



Indicator: All teachers integrate college and career guidance and support relevant to their subject areas into their taught curricula. (5109)

Explanation: The evidence review suggests that all teachers at high performing districts and schools advocate a culture of achievement that includes setting high expectations for students to be college and/or career ready. Doing so includes all teachers, in every content area, incorporating relevant college information and career guidance into the classes they teach for every student. Some examples of this might be all teachers calibrating communications regarding the steps for the college application process, alerting students to college application due dates and to scholarship opportunities, offering letters of recommendation and practical college application process navigation strategies.

Questions: How will the school ensure all teachers promote a culture of achievement? How will all teachers convey to all students high expectations for college and /or career readiness? What procedures will the school use to calibrate its communications about the college applications process? How will every teacher in every content area capitalize on opportunities to make deliberate connections between their content specific domains and college and career opportunities?

Many researchers talk about creating a college-going community in high schools, where the messages to students and families about college start early and remain consistent throughout the four-year experience. Conley, et al. (2010) write that “students experience tremendous college and career readiness benefits (both social and academic) when they learn in environments where adults intentionally emphasize the value and attainability of postsecondary education” (p. 19). According to Schneider (2006),

The most fundamental element of relational trust is advancing the best interests of the students, including their academic and social development. In the high school, this translates into shared goals among the staff that all students can go to college, and it is their personal responsibility to try and make that happen (p. 9).

However, teachers are the adults in a school who interact with students most regularly, most consistently, and often, most intensely. As such, they are a critical driver for students in the college readiness process and need to be attentive to the influence of their role.

How Teachers Can Have an Impact on Students’ College Application Goals and Outcomes

McClafferty, McDonough, and Nunez (2002) reinforce these ideas and provide a list of nine “principles of a college culture” to which school faculty should ideally adhere. The principles that teachers are best able to enact are: facilitating college talk with students and families, holding high and clear expectations for students, sharing information and resources, ensuring that students are prepared for testing through a rigorous curriculum, staying involved in the college process, and collaborating with counseling staff (p. 11).

Teachers ultimately have the most control over their own classroom environment, what they teach, and how they teach it. With this element of control, teachers have the ability to assert tremendous influence on students by actively incorporating college readiness skills, information, and personal anecdotes into their regular instruction. The need for rigor in college preparatory teaching – and transparency about why the work is rigorous – should not be underestimated (Schneider, 2006). Skills such as time management, organization, problem solving, and research should be explicitly taught to students, with opportunities for them to develop these skills for themselves. Quint, et al. (2008) rightfully point out that students will need both content knowledge and the above-mentioned skills in order to get into and succeed in college; accordingly, both must be explicitly taught.

Corwin and Tierney (2007) emphasize how teachers can help motivate students by sharing their own experiences with college, discussing the application process or costs with students, and by incorporating parts of the application process, such as essay writing, into their curricula. In this way, teachers are not only exposing students to material and information related to college, but they are also promoting a positive attitude about all of their students being able to attend college (Schneider, 2006).

College-Related Professional Development for Teachers

Corwin and Tierney (2007) also discuss the importance of college-related professional development for teachers and other staff members, especially for schools with underserved or unique populations. Teachers who are particularly astute in the college process, especially those leading programs like AVID, can maximize their impact by training their colleagues on ways to incorporate college into daily lessons. It is also encouraged for teachers to have vertical planning time – with teachers of the same content areas but different grade levels – to ensure that work becomes more rigorous and structured more like college-level work as students progress in school (Conley, et al., 2010). Team-based planning also facilitates teachers' knowledge of courses other than their own, allowing them to help students make connections between courses and to their own lives (Quint, et al., 2008).

Key Relationships in the College Readiness Process

Teachers can also gain insight into the college process by collaborating closely with the college counseling

staff at the school; these collaborative relationships will not only ensure that messaging to students is the same throughout the school, but it can also facilitate extra support for students during the college application process. Importantly, this collaboration must extend to students' families as well, as families must be able to trust the school staff helping their children decide their future steps, especially for those who may not have navigated the college process themselves (Schneider, 2006).

Above and beyond the instruction that occurs within the classroom, it is the teacher's supportive and mutually trusting relationships – with staff, students, and families – that can be most impactful on a student's decision making process about his or her future. Throughout the body of research on the topic, it is clear that when a teacher believes that a student can go to college and provides the appropriate instruction and supports for him or her to succeed, that student is empowered, prepared, and more likely to achieve that success.

References and Resources

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