, the number one reason that students cited for dropping out was that classes were not interesting (Bridgeland et al., 2006). Course content must be relevant to students' lives, otherwise boredom and apathy set in, especially in large classes where students can become invisible to teachers. Students with a history of academic failure need more teacher attention and education plans tailored to their interests. Whether the educational setting is an alternative school, traditional high school, or a community college, off-track students benefit from opportunities to apply what they learn in a real world setting. In addition to increasing high school graduation rates and developing workplace competencies, a recent study shows that WBL experiences such as job shadowing and internships increase participation in postsecondary education (Neumark and Rothstein, 2005).

Phase 2: Bridge Programming

Examples of Work-Based Learning In Action. When off-track students are guided to think about life after high school and then participate in WBL outside of the classroom, the students gain experience that is often transformational. Work-based experiences transport students from familiar classroom settings to worlds they may never have imagined, and can lead them to see themselves in new ways. Company tours, job shadows, and paid and unpaid internships are all strategies that provide varying levels of workplace exposure. Each requires increased levels of resources and adult effort, both during the school year and over the summer months, to coordinate students' WBL activities and academic programs.

WBCHS creates WBL experiences for students through the New York City Department of Education Learning-to-Work Program[12], an integrated workforce readiness and student support program that incorporates career preparation, workforce connections, academic support, and support services. In Learning-to-Work (LTW) at WBCHS, students develop employability skills while they get to see and feel a tangible connection to what else they could do in the world. Internships are developmental with scaffolding from "close to home" opportunities to more distant businesses with opportunities for pay commensurate with increasingly responsible situations. The youth internship coordinator from Good Shepherd Services serves as a bridge between LTW and the WBCHS teachers in academic classes. This person establishes clear expectations about what counts in the real world (e.g., attendance, grades, punctuality, teamwork, and effective communication) and identifies skills being developed at LTW sites that teachers can reinforce in classes.

In the Gateway to College National Network, Riverside Community College uses WBL to motivate its students, weaving career and technical education (CTE) into students' coursework with the hope that increased relevance will spur accelerated learning. Riverside administrators consulted with regional economists and a local workforce agency to determine the economic viability of three career pathways offered: automotive technologies, logistics management, and manufacturing technology. Then, faculty at the college and worksites clarified expectations and identified what students need to know and learn, thereby assuring students that training opportunities align with their college courses. A federal Tech Prep grant provided the springboard for Riverside's school-to-career ladders, giving the school the start-up funds necessary. Now Riverside students can build identification with their chosen community college career pathway as they earn industry entry-level certification. With an industry certificate in hand, a student can qualify for a living-wage job and manage to pay the bills while continuing to pursue a college degree. Riverside has found its work-based learning program alleviates stress, particularly for older students who face pressure to justify the value of their time at school and contribute to the family income.

Other work-based learning examples across the country offer promising ideas to schools that want to add relevance to their Back on Track Bridge Programming. Often, schools will partner with workforce intermediaries to coordinate opportunities for their students. Workforce intermediaries can be especially helpful in keeping youth on-track during the summer months. Research conducted by the Connected by 25 Initiative in Portland, Oregon, found that off-track students are more likely to dropout from school

[12] Learning to Work (LTW) is an in-depth job readiness and career exploration program designed to enhance the academic component of select Young Adult Borough Centers (YABCs), Transfer Schools, and GED programs. The goal of LTW is to help students overcome obstacles that may impede their progress toward earning a high school diploma and lead them toward rewarding employment and educational experiences after graduation. LTW offers academic and student support, career and educational exploration, work preparation, skills development, and internships. (Retrieved July 19, 2010 from http://schools.nyc.gov/ChoicesEnrollment/AlternativesHS/LearningtoWork/default.htm.)

during the summer months when they are idle and away from school (Celio and Leveen, 2007). When students participate in summer employment, they are more likely to stay in school, graduate, and earn more in their lifetime than youth who don't work during the summer (Sum et al., 2010).

