VUE

College Readiness Indicator Systems **Building Effective Supports for Students**

About the College Readiness Indicator Systems Initiative

This issue of *Voices in Urban Education* grew from the work of the College Readiness Indicator Systems (CRIS) initiative and was developed with the support of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The Annenberg Institute for School Reform (AISR) at Brown University and the John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities (JGC) at Stanford University have each received three-year grants from the Gates Foundation to work together to select a network of sites and develop models for College Readiness Indicator Systems. As part of this collaborative effort, AISR and JGC develop, test, and disseminate effective tools and resources that provide early diagnostic indications of what students need to become college ready. The two organizations work closely with the Consortium on Chicago School Research, which also has received a grant from the Gates Foundation to develop and test CRIS-related tools based on their work with the Chicago Public Schools. The CRIS sites are Dallas, New Visions for Public Schools (New York City), Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and San Jose, California.

For more information, visit http://annenberginstitute.org/cris

VUE

College Readiness Indicator Systems:

Building Effective Supports for Students

Higher Expectations: Moving Toward Indicators of College Readiness

Jacob Mishook

Districts need to develop robust measures to track their students' college readiness, starting as early as elementary school – and use those measures to put supports and interventions in place.

The past three decades of education reform in the United States, since the report *A Nation at Risk*, have seen a consistent ratcheting up of standards and expectations for students, teachers, and education leaders. For much of this time, the primary focus was on raising the troublingly low rates of high school graduation, concentrated especially in schools dubbed "dropout factories." At the same time, there has been a growing understanding that obtaining a high school diploma is not enough for young adults to compete for highly skilled jobs, and that well-paying jobs historically requiring only a high school diploma, such as those in the manufacturing sector, are disappearing. Having the skills and knowledge to enter and succeed in a postsecondary institution is now the standard to which our young people are being held, and where the opportunities for economic growth lie in the future.

Thus, we have now moved into an era of college readiness, where a broad range of actors – the Obama administration, multi-state collaboratives, local policymakers, major foundations, researchers, and community-based organizations – have reached considerable agreement that ensuring that all young people are prepared to succeed in college, whether or not they decide to pursue that path, is a key strategy for the United States to remain globally competitive. There is also an emerging research literature that recognizes that solid academic preparation, while necessary, is not sufficient to succeed in college. Both academic tenacity and college knowledge arm students with the "soft" skills necessary to understand the process for accessing higher education and the cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies, like persistence, that allow students to succeed in the college environment.

But to get from being aware of the urgent need for college readiness to actually ensuring postsecondary success for our nation's students, we need to address three questions. How do we know when a student is prepared for college? How do we get that information in time to support a struggling student, rather than after standardized test scores are in, when it's too late? And most important, how do we use that information to design effective supports and interventions?

Jacob Mishook is a senior research associate in district redesign and leadership at the Annenberg Institute for School Reform.

The concept of "leading indicators" for education was pioneered by the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University (AISR), along with early work on the opportunities and challenges of using data warehouses to support student achievement (Foley et al. 2008; Mieles & Foley 2005). AISR, with its focus on building the capacity of urban districts to improve educational outcomes for all students, has a long history documenting the work of districts around the development and use of indicators to improve the educational outcomes for students.

Developing leading indicators for college readiness builds naturally upon this work. In that earlier work, we found that although indicators exist to identify students at risk of dropping out of high school, few indicators of students' college readiness were currently in place, and few districts have linked indicators to practices and policies at the school and district levels in ways that would enable action to create meaningful, lasting change. One of the primary roles that districts and their partners can play today is to identify and develop a system of college readiness indicators – and tie those indicators to individualized supports and interventions.

That is the goal of the College Readiness Indicator Systems (CRIS) project, which brings together two research and reform support organizations – AISR and the John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities at Stanford University – and five district partners – Dallas Independent School District, New Visions for Public Schools in New York City, the School District of Philadelphia, Pittsburgh Public Schools, and San Jose Unified School District – with funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.[1]

The CRIS Network is working to address several key questions, including:

- Are the indicators that identify students who aren't on track for college readiness the same ones that will point to interventions for those students?

- What is the balance between having a parsimonious number of predictive indicators – typically measures of academic preparedness – and taking into account the harder-to-measure indicators of academic tenacity and "college knowledge," which also impact college readiness?

