

*A Resource
Toolkit*

From Aspirations to Action: Increasing Postsecondary Readiness for Underrepresented Students



Smaller Learning Communities Program
Thematic Meeting on Higher Education:
Translating Aspirations into Action

January 12-14, 2011 | Washington, DC



SMALLER
LEARNING COMMUNITIES
PROGRAM

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Resource Toolkit

A product of the Smaller Learning Communities Program
Thematic Meeting on Higher Education: *Translating Aspirations into Action*

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Introduction

WHY WE CREATED THIS TOOLKIT

This collection of resources was selected to support the learning, planning, and implementation of school programs and strategies required to increase the likelihood that underrepresented students will be able to connect their postsecondary aspirations to a plan for attaining a postsecondary degree. The collection responds to the key components of a conceptual framework for translating aspirations into action that provided the foundation for the Smaller Learning Communities Program Thematic Meeting on Higher Education convened in January 2011. These components include:

- Smart use of data to address student needs and monitor progress
- A culture of success for all at the school, district, and community level
- Adult learning and support, including professional learning and planning time
- Student learning and support for success in a rigorous, challenging curriculum
- Youth development supports to help connect aspirations to a plan
- Transition supports from high school to higher education

The meeting brought together individuals and organizations that are doing work in many of these areas. The resources in this toolkit include this work, with many examples that demonstrate the interconnectedness of these ideas.

HOW THE RESOURCES WERE SELECTED

The resources were selected based upon their successful use by SLCP grantees as a foundation for their college readiness activities or their successful alignment with these activities. Also important is the easy accessibility of these resources on the Web and their alignment with the SLCP absolute priority of preparing all students for postsecondary and career success. It is hoped that this toolkit will help school teams select tools most appropriate for their current SLCP work.

This toolkit consists of 25 descriptions of resources, lists the target users, and describes when to use the resource. Each description also contains, where appropriate, helpful tips and advice for using the resource. Please note that most of the descriptions are either paraphrased from or taken directly from the resource Web site and have been fact checked by the tool developers or authors. Some have been compiled by AED.

A word about terminology: the term underrepresented youth refers to students with limited resources and supports in terms of applying for college and being “college-ready.” They may, in fact, not have benefited from a “college-going” culture—the expectation that they are “college material” and will attend college—in their families, their communities, their socioeconomic/ethnic subgroups, and even in their schools. These students could well be the first in their families to attend college and are often off-track in terms of age, credits attained, and high school course of study. In addition, these students may be immigrants with or without documentation, refugees, and other international students.

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

The resources are organized by the following categories:

- **Section 1** provides **tools and rubrics** that are useful for understanding and assessing specific assets, skills, behaviors, knowledge, and overall culture essential to ensuring that all students are prepared for higher education and careers. These materials will help foster dialogue and build a shared vision among stakeholder groups.
- **Section 2** includes helpful resources for reviewing **current research** on programs and strategies that increase and sustain college going, particularly among underrepresented youth.
- **Section 3** includes examples of **specific programs** that have demonstrated success in increasing the number of students graduating from high school and transitioning to higher education.

The **Toolkit at a Glance** matrix on the next page may help users quickly narrow down and select the resources that will be most helpful to their college readiness work.

The **Appendix** lists several Web sites where educators can find additional related resources.

A Resource Toolkit does not provide a particular process, but rather a collection of resources to assist districts and schools and to support and inspire school leaders, planning teams, students, families, and community members engaged in the vital work of preparing all students for success in high school, postsecondary education, and beyond.

INTRODUCTION

That being said, and recognizing the time required to study each resource in depth, the matrix is provided on this page to help narrow down the most appropriate resources for specific needs. For example, to help staff learn more about using data, the matrix indicates that resources #2, #13 and #14 may be helpful. For a college-ready assessment rubric to use with school staff, seven resources are identified on the matrix.

Once the appropriate resources have been selected, tips on how to use the resource follow the description on each page.

TOOLKIT CONTENTS AT-A-GLANCE

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Financing College													x												
Transitions and Interventions										x		x					x	x							x
Family/Community Resources													x		x				x		x	x			x
Related Policy Initiatives															x			x		x			x	x	x

SECTION 1

Tools and Rubrics for Assessing College Readiness

1. Putting Kids on the Pathway to College: How is Your School Doing?

Annenberg Institute for School Reform

➤ <http://www.annenberginstitute.org/products/bto.php>

➤ <http://www.annenberginstitute.org/index.php>

TARGET USERS: School improvement teams, school reform organizations, district leaders, teacher unions, professional development specialists, researchers, student organizations, community organizers, and policymakers.

WHEN TO USE THIS RESOURCE: The College Pathways Rubric is designed for use as an information and assessment tool to inform the thinking about and evaluation of a school's progress in adopting the practices in the four key components, described in the next section.

FOCUS OF THIS RESOURCE: Developed by the Annenberg Institute for School Reform and growing out of the findings in *Beating the Odds*, a study of 13 New York City high schools, the College Pathways Tools include a framework and rubric, a student survey tool, and focus group protocols for students and parents. The materials are designed to help schools determine how well they are preparing students, especially low-income students, to graduate on time and prepared for college-level work.

The four key components of the tool are:

- Academic rigor
- A network of timely supports
- A culture of college access
- Effective use of data

The rubric illustrates three levels of evidence (beginning stages, reaching most students, reaching all students) for each indicator within the framework. The document includes a rich list of examples from the schools in the *Beating the Odds* study, illustrating specific practices and programs that support the key components implemented.

SECTION 1: TOOLS AND RUBRICS

The student survey (Is Your School Creating a “Pathway to College”?) allows students to rate their school, indicate which supports and programs they use, and how the school could do a better job. The focus group protocols offer another way to find out what students and parents think about the school’s efforts and to ultimately deepen community understanding about college readiness.

TIPS FOR USING THIS RESOURCE: The rubric could help school leaders understand the variation in perceptions of the school’s performance or level of implementation across stakeholder groups.