In Massachusetts, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MDESE) adopted WBL as a statewide strategy to increase high school diploma attainment among their most vulnerable youth (ELL, special education, and low-income). Structured internships and career exploration activities are provided in healthcare, engineering, finance, journalism, web design, and public safety. A uniform work-based learning plan is used for all internships. The Private Industry Council (PIC), a workforce intermediary, coordinates summer internships for Boston public schools and runs a program called Classroom in the Workplace (CinW) that combines academic remediation with summer employment for students who score below passing on the MCAS.[13]

Employers who participate in CinW agree to provide 20 hours per week of employment with an additional 1.5 hours each day of paid "professional development," in which student employees prepare for the MCAS at the workplace. The employer agrees to pay wages to the students for work and class hours and to provide conference room space on the premises for the daily MCAS prep class (the PIC pays for the instructor). This model shows the importance that employers place on ensuring their employees earn a high school diploma by emphasizing and paying for "professional development" as they would for other employees.

Behind the scenes, a cadre of PIC career specialists are in schools all year long to ensure that eligible youth are identified, recruited, and matched with a suitable job. On average, 1,500 youth ages 16 and older participate in CinW every summer. Effective internships, documented in a learning plan, are structured to incorporate goals and learning objectives for student skill acquisition and are developed jointly by the student, supervisor, and career specialist. The learning plan drives learning and productivity (Westrich et al., 2008). This in-depth plan includes a "job description" and specific workplace competencies and skills to be developed during the student's experience. Keith Westrich, director of Connecting Activities at MDESE, stresses the importance of structuring internships to meet specific learning objectives by emphasizing, "It is one thing to get them placed—it is another effort to actually build skills."

[13] The Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System, or MCAS, is a standardized test that is taken by public school students in grades 3 through 10 (excluding grade 9, however). All 10th graders in Massachusetts public schools must pass the MCAS exam to graduate from high school.

Soft skills are essential for success in today's workplace and are difficult to teach in the classroom. Soft skills are not so much about the "what" of the job but about the "how" it gets done (Murnane and Levy, 1996). The Massachusetts work-based learning plan (WBLP) emphasizes the development of both hard and soft skills necessary for career success. The plan addresses supervisor's expectations related to attendance and punctuality; workplace appearance; how to accept direction and constructive criticism, and how to speak, listen, and interact with coworkers. It also provides information on the workplace culture, policies, and safety procedures. At the middle and end of the work experience, supervisors evaluate student performance. As one career specialist explained, this provides a structured way for youth to receive professional feedback without feeling like they are getting "jumped."

The combination of classroom learning, real work experience, and a WBLP to measure skill development allows CinW participants to thrive. Elspeth Dennison, CinW coordinator, expounds on the benefits:

> *We see over and over again, students develop a whole different perspective on who they are and what they can do. Kids who feel like failures, who constantly deal with damaging internal dialogue, get the positive experience of having a job downtown, in a high-rise, where they wear a tie and they are appreciated for their work. They get regular feedback and there is immediate payoff. Shy kids open up; they beam and are proud to speak about their experience.*

The program retention rate for CinW is more than 85 percent, and the attendance and punctuality rate among those who stay is higher than 90 percent—successful measures for students who have a history of poor school attendance and academic failure, students who are used to finding barriers and giving up. Analysis of outcome data collected from WBLP found that 57 percent of students who participated in internship experiences with academic support showed sufficient improvement in their MCAS scores, allowing them to graduate with a diploma—compared to 43 percent of students who did not participate in the same activities (Westrich et al., 2008). (See appendix 2 for a copy of the work-based learning plan.)

Leveraging Partnerships with Workforce Intermediaries. Examples from several urban areas demonstrate how school districts and postsecondary institutions can collaborate to strengthen students' career pathways by leveraging partnerships with workforce intermediaries like the Boston PIC. With limited resources to achieve ambitious educational outcomes, practitioners can partner with publicly funded entities that focus on workforce development for off-track youth and adults. The education and workforce systems share the same goal to prepare youth for continuing postsecondary education and the workforce; however, they operate in isolation at the federal level. At the local level, as with Portland, Oregon, and Boston, Massachusetts, education and workforce funds are often blended to provide comprehensive services to eligible youth.

Workforce Investment Boards (WIB),[14] located in subregions throughout each state, administer Department of Labor Workforce Investment Act (WIA) funds for training and employment services for eligible at-risk youth, adults, and dislocated workers. WIA youth funds, which serve 14- to 21-year-olds, emphasize the attainment of a credential, the achievement of literacy and numeracy gains, and successful placement in employment or postsecondary education. In Portland, Oregon, Worksystems, Inc., the local workforce intermediary, administers WIA funds. Through a competitive procurement process, Worksystems contracts with alternative schools and community-based organizations to support attainment of a secondary credential and successful transition to and persistence in postsecondary education for disconnected, low-income youth who have barriers to employment. Most of these programs blend WIA funds with Oregon Department of Education Average Daily Membership Funds[15] to provide a full array of services to support transitions through the education continuum. Portland is seeing encouraging results, with 51 percent of WIA-funded youth successfully entering postsecondary education upon attainment of a high school diploma or GED.