- In this fiscally uncertain time, how can districts leverage their limited resources to best support schools using data to identify "off-track" students and provide necessary interventions?

- How can external partners, including higher education institutions, the business community, and community-based organizations, support districts in a community-wide effort to ensure all students are college ready?

The articles in this issue of *Voices in Urban Education* focus on building robust, predictive, and nuanced college readiness indicator systems, connected to supports and interventions for students and drawing on the experience and expertise of the entire community, from K–12 systems to higher education to community-based organizations to local government.

………..

1   For more about CRIS, see the inside front cover of this issue of *VUE* and http://annenberginstitute.org/cris.

- Oded Gurantz and Graciela Borsato of the John W. Gardner Center at Stanford University describe the tri-level system of college readiness indicators they developed in their ongoing collaboration with the CRIS districts and present early findings from that work.

- Matthew Hewitson, Mary Martinez, and Emalie McGinnis – principals in San Jose Unified School District and participants in the CRIS work – talk about their role in building college readiness supports for all students in their schools and what it means to be college ready across K–12.

- Freeman Hrabowski III, president of the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, shares his long-time passion to increase the number of minority students majoring in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields and the supports those students need to succeed in higher education.

- Jamie Alter of New Visions for Public Schools, Shane Hall of Dallas Independent School District, and Marcy Lauck of San Jose Unified School District share their perspectives as CRIS liaisons to identify and refine not only college readiness indicators in their school systems, but also the ways those indicators are being used to support students who are off-track for college.

- Jacob Mishook, senior research associate at AISR, describes the connections between the college readiness work of CRIS and AISR's focus on "smart education systems" that ensure equitable access for all young people to an education that prepares them for college and career success, and for active and informed citizenship in our nation's democratic process.

The districts, school leaders, higher education institutions, community-based organizations, and researchers represented here are on the leading edge of understanding how to engage students with more demanding academic content, developing nuanced and parsimonious indicators of college readiness, and providing supports and interventions for those students who struggle with these higher expectations. Finally, there is also a growing awareness that in an environment with diminishing resources for school systems, it is only through community-wide advocacy and collaboration that districts will be able to provide all students with the tools and knowledge to succeed in the world beyond high school.

REFERENCES

Foley, E. J. Mishook, J. Thompson, M. Kubiak, J. Supovitz, and M. K. Rhude-Faust. 2008. *Beyond Test Scores: Leading Indicators for Education*. Providence, RI: Brown University, Annenberg Institute for School Reform. Available at http://annenberginstitute.org/publication/beyond-test-scores-leading-indicators-education.

Mieles, T., and E. Foley. 2005. *From Data to Decisions: Lessons from School Districts Using Data Warehousing*. Providence, RI: Brown University, Annenberg Institute for School Reform. Available at http://annenberginstitute.org/publication/data-decisions-lessons-school-districts-using-data-warehousing-0.

Building and Implementing a College Readiness Indicator System: Lessons from the First Two Years of the CRIS Initiative

Oded Gurantz and Graciela N. Borsato

The College Readiness Indicator System initiative has developed a menu of signals and supports of students' academic progress, tenacity, and college knowledge at the student, school, and district levels.

More students than ever are enrolling in college after high school, but many of them are not "college-ready" (Turner 2004). College readiness (CR) refers to the level of preparation students need in order to enroll and succeed in college (Conley 2007). Many school districts have Early Warning Systems (EWS) in place to identify students at risk of dropping out of high school or of not being college-eligible by the time they finish high school (Allensworth & Easton 2007), but these tend to focus on a small set of academic measures such as course credits and grade point average (GPA). Few of these systems incorporate other aspects of CR that address the necessary skills, attitudes, and competencies needed to attend college capable of earning a degree.

Oded Gurantz is a former senior policy analyst at the John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities at Stanford University and is currently pursuing doctoral studies at Stanford University. Graciela N. Borsato is a social science research associate at the John W. Gardner Center.

The College Readiness Indicator Systems (CRIS) initiative aims to develop and study the implementation of a system of signals and supports designed to significantly increase the number of students who graduate from high school ready to succeed in college.[1] To achieve this goal, the John W. Gardner Center is working with four of the CRIS districts to articulate efforts to address the CR gap: Dallas Independent School District, Pittsburgh Public Schools, San Jose Unified School District, and New Visions for Public Schools in New York City.