2. Citi Postsecondary Success Program (CPSP): College-Ready Asset Analysis

Academy for Educational Development (AED)/
Public Education Network (PEN)

➤ Available online in 2011, please contact Frances Santiago at AED
for further information (fsantiago@aed.org)

TARGET USERS: School leadership team or teachers and other staff, reflecting a diversity of roles within the school in order to capture varying perspectives

WHEN TO USE THIS RESOURCE: Schools and districts can use this resource to determine the assets that schools need to ensure that all students graduate with “college knowledge” — the academic, social, and emotional preparations, as well as the contextual knowledge about postsecondary education necessary to succeed in college.

FOCUS OF THIS RESOURCE: CPSP developed the College-Ready Asset Analysis to engage educators in conversations about a school’s assets in preparing all students for postsecondary success. CPSP is a partnership between the Academy for Educational Development (AED) and the Public Education Network (PEN), whose goal is developing approaches to improving outcomes for low-income and first-generation students, currently with a focus on three cities—Miami, Philadelphia, and San Francisco. The tool focuses on the 9th and 10th grades because research demonstrates that college readiness must begin by then (although preferably in the middle grades).

The tool’s four key facets are:

- Academic behavior
- Cognitive skills
- Contextual knowledge
- Content knowledge

These facets are based on research conducted by David Conley and draws from the work of Educators for Social Responsibility, California GEAR UP, and Pathways to College Network. There is an extensive list of core components within each facet, with a place for users to identify evidence and the degree of implementation, who is responsible, how data are being used to track the component, and a place to identify next steps. The discussion protocol accompanying the tool provides detailed instructions on how to use the tool as a process for developing a next-steps action plan building on a school's existing strengths and addressing challenges.

TIPS FOR USING THIS RESOURCE: This resource is best used as part of a long-term, ongoing inquiry process to increase the capacity of the school to prepare all students for higher education. It is recommended that groups of no fewer than three and no more than eight participants engage in the analysis. Initially four meetings are recommended (one for each of the four facets); at each meeting the first hour is devoted to discussing a specific facet and the second hour to developing consensus around what are the highest priorities are for the school and to begin action planning around them. Schools are encouraged to share the data and action plans developed through the asset analysis with partners, including the district and institutions of higher education, especially as these and other key partners will likely have roles to play in furthering a school's capacity to prepare all students for postsecondary success.

3. EPIC Online Surveys

Educational Policy Improvement Center

➤ <http://www.epiconline.org/cpas>

➤ <http://www.epiconline.org>

TARGET USERS: School leaders, teachers, and other practitioners, students, and administrators

WHEN TO USE THESE RESOURCES: The online surveys are useful for assessing the school's capacity to prepare all students for higher education, based upon David Conley's four facets. The assessment system measures student progress in the "Key Cognitive Strategies" facets described below.

FOCUS OF THESE RESOURCES: These resources are based on the research of David Conley, the CEO of EPIC, and are described in his March 2007 report, *Redefining College Readiness*.

1. College Ready School Diagnostic (In development since June 2007)

The College Ready School Diagnostic is a Web-based tool that assesses how well schools prepare their students for enrollment and success in college. This tool will generate a profile of a school's program in relation to the "four facets of college readiness" identified by Conley:

- Key cognitive strategies
- Key content
- Academic behaviors
- Contextual skills and awareness

The tool consists of a series of online surveys designed for students, teachers, counselors, and administrators. The diagnostic generates a series of reports that evaluates the school on its readiness in each of the four facets. Schools can filter and compare results (internally or with other schools). Each report also includes recommendations and resources on best practices for postsecondary success.

To further develop and refine the Diagnostic tool, EPIC conducted site visits to 38 schools across the country to study their programs and practices. EPIC selected these schools because of their success in graduating college-ready students from typically underrepresented groups. (A full profile and site visit reports of these 38 schools are available on the EPIC Web site epiconline.org/college_readiness).

A copy of the tool is **not** available on the EPIC Web site at this time.

2. College-Readiness Performance Assessment System (C-PAS)

The second tool available from EPIC is a formative assessment system designed to gauge student development of key cognitive strategies from 6th through 12th grade. This tool focuses exclusively on students. By having all students complete carefully designed performance tasks that are scored by teachers using common scoring guides, a school obtains information on how well students are progressing toward college readiness in the important area of cognitive strategy development.

The College-readiness Performance Assessment System (C-PAS) is a formative assessment designed to track the development of the key cognitive strategies or thinking skills necessary for college-readiness and success: problem formulation, research, interpretation, communication, and precision. Since Fall 2006, EPIC has partnered with The Urban Assembly (UA) schools in New York City to develop and pilot C-PAS.

C-PAS is designed to measure the Key Cognitive Strategies through rich performance tasks that teachers embed within existing curricula and that align with curricular requirements. It is designed as a tool to help guide and inform a school's efforts to prepare students for post-secondary success. The information generated from C-PAS measures student development of the key cognitive strategies over time in grades 6–12. This system is designed to help all students, regardless of current academic skill level, develop the thinking skills necessary for future success.

Note: These materials are not currently available on-line. However, it is important to note that the research involved in developing these materials is being used by other organizations to inform the development of tools and resources related to college readiness. While the specific tools are not available, the Web site is informative.

(Source: From the Epiconline Web site: www.epiconline.org)

TIPS FOR USING THIS RESOURCE: Schools will develop an extensive profile using these tools. It is important for teams of teachers to design a process for reviewing the data and for targeting areas of high need and for assigning responsibilities for moving forward. For example, who will organize professional development sessions or professional learning community work to improve weak areas identified?

4. College Readiness Rubric

South Westchester Boards of Cooperative Education Sources, BOCES

➤ www.swboces.org/files/315/College%20Readiness%20rubric.pdf

➤ www.swboces.org

TARGET USERS: Teachers and families

WHEN TO USE THIS RESOURCE: Use this resource to assess students' capacity to manage both college level work and independent living in college.

FOCUS OF THIS RESOURCE: This tool came from the Westchester and Putnam County Special Education Parent Teacher Association (SEPTA). Web site also has a *Transition Planning Guide for Families*. The rubric requires users to assess student readiness on a scale of 1-4 in the following domains:

- Social skills/personal
- Social skills/academic
- Self-awareness
- Student uses multi-path planning to address future goals
- Student's knowledge of his/her place in a legal framework
- Documentation of disability and support needs
- Literacy
- Study skills/acquiring and manipulating information
- Study skills/using and producing information
- College admissions testing
- Student demonstrated competency in a rigorous curriculum

(Source: Internal AED review)

TIPS FOR USING THIS RESOURCE: While this rubric is focused exclusively on student behaviors and practices, particularly for students with special needs, it also identifies many of the non-academic skills that are needed for independent living and success in college. In particular, the indicators for self-awareness, literacy, and study skills seem useful and relevant to first-time college-goers and other students who have been historically underrepresented in college.

