



Building a Pathway to the Future: Maximizing High School Guidance and Advisory Support

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Introduction

A high school diploma—once the endpoint in a person’s education—is now an essential stepping stone to postsecondary success. We are in an age when all students need high levels of literacy and numeracy as well as a range of “soft skills” to gain access to a successful future, whether they choose to go to traditional colleges or opt for technical training that leads to high-skilled employment (Murnane and Levy, 1996). By 2018, more than three-fifths of all jobs will require some form of postsecondary education (Carnevale et al., 2010). In today’s rapidly changing labor market, an estimated 85 percent of current jobs and nearly 90 percent of the fastest growing and best paying jobs now require some postsecondary education (Business-Higher Education Forum, 2003).

Economically, earning just a high school diploma has become only marginally better than dropping out. High schools have a critical role to play both in preparing students for postsecondary academic success and facilitating these students’ transition into postsecondary education and training. They can help frame the high school experience as a means to an end, making this connection early and revisiting it often throughout students’ high school careers. High schools are therefore critical in facilitating students’ construction of individualized pathways through high school and on to success at the next level.

Available research sends a powerful message that 21st century high school teaching will require more than high-quality content-area instruction. Instead, high school preparation must intentionally and explicitly lead to college and career readiness. When high schools are organized around the provision of high-quality, postsecondary preparation and support, and schoolwide expectations hold all adults responsible for supporting all students through postsecondary planning and college-going pursuits, students perform at higher levels than their peers in similar schools (Ascher et al., 2007).

The traditional high school culture organized its teaching around discipline-based subject matter, and devoted its best resources (e.g., seasoned teachers and smaller classes) to the subset of students who were viewed as destined for college. This typically left the role of helping students formulate future plans and navigate the postsecondary admissions process to parents and a handful of overworked guidance counselors. To successfully change that culture, the whole school will need to take responsibility for preparing all of its students for postsecondary success in college and/or careers.

This paper sets forth an expanded conception of the guidance and advisory tasks that we believe are essential in helping today’s students make the most productive use of their high school years. We begin by laying out a model for collective responsibility, which employs multiple messengers to frame high school as a pathway to the future and establish an equitable college-going culture. The necessary guidance tasks are embedded in the following sections that discuss creating students’ individualized pathways to success and helping them navigate the college choice and admissions process to secure a place in postsecondary education and training. We conclude by discussing the different roles that guidance staff, teachers, parents, students, alumni, and community members play in carrying out these supports.

Collective Responsibility: Framing High School as a Pathway to the Future

At successful high schools, all adults in the building hold high expectations for all students that include preparation for, and transition into, postsecondary success. When all students are supported and held accountable and the college buzz is in the air, students remain engaged. “Students repeatedly cite the quality and quantity of *personal* conversations with counselors, advisors, and teachers as a major source of support and influence on their thinking about college” (Roderick et al., 2006).

This model is in contrast to the partial and fragmented model of postsecondary preparation, where support and accountability for postsecondary planning lie with guidance counselors and, if students are lucky, college coaches. The most successful schools have buildingwide faculty support and investment in frequent, open, and ongoing communication about students’ future postsecondary endeavors. All stakeholders are integral and play multiple roles—both specific to their delivery of high-quality instruction and, more broadly, in their role of fostering focused, supported college-going expectations for all students. A recent study found that “schools with an integrated approach to college preparation, and particularly to college access activities, more effectively facilitated a schoolwide college-going culture” (Academy for Educational Development [AED], 2009).

The first step toward establishing and improving a school’s college-going culture is to frame students’ success in high school as the path for achieving the postsecondary success they desire. Traditional high schools practiced a “sink or swim” approach to informally sort college-bound students from their peers. This model may have been acceptable at a time when a mere one-third of high school graduates went on to postsecondary education and many job opportunities that provided a living wage required only a high school diploma. The mentality in today’s high schools must send this collective message to students: “Your postsecondary success is the goal—we are all oriented around this objective and expect everyone to work to achieve it. This is what

we will do to support you in reaching this goal and this is what we will expect from everyone as you work toward this goal.”

Traditional high schools also usually functioned by offering the discrete components—classes, extracurricular activities, etc.—of a high school education, often in fragmented and nonsequential form. The implicit assumption was that these components added up to college readiness. In this model, guidance counselors alone helped students select which courses to take the following term, frequently without much teacher input and with limited reference to students’ postsecondary aspirations and plans. Discussions of college testing and applications often did not get underway until students were well into their junior years. As one guidance counselor put it: “seniors in the fall; juniors in the spring.”

As some form of postsecondary education becomes a necessity, the role of high school guidance is evolving to ensure that students are prepared for success at the next level. This new role goes beyond traditional guidance practices by providing structure, time, and direct support for all students to participate in college-going activities.

For example, San Diego’s Hoover High School, working with the Center for Excellence in School Counseling and Leadership (CESCaL) at San Diego State University, has been implementing a 4-year guidance plan with lessons taught jointly by counselors and teachers. In addition to attending to more traditional matters (e.g., healthy relationships, attendance, and discipline), the guidance curriculum includes six lessons in the ninth grade covering the different kinds of postsecondary options; the course requirements for entry into the California state college system; basic facts about financial aid; and the importance of a student’s grade point average to both graduation and college admission. The 10th-grade lessons cover career and interest inventories and touch on the rights of undocumented students in California to attend higher education institutions—a topic revisited in both the junior and senior year. In the 11th grade, the curriculum covers career exploration and postsecondary options. During the students’ senior year, guidance lessons address the college application timeline, SAT/ACT score reporting, college essay writing, financial aid and scholarships, and community college options. Many postsecondary planning resources are available on CESCaL’s website, <http://www.cescal.org>.

High schools can also take steps early on to engage students in understanding their postsecondary options through experiential learning opportunities offered to all students. This can take the form of career shadowing beginning in ninth grade, summer college workshops, and annual college visits. With guidance staff providing appropriate leadership, monitoring, and support, postsecondary education and training opportunities can become an attainable goal for all students. It is essential that the guidance curriculum is equitable and not organized around stratified pathways that destine students for unequal outcomes.

Some high schools now supplement the work of guidance counselors with a set of practices that help all students learn about and prepare for postsecondary education. Some of these models are described below.

College Pathways Tool Series. From the Annenberg Institute for School Reform (AISR) at Brown University, The College Pathways series provides tools for schools—primarily those serving low-income students—to help prepare pupils for on-time graduation with college-ready skills and a college or technical school acceptance. The key components are academic rigor, a network of timely supports, a culture of college access, and effective use of data. (AISR provides many of their useful tools online at <http://www.annenberginstitute.org/products/BTO.php>.)

AISR conducted a qualitative study and quantitative review of data of 13 New York City high schools that “beat the odds” (BTO) to inform the creation of this tool. These schools were graduating predominantly low-income students at rates that competed with or exceeded citywide averages. They also were consistently exceeding averages at schools with similar student populations within the district. BTO schools enrolled students in both 2- and 4-year City University of New York (CUNY) colleges at percentages similar to the citywide average and had much higher 2- and 4-year enrollment levels than other high schools with comparable student populations (Siegel, 2005, cited in Ascher and Maguire, 2007).

Advisory Programs. Many high schools now include a regular advisory period as part of the student schedule. Advisories are most successful when their purpose is clear to all staff and students and when they include ongoing opportunities for advisors to personally respond to the diverse needs of their advisee group. Many schools focused on postsecondary success are implementing advisory curricula that include regular conversations about, and supports for, postsecondary planning. The relationship between student and advisor allows for the advisory to play a role in linking students to various postsecondary-planning supports. Advisors also are uniquely informed to provide guidance to help students as they select coursework and encourage them to pursue the most rigorous course of study. Advisories are best designed at the school level to accommodate the school’s unique student population and staff configuration. The following examples may be useful as schools attempt to implement a purposeful advisory program that supports students on their path toward postsecondary success.

