

## Creating a College Going Culture

### Introduction

A college going culture is characterized by the expectation that all students have the opportunity to further their education and skills to be lifelong learners. Postsecondary pathways include the military, trade school, apprenticeships, associate degrees, and bachelor's degrees. Building a college going culture in your district is the responsibility of dedicated teachers, supportive staff, and administrators who want the best for all students. This guide contains tips and strategies to empower your students to strive for postsecondary access and attain fulfillment in their chosen career.

### Materials

- Buy-in from students, families, staff, teachers, and administrators
- College knowledge - including deadlines, admissions requirements, financial aid, etc.

### Instructions

- **Students: Establish a College Culture Calendar**
  - o 9<sup>th</sup> Grade
    - Complete interest inventory to identify Career Clusters
    - Research career pathways and necessary educational requirements
    - Visit a college or vocational school campus (in-person or virtually)
    - Have on-going visits with their CCR advisor as well as annual school counselor meetings
  - o 10<sup>th</sup> Grade
    - Re-evaluate goals and career interests
    - Identify colleges, post-graduate schools, and/or apprentice opportunities
    - College or vocational school visit
    - Shadow at least one job with a community professional
      - Possible event: "Lunch Time Grill" with community professionals
    - Obtain first part-time job or summer employment
    - Evaluate academic profile with career interest in mind
    - Pre-entrance exam preparation (PSAT or ACT)
  - o 11<sup>th</sup> Grade
    - Research and formulate a list of colleges to match career interest inventory and personal interest (sports, location, etc.)
      - Establish a timeline for college visits and applications
      - Attend local college fairs
    - Research financial aid and scholarship opportunities with parents
    - Rigorous course selection with college credit bearing courses



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- o 12<sup>th</sup> Grade
  - Narrow down college selection for application process THEN submit all college applications by the end of November
- **Inside Your School**
  - o School Appearance
    - Hang posters and brochures from trade, community, two-year, and four-year colleges on the walls
    - Use college pennants as décor
    - Have flyers in bathrooms, hallways, and the cafeteria to announce upcoming college entrance exams and test preparation classes
    - Have a higher education fact-of-the-day in the morning announcements
  - o Resources
    - Have college resource websites bookmarked on school computers to allow students the time in school to apply for admissions, financial aids, scholarships, etc.
    - Provide internet and technology resources for families to complete FAFSA
    - Organize a Career Day and/or have a College Fair
    - Have ACT and SAT prep books available in the library
    - Establish a senior seminar course for all seniors
      - Schedule a local bank representative to speak to seniors about finances
  - o Counselors office, CCR Advisors, and CFES Team
    - Hold individual conferences with each student, regardless of academic level, frequently, and EARLY to plant the seed
    - Host college information sessions with admissions officers
    - Help to schedule campus visits prior to junior year
    - Restructure the counseling office into a College & Career Center where students and parents can find information on scholarships, financial aid, applications, and career options
    - Host student alumni panel: Invite current college students and former high school alumni to speak
    - Lead small-group sessions on college issues (writing essays, getting recommendations, preparing for tests, applying for financial aid, transitioning to college life, living in a dorm, and planning for careers)
    - Organize a FAFSA night for parents and bring in a college admissions advisor to assist with form completion
    - Celebrate student acceptances!
  - o Staff
    - Encourage staff to represent their alma maters once a week with a college t-shirt day



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- Keep staff up to date on any changes in college admissions, graduation requirements, basic college entrance requirements, and testing
- Develop a college newsletter: Have a teacher spotlight each week or month describing their pathway to teaching
- Have a consistent and shared message that college/post-secondary programs are possible for all students no matter their background
- **Family Engagement**
  - Know that collaboration between the school district and the families is vital, especially to those with a first-generation bound student
  - College & Career Center should create a social media platform to share with parents
  - Utilize email blasts on college & career information
  - Have parents chaperone college visits
  - Morning coffee discussions, lunchtime grills, and/or evening events with students and CCR Advisors
    - Parent orientation discussing pathways and course selection for post-secondary options.

## Take it from here

- Building a college culture takes time, patience, and buy in from all staff members. Frequent and quality advisory time from staff is vital for students to stay motivated and knowledgeable of their options. Further, students need reflection time with a CCR Advisor to discuss career choices and pathways. With a positive and effective college going culture embedded in a district, as supported by CCR Advisors, students will forge their pathways to college and careers.