5. Early College High School Benchmarks

Early College High School Initiative

➤ www.earlycolleges.org/Downloads/BenchTool12205.pdf

➤ <http://www.earlycolleges.org/>

TARGET USERS: School leaders, teachers, community leaders, and college partners

WHEN TO USE THIS RESOURCE: These materials are useful for school leaders engaged in planning and developing a model early college high school.

FOCUS OF THIS RESOURCE: The Early College High School (ECHS) initiative has developed a set of rubrics for schools to use as an indicator toward progress and success in developing an ECHS. The guidelines establish a set of ideals toward which all ECHS will strive. There are seven benchmarks, each with a “beginning,” “implementing,” and “realizing” phase. These benchmarks describe overall school design and planning issues, as well as leadership, physical plant, recruitment, selection, and teacher retention issues. The rubrics do not identify a set of practices for each successive grade of high school; however, these rubrics might be useful as a guide for institutionalizing a school culture of college readiness. (**Source:** Review by AED staff)

TIPS FOR USING THIS RESOURCE: The resource could be a companion to other tools that focus on student academic and contextual readiness, since this resource describes the type of school organizational and cultural features essential to college readiness. School leaders need to design a process for the leadership team to address weaknesses once they collect and organize the data from the rubrics.

6. Outline for Postsecondary Preparation

Educators for Social Responsibility

➤ <http://esrnational.org/esr/wp-content/uploads/2009/05/increasing-college-access-hi-res.pdf>

➤ <http://esrnational.org>

TARGET USERS: Teachers and grade level teams

WHEN TO USE THIS RESOURCE: During professional planning time, teams may use this resource to identify targets for behaviors and skills at each grade level.

FOCUS OF THIS RESOURCE: The outline identifies behaviors and skills that students should be engaged in during each year of high school, as well as behaviors and skills in a four-year progression to help students get ready for college. The domains described include:

- Personal learning and postsecondary plan
- Nonacademic college preparation and the college-going process
- Career development

This outline can serve as the basis to flesh out a more in-depth rubric. While domains might be described differently, the content of each of the domains addresses many of Conley's "key behaviors for college readiness."

TIPS FOR USING THIS RESOURCE: The outline can serve as a basis for teams of teachers to collaborate on the college readiness activities at each grade level and to build a coherent grade 9-12 plan. Some of these activities could be done during student advisory periods and could become part of the 9-12 advisory curriculum.

7. School Self-Assessment Rubric: Conditions for a College Going Culture

California GEAR Up

➤ www.castategearup.org/tools/for-schools/ssar

➤ www.castategearup.org

TARGET USERS: School leaders and leadership teams

WHEN TO USE THIS RESOURCE: Use this resource to foster conversations about the overall conditions in a school that promote and support college going.

FOCUS OF THIS RESOURCE: The GEAR Up School Self-Assessment Rubric was developed to guide planning and assessment of the development of a college-going culture in schools. It identifies six conditions of a college-going culture that are further defined by 35 sub-conditions. Schools rate themselves periodically on a scale of 1 to 5, with a 5 for a model program.

Conditions Measured

- Rigorous academic curriculum
- High-quality teaching
- Intensive academic and college-going support
- Multi-cultural college-going identity
- Family, neighborhood, and school supports

Four phases of development of these conditions are described, with a Phase 5 being a “strength that can be shared with other organizations and institutions.” Each of the four descriptive phases develops according to numbers of students or staff engaged in the practice, program, or behavior—that is, “none,” “some,” “most,” and “all.”

Much of the language in this rubric comes from the comprehensive school improvement literature—leadership, different types of strategic thinking, and development of partnerships. While there are few specifics regarding actual college-going readiness programs, practices, and behaviors, some particular issues are addressed. For example, the college access and success rubric, Condition B, describes what a comprehensive, results-based counseling and guidance program should look like, with some description of first generation college preparation practices and programs. (**Source:** Internal AED review)

TIPS FOR USING THIS RESOURCE: In addition to its usefulness as a planning and assessment guide, the California GEAR Up provides an excellent view of a varied range of activities geared to increasing college readiness. The rubric is intended to be used periodically to assess progress over time.

8. College Readiness Mathematics Standards

Washington State Transitions Math Project

➤ www.transitionmathproject.org/standards/doc/crs_march23_2006.pdf

➤ www.transitionmathproject.org

TARGET USERS: High school math teachers and math curriculum leaders

WHEN TO USE THIS RESOURCE: Use this resource to align the high school math content and skills with college readiness.

FOCUS OF THIS RESOURCE: This rubric “defines the core knowledge and skills” that students are expected to know upon entering college-level math courses and courses with a quantitative component. They also provide the information and support students need for a successful transition from secondary to postsecondary education in math.” One section on “attributes” describes the kinds of learning behaviors that are relevant across all content areas. The behaviors are:

- Demonstrates intellectual engagement
- Takes responsibility for own learning
- Perseveres when faced with time-consuming or complex tasks
- Pays attention to detail

TIPS FOR USING THIS RESOURCE: Math teachers often struggle with de-tracking and with the idea of preparing all students for college-level math. This resource helps teachers look at both content skills and overall learning behaviors, and thus look at the capacity of the students in a different way.

9. College Readiness for All Toolbox

Pathways to College Network

➤ <http://toolbox.pathwaystocollege.net/>

➤ www.pathwaystocollege.net/Default.aspx

TARGET USERS: School leaders, educators, teams of teachers, and students

WHEN TO USE THIS RESOURCE: This resource provides tools to assist in the change processes in school organization and infrastructure essential to creating a college-ready system.