Granger High School (GHS) – Granger, Washington. Prior to starting advisories at GHS, the school had the lowest academic performance in the state (11 percent proficiency in writing, 20 percent in reading, and 4 percent in math) and a 58 percent graduation rate. The student-to-counselor ratio was 400:1 and the average parent attendance for progress reporting was 10 percent. The school was looking to promote personal connections to students in a way that provided a manageable ratio of students to adults. The principal implemented an advisory program with a student-to-teacher ratio of approximately 20:1. The advisory goals are as follows:

1. Every student will be well known, both personally and academically, by at least one adult staff member.
2. Every student will be pushed to increase his or her reading and math levels.
3. Every student will be challenged to meet rigorous academic standards in an appropriate educational program.
4. Every student will be provided with opportunities to experience the benefits of community membership and to develop and practice leadership.
5. Every student will be prepared for whatever he or she chooses to do after graduation, with a strong transcript, a career pathway, a plan, and a portfolio.

The program utilizes Navigation 101, a planning program for grades 6–12 that helps students make clear, careful, and creative plans for life beyond high school through involvement with the school, parents, and community. As part of GHS’s advisory program, students conduct job shadowing, complete career goal and interest inventories, and develop postsecondary portfolios. The advisors also oversee the development of students’ personal plans for progress, a strategy that will be discussed in more detail later in this paper. Advisory groups, heterogeneously balanced by reading level, meet Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday. Classroom teachers provide advisors with individual student progress reports every other Friday. Advisors meet with parents twice a year and paper progress reports are sent home every 2 weeks. Over a period of 7 years, attendance at parent-student conferences rose to 100 percent. Test scores went from some of the lowest in the state to some of the highest, the graduation rate rose from 58 percent to 90 percent, and the college-going rate rose to more than 90 percent of high school graduates (Esparza, 2010).

Educators for Social Responsibility (ESR). ESR’s approach to advisory is rooted in youth development and the need for personalization in schools. The program offers many tools for practitioners to use as they develop unique advisory programs encompassing all stakeholders. ESR’s work has led to the development of successful advisory programs across the country, from San Diego to New York. (A recently released report, *Increasing College Access*, is available on ESR’s website, <http://www.esrnational.org>, as a tool for schools to use in planning for postsecondary supports through advisory.) Since 2006, ESR has been working with the Austin Independent School District (AISD) in Texas on advisory implementation in 10 large comprehensive high schools. The district goals for advisory are building relationships and community; supporting academic achievement and skill building; promoting postsecondary planning, access, and completion; supporting healthy development toward adulthood; and developing parent and community connections (AISD School Board Report, 2009). In a recent program evaluation, more than half of students surveyed reported frequent support planning for college and less than one-fifth of students reported having no specific plans for life after high school. In schools with historically low postsecondary enrollment rates, students reported having more frequent conversations with their advisors about

colleges and careers than did students enrolled at schools with historically higher postsecondary enrollment rates (AISD Office of Redesign: Department of Program Evaluation, 2009).

The Family Advocate System. Working through its First Things First model, the Institute for Research and Reform in Education (IRRE) developed the Family Advocate System, which pairs teachers and appropriate support staff with a small number of students and their families—approximately 15 to 17 students per staff member. IRRE provides training the summer before implementation so that family advocates’ responsibilities can begin at the start of the school year. The staff member becomes an advocate for these students and their families, and students stay with the same advocate the whole time they attend the school. Family advocates are responsible for checking in with each student weekly; meeting with their students during the class period scheduled for that purpose; meeting with each student and his or her family twice a year; communicating about student progress at least monthly with each family via phone calls, notes, and e-mails; and meeting with their colleagues who teach the students in their group to discuss student progress and issues affecting students’ success. (The IRRE’s publication on Family Advocate Systems is available online at http://irre.org/sites/default/files/publication_pdfs/building_relationships.pdf.)

The argument we put forth calls for adults to share the collective responsibility of framing high school as a pathway to the future. The preceding models are ways to build the school’s capacity to take on this work. In the following section, we move to the student level and the work of facilitating students’ creation of individualized pathways to success, building a bridge between their high school education and their futures.

Creating Individual Pathways to Success

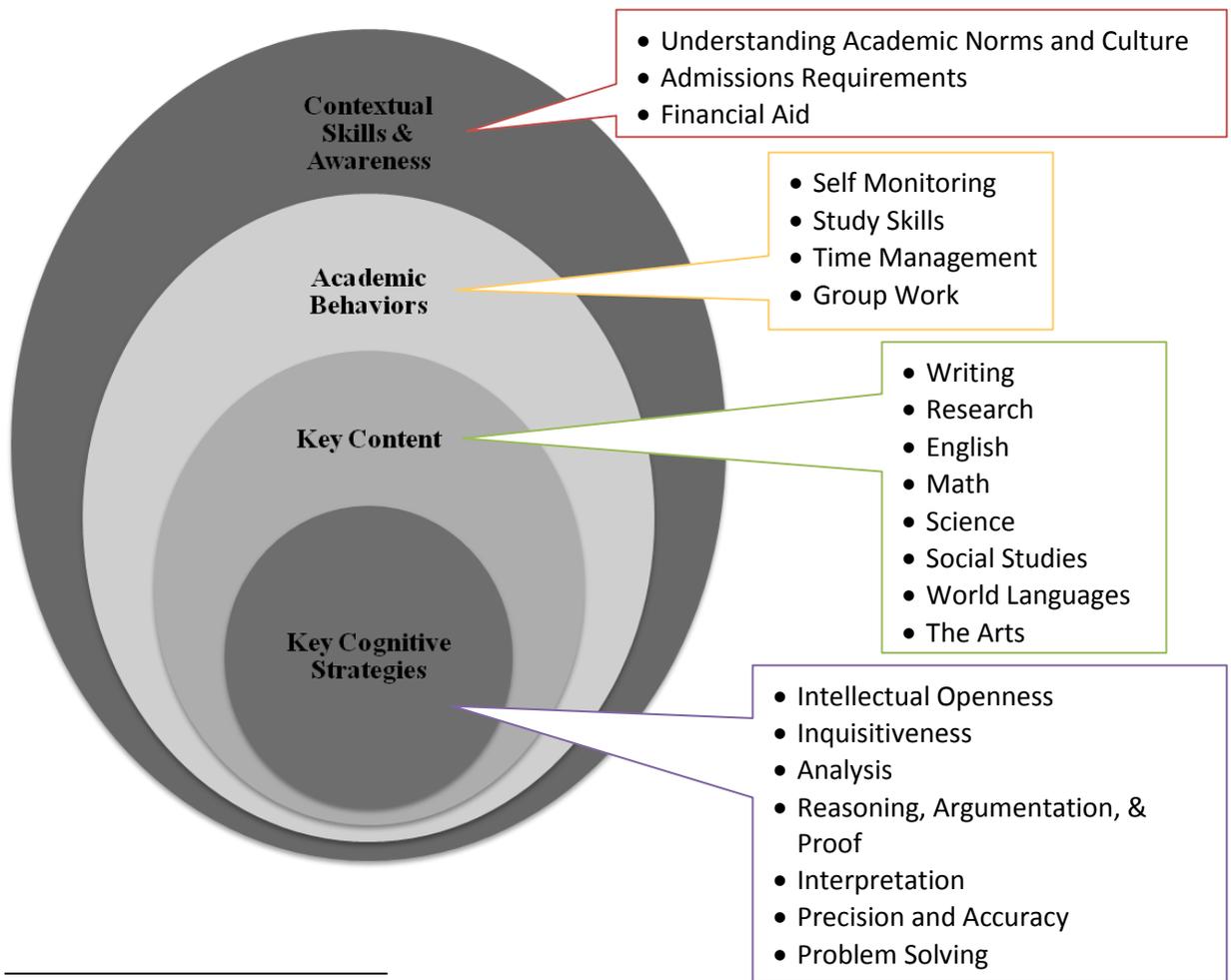
In an integrated whole-school model, the adults share the collective responsibility for preparing all students for postsecondary success. Standards-based instruction usually requires teachers to engage in meaningful professional conversations about instruction with their content-area colleagues. In the whole-school model, all adults in the building also discuss how to provide a timeline of supports for facilitating students’ creation of their own individualized pathways to postsecondary success. It should be noted that the support tasks start as soon as students enter high school and continue throughout their matriculation in the postsecondary institution of their choice. We discuss the following tasks in greater detail below:

1. Maintaining college-ready performance—starting strong and staying on track.
2. Guiding appropriate course selection.
3. Engaging parents.
4. Choosing postsecondary options.