For programs that want to use WBL for its off-track students, early adopters such as WBCHS, GtC, and others described in this paper offer promising starting points. Strategic collaborations among educational and workforce organizations are often recommended, and they must come together based on a sound analysis of the local economy's future needs and trends. When students know the community is working together on their behalf, they can make more confident choices about their future, trusting that their college and career choices will pay off in the future.

Persistent Issues Yet To Be Solved

Although success in supporting off-track students to college and career is evident, several pressing issues continue to stymie progress. These issues include the following:

Lack of knowledge about what works and why. The need persists to understand what approaches work best for different students and why. But evaluations are costly; financial support is needed to conduct studies that determine effective promising strategies and programs. (Bloom, 2010; Brock, 2010). To date, we know far more about program inputs than results (Harris and Ganzglass 2008).

Structural barriers between high school and colleges. The lack of alignment between high school standards and college entry requirements can confuse and frustrate many students. They find that even though they passed high school English and math courses, their college placement scores show that they must pass developmental education courses first. The excitement of college access pales in the

[14] Go to www.servicelocator.org/WorkforceContacts.asp to find WIB contact information by state.
[15] "Average daily membership" or "ADM" means the aggregate days membership of a school during a certain period divided by the number of days the school was actually in session during the same period.

face of required remediation courses that don't really count toward a degree or career certification—and they are costly. We also need data systems that communicate across levels and data systems that can inform high schools and colleges about what is needed for stronger pre-college preparation and how differently prepared graduates perform.

Sharing the cost of helping off-track youth succeed. Finding the resources to support the high school-to-college transition is challenging for all concerned parties. If we are serious about ensuring success at the next level, then we need to provide incentives for both the sending and receiving institutions to work across their organizational boundaries. Collaborations are essential. Historically, school districts have borne the financial burden for off-track students, while the community as a whole reaps the benefits when dropouts succeed in college and career. Costs and benefits need to be shared through smart, strategic collaborations at the high school level and continuing into college and career because the ultimate community costs of off-track student failures are insupportable in the long term.

Adopting a positive orientation. The healthy shift from a deficit to an asset-based approach orients us all toward what to do, what strengths can be built upon, and what higher goals we can strive for. An offshoot of the asset-based approach, the increased appreciation for student voice and involvement in decisionmaking, might offer reinvigorated visions of what young people can do.

The examples described in this paper point us in a productive direction, showing us that some schools are achieving success with off-track students. Their lessons—their breakthroughs and sticking points—show us what can be achieved with some of our traditionally most challenging students. No doubt all schools would benefit from learning more about their strategies.

Changing the life trajectories of children and youth from risk to resilience starts with changing the beliefs of the adults in their families, schools, and communities (Benard, 2004). Every district will have a set of students that needs to be reached and supported in different ways, but they do not have to be lesser ways. We know off-track students—not only a few remarkable exceptions but all—can succeed in college and career. Now our challenge is to prioritize their success and craft the collaborations that can deliver it.

References

Allen, L. (2010, June). *Back on Track Three Phases.* Paper presented at the meeting of Jobs for the Future…, Boston.

Alliance for Excellent Education. (2010). *Economic Benefits of Reducing Dropout Rates Among Students of Color in the Nation's Forty-Five Largest Metropolitan Areas.* Retrieved July 7, 2010 from www.all4ed.org/publication_materials/EconMSAsoc.

Barton, P.E. (2005). *One-Third of a Nation: Rising Dropout Rates and Declining Opportunities.* Policy Information Center, Educational Testing Service.

Benard, B. (2004). *Resiliency: What We Have Learned.* San Francisco: WestEd.

Bloom, D. (2010). Programs and Policies to Assist High School Dropouts in the Transition to Adulthood. *The Future of Children*, *20*(1): 89-108.

Bridgeland, J., Dilulio, J., Morrison, K. (2006). *The Silent Epidemic: Perspectives of High School Dropouts*. Civic Enterprises in association with Peter D. Hart Research Associates for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Washington, DC: Civic Enterprises. Available at http://www.civicenterprises.net.