FOCUS OF THIS RESOURCE: The Pathways Implementation Model provides a recipe for identifying desired changes and a methodology for successfully implementing the “what” content and the “how” process. The tools can be used within the structure of the nine-step pathway or they can be used “a la carte.” Each tool includes an overview of the tool, its purpose, when to use it, length of the activity, and where in the process it fits.

The focus of these tools is primarily on school infrastructure and organizational supports around college access and success. Tool topics in the toolbox include:

- **Leading Change Initiatives** – The Initiating Change Tools are organization development and change leadership strategies that help educators understand the process and steps that must be followed to ensure the development, acceptance, and sustainability of an effective change initiative.
- **Enhancing Expectations** – These tools assist educators in developing a college-ready culture involving students, parents, administrators, teachers, and community leaders, promoting the belief that all students can graduate and be successful in post-secondary education or work.
- **Enhancing Achievements** – These tools are for educators interested in developing a rigorous and student-centered curriculum across all disciplines, to prepare all students to master essential 21st Century skills.

- **Enhancing Access** – These tools are for educators interested in developing pathways to post-secondary opportunities for all students. This includes partnerships with community business leaders, local colleges and universities, and various outreach programs.

(**Source:** Internal AED review)

TIPS FOR USING THIS RESOURCE: One tool that is similar to a rubric is the Student Centered 21st Century College Culture Ready Evaluation. This tool identifies eight areas of a college-ready culture, which could easily be used with students.

SECTION 2

Research and Data that Document Successful Practices and Programs

10. On Course for Success: A Close Look at Selected High School Courses that Prepare All Students for College and Work

ACT and The Education Trust (December 2004)

➤ www.act.org/research/policymakers/pdf/success_report.pdf

➤ www.act.org/education/index.html

TARGET USERS: Leadership teams, teachers, central office staff, and parents

WHEN TO USE THIS RESOURCE:

- As background reading for stakeholders concerned with improving student learning and ensuring that each student graduates ready for postsecondary success.
- To help schools consider what programs are no longer useful or affordable, given their SCLP goals.
- To understand an instruction-centered approach for moving beyond the vision of the comprehensive high school as a model of excellence.

FOCUS OF THIS RESOURCE:

ACT Inc. and the Education Trust, the co-authors of this 75-page report, are devoted to the educational success of all students, especially the minority and low-income students who will increasingly contribute to the U.S. economy. In particular, ACT and the Education Trust are working to ensure that all students arrive at the doors of colleges and universities ready for college-level study without the need for remediation. That means finding out what essential qualities of high school courses foster successful transition to college. The results of this study are clear: In high schools with significant minority and low-income student populations, students can be prepared to succeed in credit-bearing, first-year college courses. Further, given that the skills needed for college are also the skills needed to enter today's workforce, all students must graduate college-ready, whether they plan further education or work after high school graduation.

TIPS FOR USING THIS RESOURCE:

- Teachers within their content-area planning groups could examine and compare the recommendations of this report with their curricula and their expectations for student learning across all grades and course levels.
- Teachers should critically examine courses with lower expectations or learning requirements and consider phasing out those that are not appropriately aligned with college-ready work.
- This report includes sample course syllabi in English, math, and science.

11. The Power to Change: High Schools that Help All Students Achieve

Education Trust (November 2005)

➤ www2.edtrust.org/NR/rdonlyres?012DC865-97CA-4C2F-8A04-99924E2F392F0/0/ThePowerToChange.pdf

➤ www.edtrust.org

TARGET USERS: School leaders, teachers, and other practitioners

WHEN TO USE THIS RESOURCE:

- To help teams think about how schools have overcome the challenges of school redesign under difficult demographic circumstances.
- To persuade those who are reluctant to change or who are struggling to shift their focus to student needs rather than on what teachers think students can or cannot do. The stories could be helpful in cultivating a “can-do” attitude within a group.

FOCUS OF THIS RESOURCE: The report describes three schools serving mostly low-income or minority students, two of which are performing in the top tiers of their states, while the third school is one of the fastest improving high schools in its state. These schools are succeeding with students who usually are on “the wrong end of the achievement gap—poor students and students of color.” “Such schools are not common, but they do exist. Their very existence stands as proof that high schools can do more than we have ever expected.”

(**Source:** Excerpted from the report)

TIPS FOR USING THIS RESOURCE: This 24-page report may be used to help groups prioritize conversations about roadblocks to student achievement and help them focus on the possibilities, not the problems. The report emphasizes the power of teachers who set high expectations for all students and who believe that each student can, with support, achieve those expectations.

SECTION 2: RESEARCH AND DATA

This resource is best used during text-based discussions within a team or an entire faculty. The goal of preparing all students for higher education can seem daunting, so it is easy to fall into the trap of citing all the reasons why “we could never do that here.” Such thinking is often a response to the difficulties teachers face when trying to manage or engage certain students, rather than to the many proven, research-based practices and attitudes that can make a real difference in student outcomes. This report affirms that students under the most challenging personal circumstances can achieve at a high level with excellent teaching and support.

12. Advancing by Degrees: A Framework for Increasing College Completion

Institute for Higher Education Leadership and Policy
and the Education Trust (April 2010)

➤ www.edtrust.org/dc/publication/advancing-by-degrees

➤ www.edtrust.org

TARGET USERS: Leadership teams, counselors, and teachers seeking to increase their understanding of the benchmarks that drive student success in higher education

WHEN TO USE THIS RESOURCE:

- To help understand the on-track indicators for college retention.
- To gain insights about the impact of remedial courses and gateway courses for college success.
- To learn about specific strategies for catching up and keeping up.
- To guide a text-based discussion focusing on the implications of these data on higher education research on the critical need for all students to be fully prepared, especially in English and mathematics.

FOCUS OF THIS RESOURCE: This 20-page report provides a framework for improving and monitoring college success beyond year-to-year retention rates and six-year graduation rates. The reports identifies key factors that matter for college success:

- Research has found that students who immediately enroll in remedial courses have persistence and success rates similar to those who start directly in college-level courses.
- Research from both two- and four-year colleges points to the importance of enrolling in and completing college-level math early in the college career. The research is less clear regarding English courses.
- Early accumulation of credits creates momentum toward degree completion.