5. Navigating the admissions process.
6. Securing financial aid.

These tasks constitute meaningful postsecondary preparation only when combined with a strong academic program that prepares students for the rigor of postsecondary education. Research has shown that academically preparing students for postsecondary success is grounded in two areas: key cognitive strategies, such as problem-solving and reasoning; and key disciplinary content knowledge, such as English and mathematics (Bransford et al., 2000). From here, the academic behaviors, such as self-monitoring, and the contextual skills and awareness, such as knowledge about navigating the college application and financial aid process, are built (Conley, 2007). When the responsibility for completing these college-readiness tasks is distributed across the staff, students experience an especially rich and rigorous college-prep program of study (figure 1).

Figure 1: Facets of College Readiness¹



¹ Adapted from Conley, D.T. (2007). *Toward A More Comprehensive Conception of College Readiness*. Eugene, OR: Educational Policy Improvement Center.

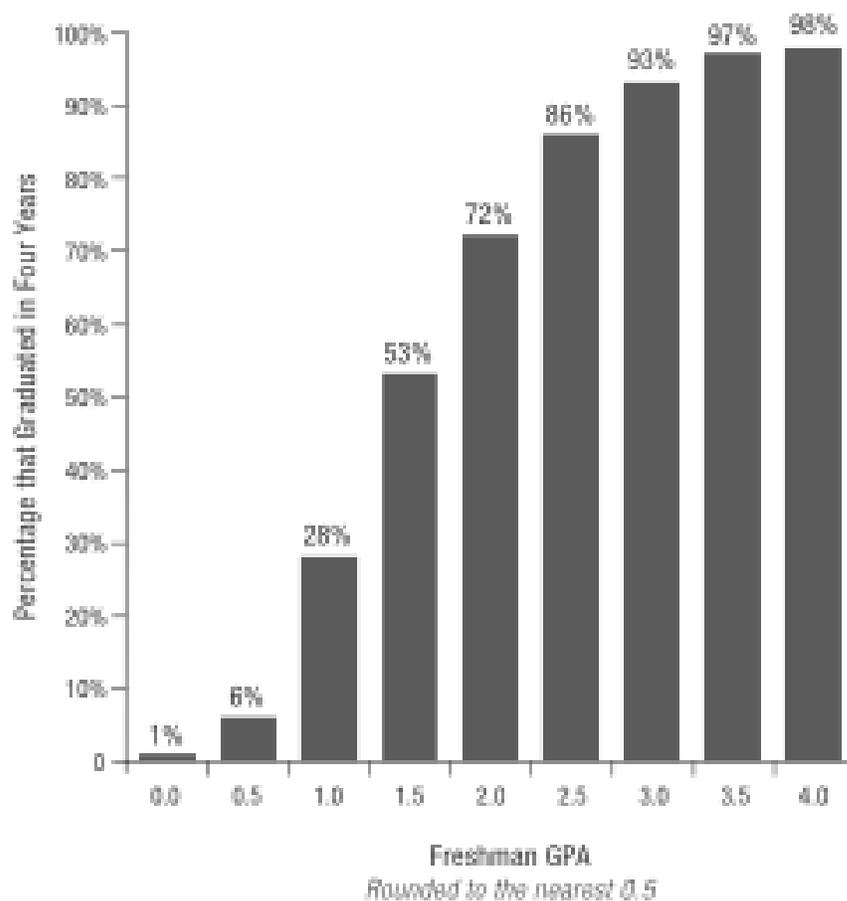
Students should be actively engaged in tailoring their individual pathways to meet their goals. They need tools to help them chart progress toward their goals in relation to required skills and coursework. This work should begin very early because ninth-grade performance and a student's initial grade point average (GPA) are critical benchmarks for predicting on-time graduation and postsecondary matriculation. In addition, appropriate course selection goes hand in hand with laying out a rigorous path to high school graduation. Finally, parent engagement is an integral part of students' successful creation of individualized pathways to postsecondary success.

1. Maintaining College-Ready Performance—Starting Strong and Staying On Track

There are many actions a school can take to facilitate ninth-graders' successful transition into high school. Foremost is welcoming students and their families into a college-going culture of high expectations for all. This includes a clear message about the importance of attendance and GPA starting in freshman year. This message should be communicated as early and as often as possible; for example, during freshman summer orientation and as part of an expanded guidance curriculum. Time should be allocated during the freshman year to explain the role of students' GPA and transcripts in preparing for postsecondary plans.

Groundbreaking work at the Consortium on Chicago School Research (CCSR) has demonstrated the importance of ninth-grade performance in predicting high school graduation. This work shows that students are unlikely to graduate if they do not make a successful transition into high school (Allensworth and Easton, 2005). The Consortium developed the freshman "on-track" indicator by combining credit accumulation for timely 10th-grade promotion with semester "core" course performance. This measure is now included in the high school accountability framework for the Chicago Public Schools (Allensworth and Easton, 2005).

Figure 2: Four-Year Graduation Rates by Freshman GPA²



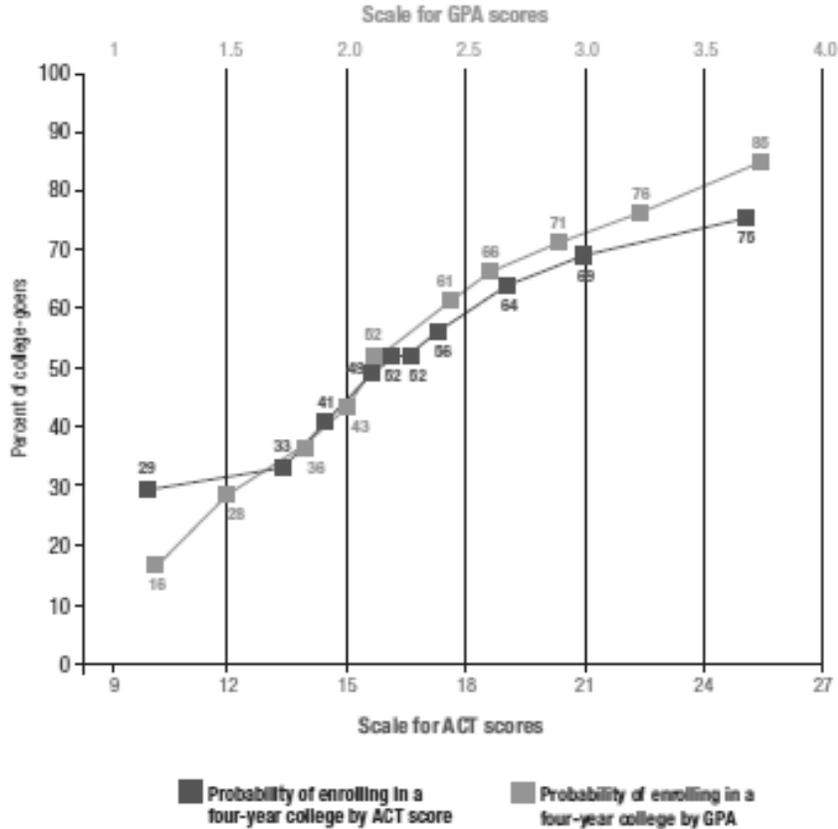
Further research conducted by the CCSR found that on-time graduation also could be predicted by examining freshman GPA and absence rates. Students with a C-plus average (GPA of 2.5) graduated on time at a rate of 86 percent or more. Students who attended school 90 percent of the time or more during their freshman year graduated on time 80 percent of the time or more. Moreover, these two data points were more telling predictors of on-time graduation than educational experiences and performance prior to high school and/or students' demographic backgrounds (figure 2; Allensworth et al., 2007).

² Allensworth, E., and Easton, J. (2007) *What Matters for Staying On-Track and Graduating in Chicago Public High Schools: A Close Look at Course Grades, Attendance, and Failures in the Freshman Year*. Chicago: Consortium on Chicago School Research at the University of Chicago.