Brock, T. (2010, Spring). Young Adults and Higher Education: Barriers and Breakthroughs to Success. *The Future of Children*, *20*(1): 109-132.

Celio, M.B., and Leveen, L. (2007). *The Fourth R: New Research Shows Which Academic Indicators Are the Best Predictors of High School Graduation—and What Interventions Can Help More Kids Graduate.* Portland, OR: Portland Schools Foundation.

Colvin, R.L. (2010, July/August). Fighting the Dropout Crisis: Can the Obama Administration Get More High Schoolers to Graduate? A Tale of Three Cities That Are Trying. *Washington Monthly Special Report*. Available at http://www.washingtonmonthly.com.

Conley, D.T. (2005). *College Knowledge: What It Really Takes for Students to Succeed and What We Can Do To Get Them Ready*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Conley, D.T. (2007, March). *Toward a More Comprehensive Conception of College Readiness.* Eugene, OR: Educational Policy Improvement Center. Available at http://www.collegiatedirections.org.

Gateway to College Annual Report (2010). Retrieved on July 2, 2010 from http://www.gatewaytocollege.org/home.asp

Harris, L., and Ganzglass, E. (2008). *Creating Postsecondary Pathways to Good Jobs for Young High School Dropouts: The Possibilities and the Challenges.* Washington, DC: Center for American Progress. Available at http://www.americanprogress.org.

Jobs for the Future. (2010). Information on programs and publications. Retrieved July 7-8, 2010, from www.jff.org.

Lieber, C.M. (2009). *Increasing College Access Through School-Based Models of Postsecondary Preparation, Planning, and Support.* Cambridge, MA: Educators for Social Responsibility.

Mathern, N., and Byers, B. (2010). *Gateway to College 2010.* Presentation materials for National Network Report.

Murnane, R., and Levy F. (1996). *Teaching the New Basic Skills: Principles for Educating Children to Thrive in a Changing Economy.* New York: The Free Press.

National Center for Education Statistics. (2010). Retrieved June 29, 2010, from http.//nces.ed.gov/fastfacts.

Neumark, D., and Rothstein, D. (2005). *Do School-to-Work Programs Help the 'Forgotten Half'?* (NBER 2005-11636). Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper.

Rothman, M. (2010). *NYC Learning-to-Work Transfer Schools: Lessons from the First 5 Years.* Powerpoint presentation to Chicago Public Schools.

Stid, D., O'Neill, K., and Colby, S. (2009). *Portland Public Schools: From Data and Decisions to Implementation and Results in Dropout Prevention.* San Francisco: The Bridgespan Group.

Sum, A., Khatiwada, I., and McLaughlin, J. (2010). *The Lost Decade for Teen and Young Adult Employment in Illinois: The Current Depression in the Labor Market for 16–24 Year Olds in the Nation and State.* Boston: Center for Labor Market Studies, Northeastern University.

Westrich, K., and Leonard, J. (2008, March). *Connecting Activities: Making the Workplace a Learning Place.* Malden, MA: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Office of Strategic Planning, Research, and Evaluation.

Interviews (conducted June–August, 2010)

West Brooklyn Community High School, New York, NY

- Rachel Forsyth, Director of Transfer Schools, Good Shepherd Services, New York City
- Liliana Polo, Principal, West Brooklyn Community High School
- Michael Rothman, Consultant, New York City Department of Education Office of Multiple Pathways and Good Shepherd Services
- Jean Thomases, Consultant, New Visions for Public Schools and Good Shepherd Services, New York City

Gateway to College, Portland OR

- Ben Byers, Director of Evaluation & IT
- Laurel Dukehart, President

- Linda Huddle, Founding Director, Gateway to College Portland Community College Campus
- Jill Marks, Project Director, Workforce & Resource Development, Riverside Community College Early College High Schools, Riverside CA
- Nick Mathern, Associate Vice President, Policy & Partnership Development