From these and other data, the report proposes a framework for success by using milestones (retention, complete remediation, begin college level work in math and English, for example), and three categories of on-track indicators (addressing remediation early, enrolling in gateway courses, and credit accumulation and academic behaviors) to identify where progress stalls and to decide upon interventions, changes in policy or practice. The report also provides an analysis of why the progress of black and Latino students stalls before degree completion. (**Source:** Paraphrased from the report)

TIPS FOR USING THIS RESOURCE: This could be used to help create a compelling case for college readiness “without remediation,” including taking a rigorous math course of study all four years of high school. The strategies for increasing college success are directly related to the actions of secondary schools as they work to increase graduation rates and increase college going. There are implications for local partnerships between secondary schools and higher education, including opportunities for earning college credits early on. A text-based-discussion protocol could be used to review the report.

13. Subprime Opportunity: The Unfulfilled Promise of For-Profit Colleges and Universities

Education Trust (November 2010)

➤ www.edtrust.org/dc/Subprime

➤ www.edtrust.org

TARGET USERS: College and graduation counselors, financial aid advisors, and school leadership teams

WHEN TO USE THIS RESOURCE:

- As background reading for those involved with advising students and parents in the college planning process.
- To help provide parents to accurate data on the for-profit college industry and its potential impact on underserved students.

FOCUS OF THIS RESOURCE: This eight-page report provides data on the impact of poorly regulated for-profit colleges and universities on underserved, vulnerable students: “For-profit colleges provide high-cost degree programs that have little chance of leading to high-paying careers, and saddle the most vulnerable students with heavy debt. Instead of providing a solid pathway to the middle class, they pave a path into the sub-basement of the American economy.”

This report points out that the failure of nonprofit institutions to serve underrepresented students has created a huge market for the for-profit sector. The data indicate that the rapid growth and record profits of these institutions is not grounded in the success of its students. Overall, only 22 percent of students in these institutions earn a degree in six years.

The data provided are compelling. In four-year, for-profit institutions, the average cost in 2007 was \$31,976, with students having an average unmet need of \$24,957. For private, non-profit institutions, though the annual average cost was higher at \$34,110, the unmet need was \$16,574. The report suggests that students' inability to pay back debt and the inability of these institutions to graduate and prepare students for careers may not be worth the cost. (**Source:** Paraphrased from the report)

TIPS FOR USING THIS RESOURCE:

- Read this report prior to working students and parents as they begin to plan college options.
- Provide the report to all college counselors and others advising students and discuss the data as a team. Decide how this issue should be approached with parents. It's important to share the data and provide a forum for others to draw their own conclusions.

14. Chicago High School Redesign Initiative: Schools, Students, Outcomes

Consortium on Chicago School Research (July 2010)

➤ http://ccsr.uchicago.edu/content/publications.php?pub_id=141

➤ <http://ccsr.uchicago.edu/content/index.php>

TARGET USERS: School leaders, researchers, and school reform planners

WHEN TO USE THIS RESOURCE: Use this resource to inform school-redesign plans.

FOCUS OF THIS RESOURCE: This 37-page report documents the outcomes of the Chicago High School Redesign Initiative, which opened 23 small high schools between 2002 and 2007. While expectations of improved relationships and higher graduation rates were realized, the program did not improve student achievement at the expected levels. The report includes a thoughtful discussion of the various issues related to improving achievement and concludes that small size alone will not accomplish that goal.

The report focuses on outcomes guided by three sets of questions:

- Did the population of students served by the CHSRI schools change as CHSRI created new schools?
- On average, how did CHSRI schools compare to other schools serving similar students in terms of absences, academic achievement, and graduation? Have these differences changed over time?
- To what extent did CHSRI graduation rates vary across schools? Were some CHSRI schools more effective at graduating the students they serve? And were CHSRI schools more effective at graduating some students than others?

With a mission to inform and assess, not to advocate for a particular policy or program, the Consortium on Chicago School Research (CCSR) was created in 1990 to study the restructuring of Chicago's schools and its long-term effects, as well as to research many of Chicago's school reform initiatives. (**Source:** Epiconline Web site)

TIPS FOR USING THIS RESOURCE: School redesign is not just about structures. The report informs planners of the many varied factors that impact student achievement. Considering the variables cited, schools should focus their planning on curriculum and instruction to improve achievement for all student groups, and particularly attend to interventions for “off-track” students.

15. College Access and Success

OMG Center for Collaborative Learning (Victoria Dougherty and Michelle Lempa, November 2010)

➤ www.omgcenter.org

➤ www.knightfoundation.org/research_publications/detail.dot?id=375835

TARGET USERS: District and school leaders, and community groups

WHEN TO USE THIS RESOURCE: Use the 16-page executive summary of this study to inform the development of an effective school and community K-16 pipeline to college attainment.

FOCUS OF THIS RESOURCE: To develop a strong local college access and success system, it is essential to understand what assets are in place, what types of college attainment results the current local system yields, and what challenges need to be addressed.

For *communities in the earliest stages* of developing a system, the process of developing a scan can play a catalytic role in galvanizing stakeholders, laying the groundwork for necessary partnership, and developing a map that can trigger momentum, direction, and collaborative will for more coordinated action. In *communities where a more emergent* or developed system is already in place, an assessment scan can provide essential benchmarking, so progress over time can be calibrated, effective strategy development can unfold, and ongoing coordination and alignment of programs can be facilitated.

This guide provides an overview of how to develop and implement an assessment of your local access and success system, exploring why it matters, how to do it, and how to leverage findings from this process to drive change. The discussion is illuminated with case study material from our recent assessments of the college access and success systems in two cities—Miami, FL, and Philadelphia, PA—which OMG Center conducted for the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. In addition, the lessons in this paper are drawn from OMG’s experience evaluating system approaches to improving college access and success for the Lumina Foundation for Education, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and the Citi Foundation. (**Source:** Excerpted from the Web site)

TIPS FOR USING THIS RESOURCE: Because this resource focuses on the entire K-16 system, it can help educators understand the barriers that often exist between different organizations of grade structures of public schools. School leaders can isolate appropriate strategies at each level (elementary, middle, high school, and college), and determine the requisite community supports. It could also be useful to study the specific issues in one of the two cities, perhaps to decide what might work in one's district.