Figure 3: A High GPA Matters More Than a High ACT Score in Access to Four-Year Colleges³

Having a high GPA matters more than a high ACT score in access to four-year colleges

Predicted probability of CPS graduates enrolling in a four-year versus two-year college by ACT score and unweighted cumulative GPA among students attending college



Note: The symbols on the lines indicate the median ACT score or GPA for each decile of CPS graduates, with the lowest decile (10th percentile) on the left and the highest decile on the right.

Schools can anticipate student misconceptions about grading policies and empower them to take ownership over the grades they earn. Many schools align more frequent tracking of student progress with clear procedures for linking students with supportive interventions as an important part of their freshman program. The following additional strategies may be useful in helping freshman students feel a sense of ownership for their grades:

- Have freshman students calculate their GPA as soon as grades are prepared for the first marking period.

³ Roderick, M., Nagaoka, J., and Allensworth, E. (2006). *From High School to the Future: A First Look at Chicago Public School Graduates' College Enrollment, College Preparation, and Graduation From Four-Year Colleges*. Chicago: Consortium on Chicago School Research at the University of Chicago.

- Print out freshman transcripts so students can hold this artifact of their progress in their hands.
- Host 5- or 9-week progress report pick-ups for freshmen in conjunction with parent nights. This concretely grounds the general postsecondary conversations with parents within the context of their child's early academic performance.

It is vital for students and parents to understand the critical and evolving role that GPA plays in shaping which postsecondary opportunities will be available to them. Further research at the CCSR found that students' high school GPA was a key indicator for predicting college graduation (figure 3, Roderick et al., 2006). It also is important to note that despite current trends that emphasize the importance of high-stakes college-readiness testing like SAT and ACT, a student's GPA is ultimately a better indicator for determining their access to 4-year colleges. Tests such as the ACT are designed to assess students' preparation for college. Thus students' performance in their courses and the extent to which they are exposed to strong problem-solving and analytical skill building are important building blocks for postsecondary success (Allensworth et al., 2008).

2. Guiding Appropriate Course Selection

According to several recent U.S. Department of Education reports, the academic intensity and rigor of students' high school curriculum is more important to their earning a bachelor's degree than their test scores or academic rank (Adelman, 1999; Adelman, 2006). Students should play an active role—with the support of their advisors—in selecting appropriate courses to prepare them for their postsecondary plans. To promote a rigorous postsecondary-preparatory curriculum for all students, schools need to shift the focus from meeting minimum literacy and numeracy standards to coursework associated with college readiness for all. Indeed, the academic program should be structured to cause students to demonstrate progressively more control and responsibility for their learning as they approach the college level (Conley, 2007).

When students have clearly articulated postsecondary goals, their selection of rigorous college-prep courses will naturally follow. In this frame of reference, student progress through high school is less about surviving individual courses and grade levels and more about accumulating self-awareness and building the skills for a successful trajectory through high school and on to postsecondary achievement. Increasingly, high schools are engaging students in guided reflection about how to map their progress toward future goals. This is done through Personal Plans for Progress and College Readiness Trackers, which are described below.

Personal Plan for Progress (PPP)

A Personal Plan for Progress is one way to organize a student’s individual pathway. A PPP is a statement of a student’s academic and social goals that has been worked out with an advisor, parent, or other significant adult to guide the student’s work for the year (Osofsky and Schraeder, 2010). The PPP is vertically aligned and revisited frequently, both during the school year to monitor progress and annually to establish goals for the coming school year as the student proceeds through high school. The PPP highlights a student’s individualized path through high school and lays out a map from freshman year to graduation that not only accumulates the courses required for on-time graduation, but also highlights courses, electives, and extended learning opportunities best aligned with student learning styles and career ambitions. The PPP accommodates students developmentally by undertaking college planning in four stages: exploration, dreaming, planning, and owning (figure 4).

Figure 4: Four Stages of Personal Plans for Progress

Stage	Guiding Question
Exploration	<p>What are you interested in?</p> <p>Students investigate and reflect on their aptitudes, learning styles, and interests. This takes place through experiential learning opportunities and guidance from mentors at the same time that students are exposed to different career and postsecondary opportunities. Discovering inner resources and outside support is a key component of this stage.</p>
Dreaming	<p>Where are you headed after high school?</p> <p>The development of student awareness during the exploration phase is now transitioned into student development of postsecondary and career goals. An important aspect of this phase is establishing a firm connection between students’ beliefs and goals, and the reality of what it will take to achieve these goals. The PPP roots these beliefs and goals in concrete information about the process of their goal attainment.</p>
Planning	<p>What movement have you made toward your dreams?</p> <p>In this step, students commit to paper the important steps they intend to take to arrive at their desired postsecondary destination. This includes consideration of course selection, extracurricular activities, and internship opportunities. The planning step allows students to visualize how their postsecondary aspirations are rooted in a rigorous 4-year high school experience.</p>
Owning	<p>Do you have ownership over your future?</p> <p>Ownership of the student’s PPP evolves over the course of each school year. Students should be able to articulate with detail how they are progressing towards their stated goals. Continual reflection on their progress and articulation of an action plan builds ownership and leadership in students. This step is most powerful when students articulate their progress to teachers and parents and include artifacts of their progress</p>

Stage	Guiding Question
	in the conversation.

Source: *The Center for Secondary School Redesign, 2010.*

Personal Plans for Progress are even more powerful when they are accompanied by student-led conferences. These conferences differ from the traditional parent-teacher conference in that students plan for and lead the conference, select artifacts of their learning and skill building, and take ownership over the progress they have made and the next steps they will take to reach their goals. They provide the opportunity for students to verbalize their reflections on their past learning experiences and to articulate their commitment to action plans for the future. Students at Ohio’s Barberton High School (BHS), for example, are organized into smaller learning communities. The school day includes a daily advisory period when students engage in learning activities centered on the goals of their personal plans for progress as well as postsecondary exploration. The students present their progress during student-led conferences in the fall and the spring. Since implementing PPP and student-led conferencing at BHS, the school has seen marked improvement in student attendance. Parent participation during student-led conferences has increased to more than 60 percent, and parents say that students are better able to define their future ambitions as they work toward graduation and postsecondary success (Barberton High School, personal communication 2010).

College Readiness Tracker

New Visions for Public Schools. This New York City organization, which has created more than 80 new small high schools, developed a tool that enables students to visualize their progress through the required courses and state examinations for both graduation and college readiness. The tool shows attendance, credit accumulation, and state test performance in a series of simple charts. Student performance in completed courses and on the state exams is color coded, with off-track performance in red, almost on-track performance in yellow, on-track to graduation performance in green, and college-ready performance (for the state exams only) shown in blue. School administrators find it useful in helping students and parents see where they stand and in motivating students to get more “green” on their charts (figure 5). (Additional resources are available by clicking on the New Vision website, <https://knowledgebase.newvisions.org/resource/loadresource.aspx?ArtifactId=3298>.)