Portland Public Schools, Portland OR

- Jenni Villano, Director, Education Options

Jobs for the Future, Boston MA

- Lili Allen, Program Director

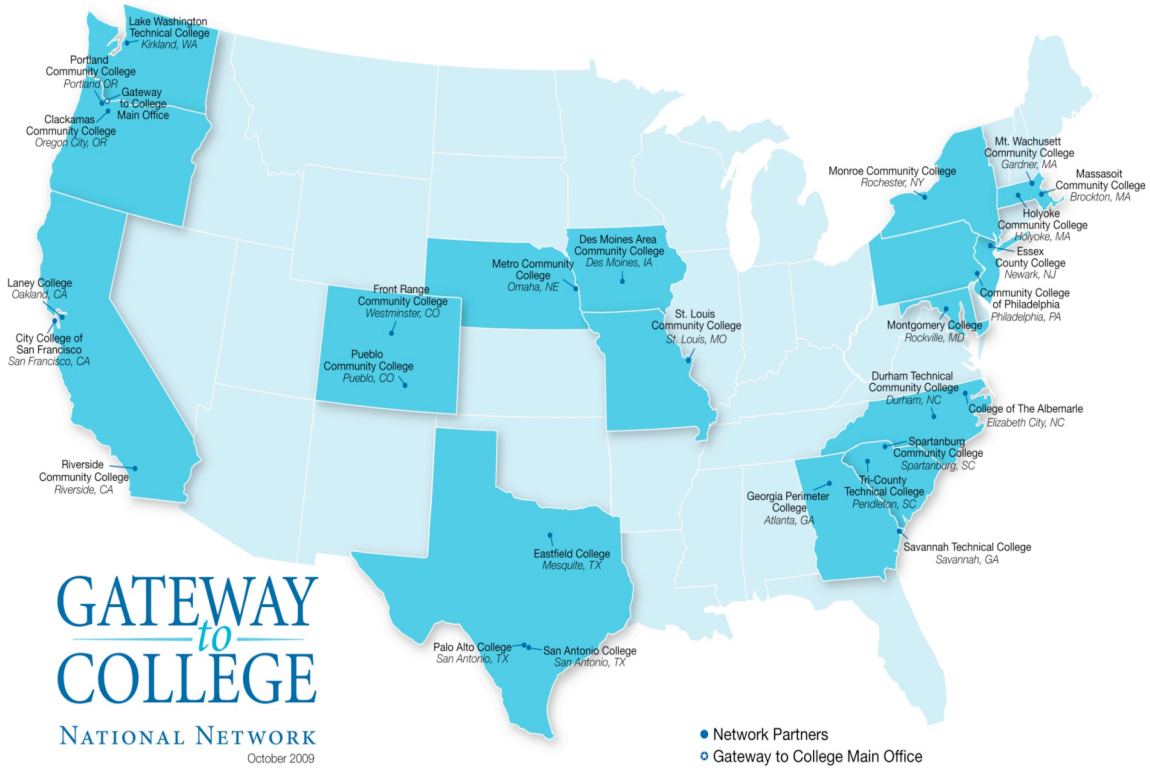
Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

- Keith Westrich, Director of Connecting Activities

Boston Private Industry Council

- Elsbeth Dennison, Classroom in the Workplace Coordinator
- Gaby Jean-Pierre, Career Specialist
- Sally Heckel, Postsecondary Coordinator

Appendix 1: Gateway to College National Network



Appendix 2: Massachusetts Work-Based Learning Plan

Massachusetts Work-Based Learning Plan

The Massachusetts Work-Based Learning Plan is a diagnostic, goal setting and assessment tool designed to drive learning and productivity on the job.

Participant's Name:		Participant's ID # (if applicable):	
Worksite:		Supervisor Name:	
Job Title:		Teacher Name:	
Career Specialist/ Facilitator Name:		School / Program:	
Start Date:		Review Date #1:	
		Review Date #2:	

Job Description:

Section 1: Foundation Skills

1

Instructions: The Foundation Skills on this page are common to all jobs and should be viewed as the foundation upon which specific workplace and career skills are added. Please review and discuss the following Foundation Skills that will set the basic expectations for the job or internship. These skills will be included in the evaluation in Section 3.