16. Redefining College Readiness

David Conley (2009)

➤ <http://occr.illiois.edu/Newsletter/2009/spring/9>

➤ <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/he.321/abstract>

TARGET USERS: School leaders, teachers, and other practitioners

WHEN TO USE THIS RESOURCE: Use this paper for essential background information to understand the broad definition of college readiness before using college readiness tools and rubrics.

FOCUS OF THIS RESOURCE: The purpose of this 30-page paper is to provide an operational definition of college readiness that differs in scope from current representations of this concept. The paper suggests that, although much has been learned about this phenomenon, particularly during the past 20 years, few systematic attempts have been made to integrate the various aspects or components of college readiness that have been investigated during this period. Consequently, the term *college readiness* continues to be defined primarily in terms of high school courses taken and grades received, combined with scores on national tests.

Recent research has shed light on several other key components of college success. Most relevant for this paper are a range of “key cognitive strategies”—content knowledge, attitudes and behavioral attributes—that successful college students tend to possess, as well as the contextual knowledge that a student must possess to be prepared for college.

The college-ready student envisioned by this definition is able to understand what is expected in a college course, can cope with the content knowledge that is presented, and can take away from the course the key intellectual lessons and dispositions. (**Source:** Excerpted from the introduction to David Conley’s paper)

TIPS FOR USING THIS RESOURCE: This resource is useful for helping school groups describe their own vision of college-readiness, or they could easily adopt this well-researched version and begin to align curriculum and practices with the descriptors. The important point to consider is that all students are on a continuum of readiness and if educators are going to ensure that all students graduate “college ready,” educators need to understand where they are on the continuum of college readiness skill and attributes. Educators should not base readiness simply on courses, credits, and seat time.

17. Replacing Remediation with Readiness, An NCPR Working Paper

David Conley (2010)

➤ www.postsecondaryresearch.org/conference/PDF/NCPR_Panel2_Conley.pdf

➤ www.postsecondaryresearch.org

TARGET USERS: School leaders, teachers, and other practitioners

WHEN TO USE THIS RESOURCE: The resource is helpful in contradicting narrow definitions of college readiness and encouraging/inspiring teachers and other educators to promote a college-going culture for all students.

FOCUS OF THIS RESOURCE: Developed under a grant from the Department of Education, this 22-page paper critically examines the traditional means of assessing college students' need for remediation and suggests as a replacement an expanded definition of college readiness—where readiness is more complex than rudimentary content knowledge and more multifaceted than a single cut point.

The paper presents and explains four dimensions of readiness that should be assessed, considers types of additional measures and methods needed to collect such information, offers a model for a student profile that captures and communicates this richer information, suggests some of the ways this information might be put to use by schools and students and the changes that would result from doing so, and considers the challenges involved in doing so. (**Source:** Excerpted from the abstract of David Conley's paper)

TIPS FOR USING THIS RESOURCE: This paper argues that, given our decentralized system of higher education—that is, with no commonality across colleges regarding readiness standards and with the relative freedom that high schools enjoy with regard to their programming—it makes sense to think of students on a continuum of readiness. This paper would be very useful in helping high schools and local colleges to develop a more seamless transition process by developing a shared vision of readiness among Conley's four dimensions.

SECTION 3

Programs and Resources that Increase Aspirations and College Readiness, or Provide Information and Guidance

18. Increasing College Access Through School-Based Models of Postsecondary Preparation, Planning and Support

Educators for Social Responsibility (Carol Miller Lieber, January 2009)

➤ <http://esrnational.org/esr/wp-content/uploads/2009/05/increasing-college-access-hi-res.pdf>

➤ <http://esrnational.org>

TARGET USERS: Urban school leaders, counselors, teachers, and policymakers

WHEN TO USE THIS RESOURCE: This resource should be used by urban educators and counselors when planning strategies to increase college-going among all youth. The four school-based models provide concrete, practical strategies for impacting urban youth.

FOCUS OF THIS RESOURCE: The focus of this paper is to identify school-based models for postsecondary preparation that are most likely to improve outcomes for underrepresented urban students. While external programs are having a positive impact, they only reach a small percentage of low-income, minority youth. The first section of the paper introduces four school-based models of postsecondary preparation, planning, and support that can serve all urban students and provides examples of how these strategies are working in schools. The final section concludes with suggestions for leveraging policies for building a public commitment for postsecondary readiness in urban high schools. (**Source:** Internal AED review)

TIPS FOR USING THIS RESOURCE: This paper could be central to a conversation about “who owns the problem” of educating and preparing the urban poor. School-based models place the major responsibility for this work in the school and with the educators, recognizing the limitations of poor families to support higher education. The examples show schools how to include all students in postsecondary preparation and planning. They do not carve out particular populations of students.

19. KnowHow2Go

➤ <http://knowhow2go.org/>

TARGET USERS: School leaders, teachers, parents, community groups, and other significant adults and/or practitioners

WHEN TO USE THIS RESOURCE: This site provides a useful framework for articulating a successful pathway to college. It is essentially a “go-to resource” for middle and high school students as they begin to plan for college.

FOCUS OF THIS RESOURCE: This Web site has much information and guidance for high school students in grades 9-12. The Web site is user-friendly for students (lots of colors, big numbers, and video streaming with a female “tour guide” talking directly to students). The site is organized by grade level starting in middle school and going through each subsequent grade through high school. In addition, there is some information available for Spanish-speaking students. The college-going pathway is described for students in four simple messages:

- (1) Be a pain in a good way
- (2) Push yourself
- (3) Find the right fit
- (4) Put your hands on some cash

Significant adults and practitioners can use this as a way to communicate and reinforce student thinking and efforts in preparation for college.

TIPS FOR USING THIS RESOURCE: The Web site is a student user-friendly resource that will need to be supplemented with additional information and material. Links to local resources are provided on the Web site. Parents would benefit from a tour of the site at “college nights” or other such events; they could use the resource to learn and plan at home as a family.

20. College Success for All: How the Hidalgo Independent School District is Adopting Early College as a District-wide Strategy

Jobs for the Future (Thad Nodine)

➤ www.jff.org/sites/default/files/college_success_for_all.pdf

TARGET USERS: District and school leaders and teachers

WHEN TO USE THIS RESOURCE: This 32-page report is useful in the planning stages of developing a dual enrollment model. Further, the story is a compelling case of college success for urban, poor, Hispanic students.