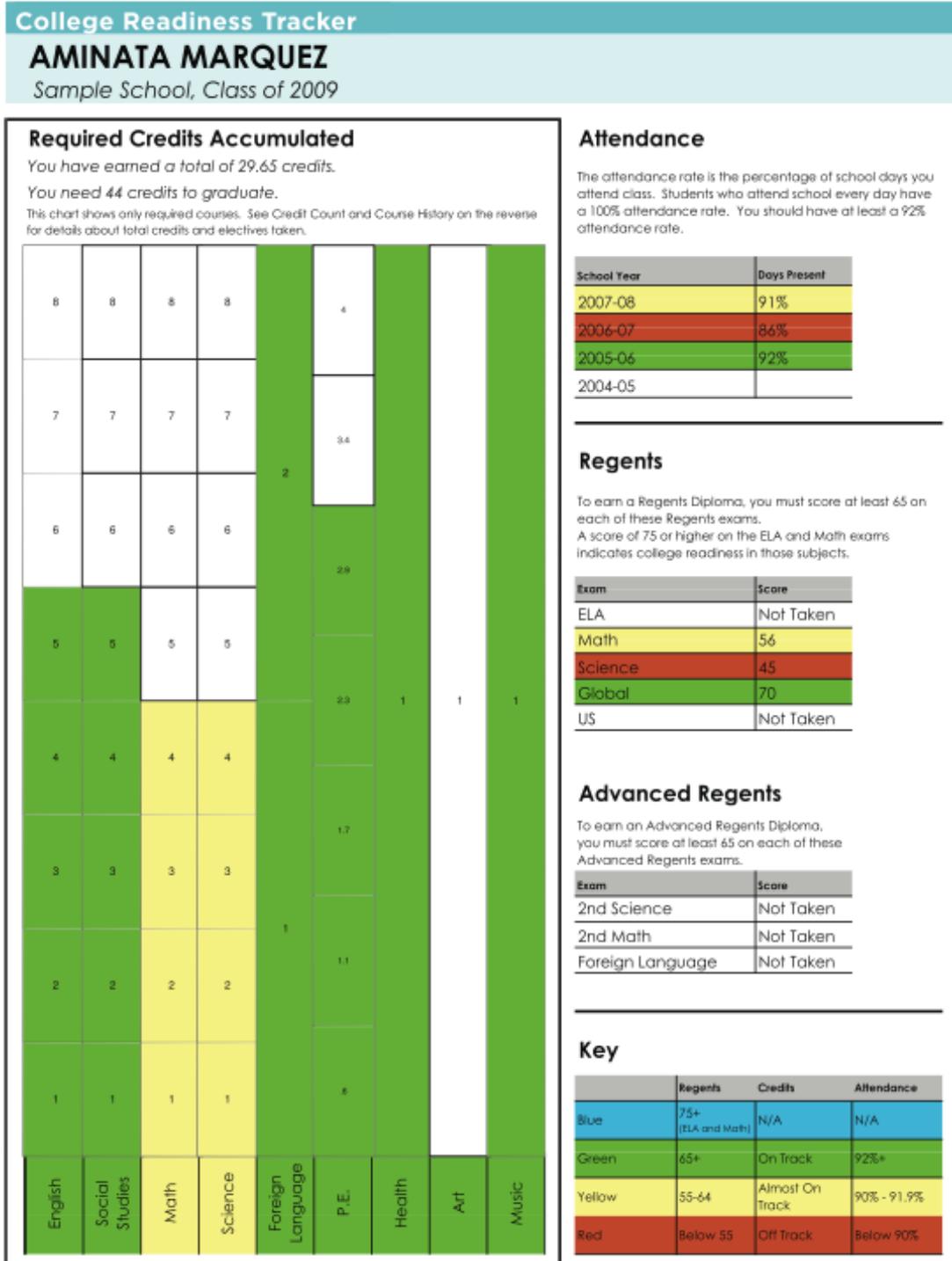
A 2010 impact study conducted by MDRC of the outcomes of New York City’s small high schools—the majority of which were created by New Visions—found the following results:

- By the end of their first year of high school, 58.5 percent of enrolled students were on track to graduate in 4 years (as measured by credit accumulation and passed

courses) compared with 48.5 percent of their counterparts in other schools, a difference of 10 percent. These positive effects on students' graduation prospects were sustained over the next 2 years.

- By the fourth year of high school, students attending these schools increased overall graduation rates by 6.8 percent (68.7 percent versus 61.9 percent), which is roughly one-third the size of the gap in graduation rates between White students and students of color in New York City.
- Because the first cohort of students in the study just graduated from high school last year, effects on postsecondary persistence and college graduation are not yet known. However, positive effects of these schools are seen for a broad range of students, including male high school students of color and students with lower academic proficiency whose educational prospects have been historically difficult to improve (Bloom, H.S., Thompson, S.L., and Unterman, R., with Herlihy, C., and Payne, C.F. 2010).

Figure 5: College Readiness Tracker⁴



⁴ New Visions for Public Schools

AMINATA MARQUEZ

Sample School, Class of 2009

Course History

Year	Term	Code	Course	Mark	Credits Attempted	Credits Earned	Subject
2005	1	E1	English 1	75	1	1	ELA
2005	2	E2	English 2	68	1	1	ELA
2006	1	E3	English 3	65	1	1	ELA
2006	2	E4	English 4	90	1	1	ELA
2007	1	E5	English 5	71	1.5	1.5	ELA
2005	1	H1S	Global Hist. 1	79	1	1	Global
2005	2	H2S	Global History 2	69	1	1	Global
2006	1	H3S	Global Hist. 3	65	1	1	Global
2006	2	H4S	Global Hist. 4	69	1	1	Global
2007	1	H5	U.S. History 1	65	1.5	1.5	US
2005	1	W5A	Math A T1	65	1	1	math
2005	2	W5B	Math A T2	65	1	1	math
2006	1	W5C	Math A T3	65	1	1	math
2006	2	W5D	Math A T4	55	1	0	math
2007	1	W5E	Math B Term 1	65	1.5	1.5	math
2005	1	S1I	Liv. Env 1	P	1	1	Science - Life
2005	2	S2I	Liv. Env 2	66	1	1	Science - Life
2006	1	SPI	Physics 1	55	1	0	Science - Physical
2007	1	S2I	Earth Science 1	65	1.5	1.5	Science - Physical
2007	1	S2L	Earth Science Lab	65	0	0	Science - Physical
2006	2	S2I	Integrated Science	68	1	1	Science - General
2006	1	FF1	French 1	55	1	0	For. Lang.
2006	2	FF2	French 2	70	1	1	For. Lang.
2007	1	FF3	French 3	65	1.5	1.5	For. Lang.
2005	1	PSA1	Phys. Ed.	P	0.58	0.58	PE
2005	2	PSA2	Phys. Ed.	P	0.58	0.58	PE
2006	1	PSA3	Phys. Ed.	P	0.58	0.58	PE
2006	2	PSA4	Phys. Ed.	F	0.58	0.58	PE
2007	1	PSA5	PE 5	75	0.58	0.58	PE
2005	2	PH1	Health	80	1	1	Health
2005	1	U1	Music	89	1	1	Music
2005	1	GOAP	Advisory	P	0.25	0.25	Elective
2005	1	GOC	Club	P	0.25	0.25	Elective
2005	2	GOA1X	Extended Day Program	F	-	0	Elective
2005	2	GOC	Club	P	0.25	0.25	Elective
2005	2	GOAP	Advisory	F	0.25	0.25	Elective
2006	1	GOA1D	Advisory	F	0.25	0.25	Elective
2006	1	GOC	Club	F	0.25	0	Elective
2006	2	GOA1D	Advisory	P	0.25	0.25	Elective
2007	1	JEL11	Elective 11 grade	70	0.5	0.5	Elective
2007	1	GOA11	Family Group	P	0.25	0.25	Elective

Credit Count

The best way to be on track is to earn 11 credits each year, including your freshman year.

Subject	Credits Earned	Credits Required
English	5.5	8
Social Studies	5.5	8
Global	4	4
US	1.5	2
Government	0	1
Economics	0	1
Math	4.5	8
Science	4.5	8
General	1	-
Life	2	2
Physical	1.5	2
Foreign Language	2.5	2
PE	2.9	4
Health	1	1
Art	0	1
Music	1	1
Other Credits	2.25	-
Total Credits	29.65	44

AMINATA MARQUEZ's
Plan for Graduation

Source: New Visions for Public Schools, not dated.

3. Engaging Parents

The most important roles parents can play in guiding their children toward postsecondary success are those of motivator and manager. Because it cannot be assumed that parents have knowledge about the postsecondary application process, schools should be prepared to help parents take on these roles. New Visions for Public Schools in New York City has prepared an excellent guide for ninth-grade parents to become oriented to the key tasks of getting students college ready starting from their child's entry into high school. (The guide is available online in both English and Spanish at <http://www.newvisions.org/the-road-to-college/overview>.) Through parent workshops and other activities, schools can empower parents to encourage students as they navigate the college-prep pathway. However, schools will be most successful when they concurrently implement school-based strategies to provide the same kinds of supports that more affluent and college-savvy parents either take care of themselves or hire others to do for them.