WORK ETHIC AND PROFESSIONALISM

Skill	*Performance Expectations*
Attendance and Punctuality	Showing up in timely manner prepared for work Providing sufficient notice if unable to report for work
Workplace Appearance	Dressing appropriately for position and duties Practicing personal hygiene appropriate for position and duties
Accepting Direction and Constructive Criticism	Accepting direction and feedback with positive attitude through appropriate verbal and non-verbal communication skills Displaying willingness to work in a cooperative manner
Motivation and Taking Initiative	Participating fully in task or project from initiation to completion Initiating interaction with supervisor for next task or project upon successful completion of previous one
Understanding Workplace Culture, Policy and Safety	Demonstrating understanding of workplace culture and policy Complying with health and safety rules for the specific workplace Respecting confidentiality and exhibiting understanding of workplace ethics

COMMUNICATION AND INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

Skill	*Performance Expectations*
Speaking	- Speaking clearly - Using language appropriate to the environment, both in person and on phone
Listening	- Listening attentively - Making and maintaining eye contact appropriate to the workplace culture - Confirming understanding
Interacting with Co-Workers	- Relating positively with co-workers - Working productively with individuals and in teams - Respecting racial and cultural diversity

Section 2: Specific Workplace and Career Skills

2

Instructions: Choose the specific Workplace and Career Skills that you will focus on during this workplace experience, concentrating on skill areas that relate to the individual's job description, the company's goals, the individual's academic or career goals or other relevant skills. Select from the list or add additional skills. For each of the skill areas you select, please briefly describe related job tasks and performance goals.

- Collecting and Organizing Information
- Computer Technology
- Critical Thinking
- Interacting with Customers or Clients
- Leadership
- Mathematics and Numeric Analysis
- Problem Solving
- Project Management
- Reading
- Research and Analysis
- Teaching and Instructing
- Time Management
- Understanding All Aspects of an Industry
- Writing
- Occupation-Specific Skills

- OR IDENTIFY YOUR OWN SPECIFIC WORKPLACE SKILLS

Specific Workplace and Career Skills	*Tasks and Performance Goals*
Skill #1:	
Skill #2:	
Skill #3:	
Skill #4:	
Skill #5:	
Skill #6:	
Skill #7:	

Section 3: Evaluation of Performance and Progress

3

Instructions: Please meet at least twice during the workplace experience to review performance and progress and to set additional goals as needed. The first review meeting (Review 1) should take place during the first few weeks to assess the individual's level of competency and to set goals. The next review meeting (Review 2) should be scheduled at that meeting to review progress.

Performance Assessment (See key below)	(1) Performance Improvement Plan Needed	(2) Needs Development	(3) Competent	(4) Proficient	(5) Advanced

FOUNDATION SKILLS

Work Ethic and Professionalism						*Goals*
Attendance and Punctuality						
Review #1	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Review #2	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Workplace Appearance						
Review #1	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Review #2	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Accepting Direction and Constructive Criticism						
Review #1	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Review #2	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Motivation and Taking Initiative						
Review #1	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Review #2	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Understanding Workplace Culture, Policy and Safety						
Review #1	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Review #2	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	

Communication and Interpersonal Skills						*Goals*
Speaking						
Review #1	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Review #2	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Listening						
Review #1	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Review #2	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Interacting with Co-Workers						
Review #1	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Review #2	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	

KEY		
	(1) Performance Improvement Plan Needed	Is not yet demonstrating the foundation skills required for the position and needs to have a formal plan for improving skills and performance
	(2) Needs Development	Beginning to demonstrate and develop the foundation skills required for the position
	(3) Competent	Demonstrates foundation skills required for the position
	(4) Proficient	Consistently demonstrates foundation skills required for the position and shows initiative in improving own skills
	(5) Advanced	Consistently demonstrates the foundation skills required for the position and shows initiative in improving own skills and using these skills to support the work of the organization

Section 3: Evaluation of Performance and Progress (Continued)

Performance Assessment (See key)	(1) Performance Improvement Plan Needed	(2) Needs Development	(3) Competent	(4) Proficient	(5) Advanced	
Specific Workplace and Career Skills from Section 2						***Goals***
Skill #1:						
Review #1	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Review #2	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Skill #2:						
Review #1	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Review #2	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Skill #3:						
Review #1	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Review #2	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Skill #4:						
Review #1	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Review #2	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Skill #5:						
Review #1	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Review #2	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Skill #6:						
Review #1	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Review #2	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Skill #7:						
Review #1	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Review #2	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	

COMMENTS AND SIGNATURES

Review #1:

Participant Signature: _____ Date: _____

Supervisor Signature: _____ Date: _____

Career Specialist / Facilitator / Teacher Signature: _____ Date: _____

Review #2:

Participant Signature: _____ Date: _____

Supervisor Signature: _____ Date: _____

Career Specialist / Facilitator / Teacher Signature: _____ Date: _____