FOCUS OF THIS RESOURCE: The Hidalgo Independent School District in Texas has raised the bar on what it means for a school system to focus on college readiness. *College Success for All* tells the story of how Hidalgo ISD, located in one of the most economically depressed metropolitan areas with one of the lowest number of college-educated adults, is preparing all of its students to earn college credits while in high school.

Hidalgo ISD serves a student body that is 99.5 percent Hispanic, 90 percent economically disadvantaged, and 53 percent limited English proficient. Preliminary data show enviable results: This past June, more than 95 percent of the Class of 2010 graduated with college credits. Two-thirds of the graduating seniors had earned at least a full semester of credit for a college degree.

College Success for All describes how Hidalgo ISD took the early college concept and adopted it as a district-wide strategy: By embedding a college and career culture and focus in everyday activities, from elementary school through middle school and into high school, the school system now motivates and prepares all of its students for success in higher education.

This strategy, combined with the establishment of strong postsecondary partnerships—with South Texas College, Texas State Technical College, and University of Texas-Pan American—more rigorous course sequencing and high-quality career pathways have been a recipe for success. (**Source:** Thad Nodine, excerpted from the paper)

TIPS FOR USING THIS RESOURCE: The story of Hildago is another example of how an entire system, K-12, shifted to a college-going culture, beginning with the elementary schools. This report documents strategies the school implemented from kindergarten to prepare students and parents for college and career—not just high school graduation. District leaders and K-12 teachers would benefit from Hildago leadership’s systemic approach to college attainment, which includes establishing an early college high school in the district.

21. College Readiness – Key Cognitive Strategies

University Readiness Initiative, Plano, Texas, Independent School District

➤ http://ur.pisd.edu/documents/PlanoISD_College_Readiness_Report.pdf

➤ <http://ur.pisd.edu>

TARGET USERS: School leaders, teachers, and other practitioners

WHEN TO USE THIS RESOURCE: Use this resource to see the comprehensive approach that one school district is undertaking to help its students prepare for college.

FOCUS OF THE RESOURCE: Plano Independent School District has implemented programs starting in the middle grades to help students prepare for college, particularly students who may be first generation college-goers. The site contains extensive information under five categories of “readiness”:

- Career
- Academic
- Personal
- Financial
- Admissions

Under each category the site provides many links under various topics. For example, the “career readiness” link has information such as:

- First steps to career readiness
- Career interest survey
- Choosing a major
- Career-degree connections
- Internships

The “academic readiness” link has topics such as:

- Middle school guidance
- 4-year plan
- Senior year plan
- Basic college vocabulary
- Information about taking the PSAT, SAT, and ACT tests

The “personal readiness” category contains information under links such as:

- Parent Expectations and Support, including “20 Ways to Stay Involved with Your Child’s Education”
- College Planning Advice for Parents

The strategies in the tool align perfectly with the college-readiness facets outlined by Conley in *Redefining College Readiness*. The guide also identifies key indicators of a school’s progress, including instructional practice or student performance, evidence, and degree of implementation. Each school is meant to identify and document its own evidence in each of the domains listed. (**Source:** Internal AED review)

TIPS FOR USING THIS RESOURCE: The University Ready Web site illustrates a truly comprehensive approach to college readiness. As such it could provide an excellent model for a school or district seeking a similar approach. It’s particularly helpful to learn about the middle level strategies and to see how the middle and secondary schools work together toward the same vision for all students.

22. Framework for Developing a System of Linked Learning Pathways

Connect Ed and the Linked Learning Alliance

➤ www.connectedcalifornia.org/downloads/Framework%20%for%20System%20%20Pathways.pdf

➤ www.connectedcalifornia.org/about/index.php

TARGET USERS: School leaders, teachers, and other practitioners

WHEN TO USE THIS RESOURCE: This resource is useful when planning changes in curriculum and school organizational structures to include opportunities for authentic learning in the community.

FOCUS OF THIS RESOURCE: Connect Ed, The California Center for College and Career, is dedicated to advancing practice, policy, and research aimed at helping young people prepare for both college and career through Linked Learning—a high school improvement approach.

“Linked Learning” is the new name for the educational approach formerly known in California as “multiple pathways,” an approach to learning that involves students in challenging, community-based, real-life learning experiences. After extensive public opinion research, the schools and organizations implementing this approach selected the Linked Learning name to more clearly convey its unique benefits to students, educators, parents, and policymakers.

The curriculum used in Linked Learning/Pathways includes lessons designed around real-world industry themes, engaging students through both challenging academic and demanding technical instruction. Students can see the relevance of academic subjects to practical applications. It also helps students with diverse interests and learning styles master the rigorous content that California’s academic standards require.

Connect Ed’s mission is to support the development of Linked Learning by which California’s young people can complete high school, enroll in postsecondary education, attain a formal credential, and embark on lasting success in the world of work, civic affairs, and family life.

(**Source:** Connect Ed Web site)

TIPS FOR USING THIS RESOURCE: The framework provides rubrics and tools for designing and implementing high-quality pathways. It could be a very useful tool for schools developing a pathway model. With a focus on rigorous learning, integrated academic core and technical curriculum, leadership and strategic partnerships, the framework provides a basis for design, implementation, and evaluation of pathways in SLCP schools.

Currently a California-based program, look for expansion of the Linked Learning Alliance soon to other states, as funding becomes available.

23. A Policymaker’s Guide To Early College Designs: Expanding a Strategy for Achieving College Readiness for All

Jobs for the Future (Nancy Hoffman and Joel Vargas, 2010)

➤ www.jff.org/publications/education/policymaker%E2%80%99s-guide-early-college-design/1141

TARGET USERS: State and local policymakers, and school and district leaders interested in dual enrollment programs for underrepresented students.

WHEN TO USE THIS RESOURCE: Use this resource to inform the planning of local early college programs.

FOCUS OF THIS RESOURCE: This planning guide draws upon the extensive work by Jobs for the Future in the development of Early College High Schools. According to the Web site,

The best way to prepare young people to succeed in college is to provide them with substantial college experiences while still in high school. Dual enrollment, advanced placement, and other programs are a start. However, college courses in high school can no longer be the exclusive province of advanced students. Ideally, all students should be able to begin college-level work as soon as they are ready—and before they graduate high school.