Parent workshop topics can be tailored to the specific populations that operate within schools. Examples of meaningful parent workshops include overviews of the college application process, financial aid, and postsecondary options for undocumented students. Additionally, workshops can provide a forum for parent conversation on students moving away from home and living independently. The Parent Institute for Quality Education offers a series of programs in several states that educate parents about fostering high educational expectations and navigating the college application process. More information is available at <http://www.piqe.org>.

When the work of preparing students for postsecondary success starts early in the high school career, and parents are invested in this work, students establish a foundation on which to build the later work of selecting, applying for, and paying for college.

Navigating the College Choice and Admissions Process

4. Choosing Postsecondary Options

Postsecondary decisionmaking is often students' first opportunity to make an adult choice about their future. Students need guidance in choosing appropriate institutions from an almost dizzying array of options. Do they want to attend a two-year or a four-year college? Are they interested in public or private institutions, in small colleges or large universities? Do they want to go to school in a small town or a large city, near home or far away? Are they particularly interested in Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HCBUs) or faith-based institutions? Do they want a liberal arts education or career and technical training?

Schools can facilitate the decision process by starting the conversation early and making information available to parents and families beginning in ninth grade. This process can include everything from submitting ninth-graders' names to appropriate colleges and universities, which, in turn, send materials to students' homes to organizing college visits and summer college workshops for students and/or parents to experience college campuses in person.

High schools will serve students best by knowing well the programs that are most frequently attended by their graduates and helping their current students avoid institutions with low persistence and graduation rates. Data from the National Student Clearinghouse (<http://www.studentclearinghouse.org>), which enables high schools to see the postsecondary persistence and completion of their graduates, can help in this effort.

Students must also consider the selectivity of the program they will choose and be encouraged to select sufficiently demanding pathways. Students can opt between

broad-access institutions, such as community and 2-year colleges that admit almost every student who applies, or more selective 2- and 4-year institutions. Longitudinal analyses of postsecondary performance of Chicago high school graduates found that students are more likely to persist in postsecondary institutions when they enter selective colleges with demanding academic expectations (Roderick, 2008).

Students also may be better served on college campuses with a critical mass of similar students. In such settings, students are more likely to encounter a supportive peer and faculty environment. High schools can also help students succeed at the next level by becoming knowledgeable about which postsecondary institutions have created successful programs to strengthen students' academic skills when necessary and to keep students on the path to timely degree attainment.

Learning Communities

Among students who enroll in community colleges with the intent to earn a credential or transfer to a 4-year institution, only 51 percent graduate within 6 years (Hoachlander et al., 2003). In an effort to address the remedial needs of many academically underprepared students, college campuses have begun creating student learning communities to improve college persistence and completion rates. At their most basic, learning communities co-enroll small groups of students in thematically linked classes to enhance engagement with school, increase understanding of interdisciplinary connections, and strengthen cognitive skills (Boylan, 2002; Center for Student Success, 2007).

Early research concluded that students in learning communities benefited both academically and socially compared with similar students who did not enroll in learning communities (Tinto et al., 1994; Engstrom et al., 2008). A recent report from the National Center for Postsecondary Research (NCPR), which presents findings from the learning communities program at Hillsborough Community College in Tampa, Florida, shows that students from the third cohort (fall 2008) earned 1.2 more credits in the first semester of their freshman year than their control-group counterparts. Furthermore, students in learning communities completed the required college-success course at a rate of 59.9 percent compared to 36.9 percent completion rate of the control group (Weiss et al., 2010).

Partnerships with outside organizations can be a powerful way to build capacity in schools where the traditional guidance model is overwhelmed by large caseloads and counselors spend the majority of their time focused on social and emotional issues.

College Summit

College Summit helps low-income high schools build a college-going culture. The organization's work includes recruiting "student influencers" from among rising high school seniors and training them in postsecondary planning through a 4-day workshop. College Summit typically identifies student influencers as B students who are opinion

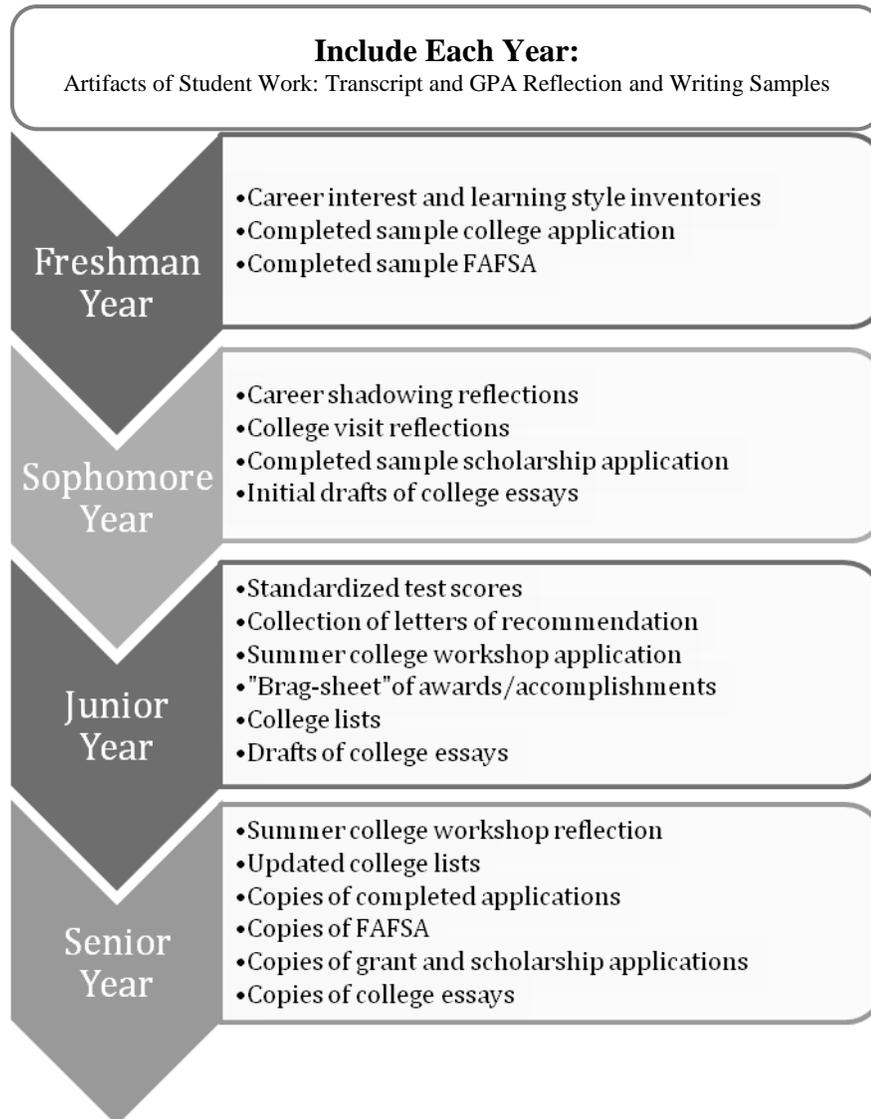
leaders among their peers. College Summit also trains teachers on how to provide students with support for postsecondary planning. Additionally, College Summit schools implement a for-credit College Summit course for all seniors where students prepare and manage their postsecondary application portfolios. College Summit places a strong emphasis on working with high schools to encourage students to apply to 4-year colleges and to avoid 2-year institutions with low transfer and graduation rates.

Since 1993, College Summit has trained more than 13,000 student influencers in 11 regions across the country—including in districts like Oakland Unified in California and Indianapolis Public Schools. These student influencers are mid-tier students with an average GPA of 2.9 out of a 4.0 scale. The college enrollment rate for these students, 79 percent, is well above the 52 percent average achieved by low-income students nationally. Furthermore, the college retention rate for these students is 80 percent—above the national college retention rate across all demographics (College Summit, <http://www.collegesummit.org>).

5. Navigating the Admissions Process

When students view high school as a means to an end, the academic choices they make and the work they produce forms the backbone of their college application. Schools can facilitate this process by requiring students to maintain a postsecondary portfolio that evolves with the student over the course of their high school experience. A postsecondary portfolio has a list of essential components (figure 6) that both the student and the school have a responsibility to maintain. Furthermore, students can complete work toward their postsecondary portfolio in a variety of settings. The components of a student’s postsecondary portfolio evolve over time and quickly accumulate during the student’s junior and senior year.