To help spread this opportunity to all students, JFF has prepared *A Policymaker’s Guide to Early College Designs* to help policymakers make informed decisions as they plan for and implement early-college designs. It outlines what it would take to systematize and scale up early college course taking, extending the benefits to all high school students, secondary schools, and colleges across the country.

Early college designs adapt dual enrollment as a school-wide strategy; unlike traditional dual enrollment programs with their *primary focus on underprepared students*, rather than high achievers. The goal is to support low-income high school students who, without significant assistance, may lack the skills and knowledge to enter and persist through college. After years of extra academic support, early college students start taking postsecondary courses in high school, resulting in dual credit—all tuition free.

(**Source:** From the Web address cited above)

TIPS FOR USING THIS RESOURCE: This resource could help state and local policymakers whose vision is to create a system of early-college experiences for all youth. The guide provides detailed information about the complexities of scaling up higher education opportunities and the need for policies at the state and local levels, including quality program design, financing, goals, and program assessment.

24. Gateway to College National Network

➤ www.gatewaytocollege.org

TARGET USERS: School and community college partners, and school counselors

WHEN TO USE THIS RESOURCE: Use this resource when planning intervention strategies for high school dropouts and those at risk for dropping out so that these students may earn a diploma and get a jump-start on college credits. It could also prove very useful for schools and colleges trying to form effective partnerships to help at-risk students stay in and graduate from school.

FOCUS OF THIS RESOURCE: Portland Community College (Portland, Oregon) created the Gateway to College program in 2000 to help reconnect high school dropouts with their education. Through the program, students complete their high school diploma requirements at community and technical colleges while simultaneously earning college credits toward an associate's degree or certificate. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation funded the replication of Gateway to College as part of its Early College High School Initiative. Since 2003, Gateway to College has evolved into a national network of 26 colleges in 16 states, partnering with more than 110 school districts. The Web site includes a link to help districts start a Gateway to College Program.

In addition to the Gateway program, the site also includes information about Project Degree, which helps underprepared college students (ages 18–26) accelerate their progress through developmental education courses in college and to transfer successfully to full-credit college courses.

Gateway to College also helps:

- Build partnerships that connect K-12 and higher education institutions and communities
- Influence systems by creating change agents who are transforming instruction and student support practices from the inside out

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- Conduct research and share findings about how to successfully serve high school dropouts and academically underprepared college students
- Effect policy and regulatory changes to ensure that Gateway to College and other alternative education models are available in every community that needs them
- Provide customized consulting services to colleges and school districts

The National Network also provides ongoing training, technical assistance, and professional development opportunities to Gateway and Project Degree programs across the country.

(**Source:** Gateway to College Web site, cited above)

TIPS FOR USING THIS RESOURCE: To be effective, high schools need to form partnerships with their local community colleges and co-design an appropriate intervention strategy for re-capturing dropouts and re-engaging those at risk. Schools and communities need to accept ownership of these students and be committed to their educational success.

25. Public Education Network (PEN)

➤ www.publiceducation.org/index.asp

TARGET USERS: Community leaders and community action groups committed to improving public education.

WHEN TO USE THIS RESOURCE: Use this resource to learn about specific involvement of Public Education Network (PEN) and local education funds (LEFs) in specific communities, and to find out what the local LEF is doing in the way of educational improvement.

FOCUS OF THIS RESOURCE: PEN is a national association of LEFs and individuals working to advance public school reform in low-income communities across the country. PEN believes an active, vocal constituency is the key to ensuring that every child, in every community, benefits from a quality public education.

PEN and its members are building public demand and mobilizing resources for quality public education on behalf of 12 million children in 32 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. PEN has expanded its work internationally to include members in Mexico, Peru, the Philippines, South Africa and Tanzania.

PEN's Mission is to build public demand and mobilize resources for quality public education for all children through a national constituency of local education funds and individuals.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

- Public education is fundamental to a democratic, civil, and prosperous society.
- Public schools are critical institutions for breaking the cycle of poverty and redressing social inequities.
- Education reform must be systemic to be effective.
- Public engagement, community support, and adequate resources are essential to the success of public education.
- Independent community-based organizations must play a central role in building and sustaining broad support for quality public education and for achieving significant reform in the nation's public schools.

- Parents and caregivers should be involved in all attempts to improve public school.

(**Source:** PEN Web site)

TIPS FOR USING THE RESOURCE: School leaders and teachers could sign up to receive the free PEN Weekly news blast keep informed about national education topics of interest, grant opportunities and new programs. School leaders should learn about the LEFs in their area to take advantage of programs and funding that may be available to their district.

APPENDIX

Useful Web Sites

Achieve

➤ achieve.org

As a part of *Measures that Matter*, a joint effort by Achieve and The Education Trust to provide college- and career-ready assistance to states, the report *Making College and Career Readiness the Mission for High School: A Guide for State Policymakers* is particularly useful.

America's Promise Alliance

➤ americaspromise.org

This site offers a variety of research on dropout prevention and closing the graduation gap, including a compelling report documenting America's failure to educate its poor.

Betterhighschools.org

➤ betterhighschools.org

This site provides a collection of resources for high school improvement, including strategies for community engagement, dropout prevention, and strengthening the transition into and out of high school. Among the many resources, the *High School Dropout Quick Stats Fact Sheet* (2007) provides information on the students most likely to dropout.

Common Core State Standards Initiative

➤ corestandards.org

The Common Core State Standards Initiative envisions every state adopting a common set of college- and career-ready standards for all high school students.

Doing What Works: Research-Based Education Practices Online

➤ dww.ed.gov

Doing What Works (DWW) is a Web site sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education. The goal of DWW is to create an online library of resources that may help teachers, schools, districts, states, and technical assistance providers implement research-based instructional practice.

Edutopia

➤ edutopia.org

Edutopia's many resources include extensive information on project-based learning.

SMALLER
LEARNING COMMUNITIES
PROGRAM

*For general information on
the SLCP program, contact:*

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Team Leader
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U.S. Department of Education
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