Figure 6: Evolution of the Postsecondary Portfolio



School-based adults are responsible for supporting students as they prepare their postsecondary portfolios. This includes providing access to necessary documents such as applications, collecting and signing off on critical paperwork, and processing application-fee waivers. Schools also coordinate the college-access process by organizing college visits, hosting panel discussions, and setting up college recruiting interviews. The school can also incorporate families into the process of managing postsecondary portfolios by providing opportunities for parents to be educated about the components of the portfolio and showing how all the pieces tie together.

Often schools struggle to allocate time to facilitate the management of students' postsecondary portfolios. The easiest way to ensure that the process goes smoothly is

to spread the steps over students' 4-year high school tenure and regularly allot time for management. Delaying this process until junior and senior year sends the message to students that postsecondary planning is not an integral part of their high school career. Strategies discussed earlier, such as Personal Plans for Progress, student-led conferencing, and advisory programs, as well as freshman and senior seminars, can ensure that the college-planning process is completed in a comprehensive way.

Community organizations also can be engaged to bolster the work of thinly spread school staff, particularly at large, high-need, comprehensive high schools.

Urban Students Empowered

In Chicago, Urban Students Empowered (US Empowered) identifies and trains highly effective teachers to lead underperforming students in low-income high schools to enroll in and graduate from 4-year colleges. Students are recruited by US Empowered program directors working in the high schools; students need to apply and participate in an interview process before being accepted. Teachers lead a 3-year program composed of a structured daily in-school course, early college exposure, and a system of online tools that collectively increase student achievement and ensure that students enroll in and graduate from college. The student alumni, equipped with a system of best practices and collaborative networks of support, become college graduates and generational leaders who advocate for higher education opportunities for all. More information on the program is available at <http://www.usempowered.org>.

US Empowered collects and reports on the progress of their students in comparison to similar peers in the Chicago Public Schools (CPS). Fewer than 20 percent of CPS students enroll in 4-year colleges and less than 8 percent are expected to graduate by age 25. In stark contrast, 98 percent of US Empowered students from CPS have been admitted into 4-year colleges and 83 percent of them are persisting in college (US Empowered, personal communication, July 2010).

6. Securing Financial Assistance

High school students frequently hesitate to pursue college enrollment when college seems financially unattainable. The truth is that millions of dollars of public and private funding is available to assist students in paying for college. High schools can increase their students' likelihood of attending postsecondary education by researching and building awareness about funding opportunities.

Understanding the financial aid process is the first step in securing financial assistance. Increasingly, colleges are delaying the awarding of merit, athletic, and extracurricular-based scholarships until after the FAFSA submission. Gaining access to these funds can be complicated—there are important deadlines and lots of paperwork. However,

schools can provide opportunities for students and families to gain awareness about financial aid options as well as assist eligible families in the completion of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). A recent study found that students who received assistance completing the FAFSA along with information about financial aid options were 40 percent more likely to apply for financial aid and 25 percent to 30 percent more likely to enroll in college (Bettinger et al., 2009).

Chicago Public Schools (CPS) F-55 Initiative

Using data provided by the Illinois Student Assistance Commission, the CPS Department of College and Career Preparation began tracking FAFSA completion among its seniors. As a result, the school system has started providing resources to schools to help them support student FAFSA completion—dubbing the effort the “F-55” initiative. This initiative encourages all CPS seniors to complete the “FAFSA,” apply to “five” postsecondary institutions, and submit “five” scholarship applications. Between 2007 and 2009, the CPS has seen the percentage of students who submitted the FAFSA increase from 64.5 percent to 81.1 percent (CPS, 2007, 2008, 2009).

It is important to note that the FAFSA process is different for students who are U.S. citizens versus students who are undocumented. For U.S. citizens, the first step is completing the FAFSA. Completion of this document is an absolute requirement for access to need-based grants, scholarships, and education awards. In addition, it typically is requested before consideration for privately-funded financial aid award packages. However, many parents hesitate to report confidential information about family income and dependents for a variety of reasons, and may delay FAFSA completion. Their concerns can be addressed early and often through parent workshops and the distribution of information to students and families.

There are no laws that prevent undocumented students from attending a postsecondary institution in this country. However, the socioeconomic status of many undocumented students makes the cost of a postsecondary education prohibitive. In some states, undocumented students who have resided in the state for a period of time and earned a high school diploma in the state are eligible for in-state tuition rates. Securing additional funding is difficult due to the fact that undocumented students are not eligible for federal student financial aid. Noncitizens are only eligible if they

- are a U.S. permanent resident with an Alien Registration Card (I-551);
- are a conditional permanent resident with an I-551C card; or
- have an Arrival Departure Record (I-94) from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security with any of the following designations: a refugee, asylum granted, a parolee, a Cuban-Haitian entrant, a victim of human trafficking, or a holder of T-Visa.

There are still options for these students, including private scholarships and merit-based awards. Many community-based programs have wonderful resources that provide the most up-to-date financial aid opportunities for undocumented students. The best way to support undocumented students in securing financial assistance is by educating them and their families early about their rights and the alternative routes they can follow.

In summary, these six postsecondary-preparation tasks described above are part of an expanded vision for guidance that will require the collective participation of all stakeholders. Without this support, guidance personnel struggle to be successful in their role of establishing and leading an equitable college-going culture for all students. District-level leadership can increase the successful implementation of this expanded model by providing appropriate resources for professional development to enable staff to understand and carry out their enhanced roles. The following section outlines these different roles.

One Goal, Many Roles: Complementary, Overlapping, and Reinforcing

It will take more than the heroic efforts of a few individuals to complete the six college-readiness tasks described above. These tasks traditionally fall under the job description of school guidance counselors. However, given the scope and scale of student needs in many high schools, guidance staff alone cannot adequately prepare students for postsecondary success without assistance from a network of staff, parents, and community members. The work of structuring information, organizing and promoting activities that foster college aspirations and college knowledge, engaging parents and enhancing their role in supporting college aspirations and motivating students, promoting a college-prep curriculum for all and overseeing course selection, and supporting students in navigating their way through the college choice and application process is a responsibility that needs to be shared across the entire school staff. This broad participation is particularly important in equitably delivering the supports required to make postsecondary success a viable option for *all* students.

Guidance counselors. Guidance counselors play a pivotal role in helping students navigate the pathway to postsecondary access and success. The work is both general, in that they influence the postsecondary focus of the school, and specific, in terms of individual caseloads. Guidance counselors are constantly incorporating new components that more proactively expose students to postsecondary options, help them chart their individual pathways, and support their efforts to negotiate the complicated and regulated procedures of securing admission and financial aid. In our expanded vision, guidance counselors also play a leadership and organizing role—they help teachers understand how to shape student aspirations and coordinate the work of teachers and other school staff in carrying out the tasks described above.

College coaches. In some schools, college coaches supplement the work of guidance counselors, focusing specifically on the college application and acceptance process. They often build personal relationships with the admissions offices of the major postsecondary institutions that receive their high school's graduates. These are usually guidance counselors with a master's degree in some form of counseling who have decided to focus on the college selection and application process. In some cases, they also have taken coursework in college and career counseling. The following programs provide college counseling professional development:

- The National Association for College Admission Counseling provides a list of the institutions offering courses in college advisement and offers professional development on the subject. Information is online at <http://www.nacacnet.org>.
- Two universities in California (UCLA and UCB) have launched online courses for college counseling with a certificate at the end of the 6-week program. However, the core work for these coaches involves knowing well which colleges will be the best match for students and developing relationships with them that can facilitate a smoother admissions process.

The coaches both help students get accepted and monitor students' transition from waiting list to acceptance. They are particularly useful when they can compensate for the lack of social capital found in the homes and communities of disadvantaged students. They also can serve as liaisons for community organizations and volunteers who help students with the college exploration and admissions process.

Teachers. Teachers have the most frequent and authentic opportunities to connect what students are doing in school to college and careers. As a result of their regular contact with students, teachers can form meaningful relationships with students and often can tell whether poor performance is a function of personal or external factors and/or a lack of requisite skills. Research shows that students perform better when they see their class work as being relevant to their lives and when teacher expectations are made clear (Bushweller interview with Balfanz and Allensworth, 2006). Numerous studies have been able to replicate results demonstrating that teachers who foster an atmosphere of high expectations for all students see high performance on student outcomes (Rosenthal, 1968).

Teachers' contributions to the high school's college-going culture are multifaceted. At the forefront, teachers have the most frequent opportunities to incorporate messages in the coursework that point to the future. From an instructional standpoint, teachers can ground their expectations for student work in college-ready standards. Immersion in rigorous literacy and mathematics class work strengthens students' transferrable knowledge in these areas. Simple steps like incorporating ACT/SAT vocabulary and timed essay writing into the coursework establish links between students' current efforts and later success. Sharing personal college experiences or wearing and displaying college gear injects college buzz into the school environment. Most

importantly, teachers can consistently link classroom-based work and conversations to eventual postsecondary enrollment and signal the importance of current classwork in building college readiness as a bridge to career success.

The Annenberg Institute for School Reform's Putting Kids on the Pathway to College rubric asks schools to reflect on whether "the school makes it clear to new ninth graders that the next 4 years will involve disciplined academic work aimed at graduation and postsecondary education. All faculty emphasize that serious careers depend on post-high school education and specify which programs are needed for specific careers" (Ascher et al., 2010).

The role of teachers and school-based adults is even more critical for students of color and first-generation college-goers. In these instances, the role and influence of adults in the school sometimes overshadows that of parents in facilitating the navigation to college, given the more extensive postsecondary knowledge and experience found among the college-educated adults in the building. "Unless college-planning is prioritized and purposefully organized in schools, students . . . who live in environments where family members and neighbors have not had the opportunity to attend college will have difficulty completing their college-planning activities" (Farmer-Hinton, 2008). Furthermore, Ron Ferguson's work with the Minority Student Achievement Network found that African-American students are more affected by teacher perceptions of their academic potential than are White students (Ferguson, 1998).

College expectations for first-generation students are powerfully influenced by teacher conversations. The role of parents and other significant adults is critical in motivating and encouraging these students during their quest for postsecondary success. However it is the school-based adults who ground these dreams in the reality of what it takes to achieve success and who support students with their expressions of confidence in students' capacity to meet the challenges ahead.

Parents. Parents play a pivotal role in providing the conditions for students to complete their academic work and in motivating and encouraging them to aspire to higher levels of achievement and postsecondary education. For students who will be the first in their families to attain a postsecondary education, parents may need orientation on postsecondary planning from teachers and counselors. This may include messages about the importance of postsecondary education to their child's future success, as well as reassurance that financial assistance will be available to help defray the costs of that education. Parents who were expecting their children to provide income immediately after high school also may need help understanding that postsecondary education is a long-term investment in their child's earning potential that should outweigh the loss of income from having to pay for college.

High-quality parent involvement is fostered when parents feel they are partnering with an adult in the building who knows their child well and is invested in his or her progress (McDonough, 1997). The educational level of a student's parent or parents should be

taken into account because it may influence the extent to which parents can advise and oversee the college-application process.

Students. College-going peer social networks are a powerful influence on students' decisions about postsecondary endeavors. Schools can tap into opportunities to incorporate postsecondary conversations into student-friendly settings like the cafeteria and study halls. In addition, posting their college acceptance letters and scholarship notifications reinforces the idea that postsecondary choices matter. College Summit, described earlier, strategically develops and uses "student influencers" to build a college-going culture in the schools where the organization works.

Alumni. Inviting high school alumni to return to the school and share their experiences also can send a powerful message to students that says, "Students like me can enroll and succeed in college." Former students from Manhattan Comprehensive Night and Day High School (MCNDHS) who are now enrolled in college are recruited to serve as volunteer tutors by the schools wraparound program, Comprehensive Development Inc. These alumni tutor current students, who are frequently immigrants and/or potential first-generation college-goers who need the flexible schedule that MCNDHS offers. They also get to see that students from MCNDHS can go on to college.

Community members and organizations. When community members and organizations are involved in the pursuit of postsecondary success, the message that postsecondary education and training is expected of all is even more powerful. These messages are particularly relevant in communities with large populations of first-generation college-goers and/or otherwise disadvantaged students. Community involvement can include the provision of opportunities for extracurricular activities, service learning and civic engagement, assistance in drafting college applications and essays, and help filling out financial aid and scholarship applications. Members of the community can also be invited into the school to speak about careers and provide examples of postsecondary pathways.

Harlem Center for Education. The Harlem Center for Education (HCE) has operated in the East Harlem neighborhood of New York City for more than 4 decades, providing a range of afterschool and summer programs for low-income, first-generation potential college students. The organization works with students who are in middle school, but mainly focuses on high school students. Funded by a combination of federal student support programs and foundation resources, HCE now serves more than 1,000 high school students each year. The organization's counselors arrange college visits; guide students in selecting colleges; fill out applications for admissions and forms for financial aid and scholarships; provide letters of recommendation; and follow up with admissions offices and analyze financial aid packages.

More than 80 percent of the high school students served by HCE are accepted into postsecondary institutions, with roughly half accepted to public 4-year colleges and one-quarter accepted to private 4-year colleges. HCE students persist in college at high

levels; for example, in the Class of 2003, 80 percent of HCE students had either graduated or were still enrolled in 2007. (This included 25 percent who had graduated and 55 percent who were still enrolled.) These persistence rates for HCE's overwhelmingly low-income students compare favorably to national figures for all students in the Class of 2003, where 63.9 percent were either still enrolled or had graduated (HCE Annual Report, 2008–2009).

Conclusion

Preparing all students for postsecondary success is the collective responsibility of all adults in an equitable 21st century high school. The changing nature of our country's economy now makes postsecondary training a prerequisite for access to careers that provide a living wage. The process of preparing and supporting all students for postsecondary education is a departure from the antiquated model of tracking students based on their perceived abilities. The extent of this cultural shift has deep-rooted implications in that it asks all educators to reexamine their beliefs about which students are capable of postsecondary education and to expand their own roles beyond providing only content instruction to encouraging students to think about postsecondary goals early on.

Too often, middle and high schools make premature determinations about which students have the potential to go on to postsecondary education that are based on the level of coursework offered to each group. This is a particular challenge in schools that have traditionally relied on student tracking. These early decisions create a serious disadvantage for the students offered low-challenge courses, who may later find their postsecondary options significantly narrowed by the failure to follow a more rigorous academic program. We cannot stress strongly enough that the single most important action a school can take in preparing students for postsecondary success is enrollment of *all* students in a rigorous college-prep course of study that includes support to those students who need additional help to achieve higher levels of success.

However, excellent discipline-based content preparation, while necessary, is not sufficient to prepare many students for the challenge of navigating the way from entry into high school to entry into postsecondary education. Additional work to provide students with the contextual skills and awareness is needed to help them understand and complete the college-admissions process.

All schools can approach the work of establishing and expanding their college-going culture while still accounting for their unique and diverse needs. Many modern high schools are complex webs of departmental and academy-based learning communities. This often is supplemented by an array of initiatives aimed at providing students with a comprehensive program of study and a range of support services. Before undertaking

the expanded guidance roles we describe in this paper, some schools may find it helpful to evaluate their current practices and collect evidence that helps them identify which students are being served by their current efforts and which students are falling through the cracks. Such an analysis is likely to guide changes in staff roles and responsibilities that lead to more sustainable and equitable practices.

The challenge going forward is to critically assess the school's college-going culture in the context of the available research on the subject. This research and the experiences of schools that proactively sought to help all students chart a pathway to postsecondary education have provided many answers for how to affect a cultural shift in a school so that all students graduate ready for college and careers. Schools will be successful in this aim if they base their efforts on the lessons of research, tailor their interventions to a careful examination of their unique school culture, build the collective responsibility of all stakeholders, and welcome the collaboration of community organizations.

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