The CRIS framework (John W. Gardner Center 2011) builds upon and enhances existing EWS in three significant ways. First, the CRIS initiative advances a menu of indicators that focus beyond high school graduation and college eligibility to target CR. These indicators concentrate on more than just students' academic preparedness and include measures of students' knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes necessary to successfully access college and overcome obstacles on the road to college graduation.

Second, the CRIS initiative adopts a tri-level approach, premised on the idea that an effective set of indicators generates and uses data that reflect activities, processes, and outcomes at the individual, setting (e.g., classroom or school), and system (e.g., district) levels.

Finally, the CRIS initiative supports districts to effectively use indicators by utilizing an iterative "design-build" approach that regularly incorporates feedback from key stakeholders and affords flexibility and attention to local variation in capacity, needs, and

....

1   For more about the CRIS initiative, a partnership between the John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities and the Annenberg Institute for School Reform funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, see the inside front cover and preface of this issue of *VUE.*

opportunities. Many districts are rich in data but have substantial limitations when it comes to actually using data to inform decisions around the goal of CR. The CRIS initiative uses a Cycle of Inquiry (COI) tool to help districts articulate what needs to be in place for the effective use of indicators, which increases the likelihood that users will see indicators as valid, locally relevant, and practical and helps districts link indicators to actions that promote student success.

THE CRIS MENU OF INDICATORS

Staff from the John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities at Stanford University selected the indicators in the CRIS menu through an extensive literature review of high school factors that predict CR. An indicator is a variable that has a consistent and predictable relationship with CR for all students. All indicators in the CRIS menu measure aspects of CR that can be influenced through actions under the purview of K–12 teachers and administrators. For example, "knowledge of financial requirements for college" was included as an indicator because research shows that students and families may have incomplete or inaccurate information about the cost of college and the types of financial aid available, and this may influence postsecondary application and enrollment (Perna 2004). Districts have the ability to address this barrier through individual counseling or schoolwide dissemination of financial information. In addition to measuring actionable indicators, districts should also collect data on contextual factors – characteristics of students and the environment that one cannot change. For example, a higher level of parental education is related to increased CR (Pascarella et al. 2004). Even though parental education is not an easily malleable factor, it may be an important contextual factor

when determining the supports needed to promote students' CR.

The CRIS menu consists of indicators measuring three key dimensions of CR:

- **Academic Preparedness** refers to key academic content knowledge and cognitive strategies needed to succeed in doing college-level work. Examples of indicators of academic preparedness are GPA and availability of Advanced Placement (AP) courses.

- **Academic Tenacity** refers to the underlying beliefs and attitudes that drive student achievement. In addition to attendance and disciplinary infractions, indicators often used as proxies for academic tenacity, other indicators include student self-discipline and the extent to which teachers press students for effort and rigor.

- **College Knowledge** is the knowledge base and contextual skills that enable students to successfully access and navigate college. Examples of college knowledge indicators are students' knowledge of the financial requirements for college and high schools' promotion of a college-going culture.

The distinction between various dimensions may blur at times, as some indicators may simultaneously capture aspects of multiple dimensions, but each dimension encompasses separate skills that can be measured by distinct indicators.

TRI-LEVEL MEASUREMENT OF COLLEGE READINESS

Another unique feature of the CRIS initiative is the tri-level approach that organizes indicators into three levels:

- *At the individual level,* indicators measure students' personal progress toward CR. In addition to courses and credits, key individual-level indicators include knowledge about college requirements and students' goals for learning.

- *At the setting level,* indicators track the resources and opportunities for students provided by a classroom or school. These include teachers' efforts to push students to high levels of academic performance, college-going culture and resources, and instructional coherence and rigor. Setting-level indicators frequently result from aggregating student-level indicators. These types of setting-level indicators are designated in the CRIS menu as a "trend in" the corresponding individual-level indicator. For example, aggregating AP participation from the individual to the school level can identify differential patterns of CR across schools. Other setting-level indicators such as a consistent attendance policy cannot be measured at an individual level or are simply measured as either present or absent. For example, AP participation rates can be compared to the number of students with AP potential, as determined by such measures as standardized test results or teacher recommendations. This approach helps prevent capable students from missing out on important opportunities for college preparation by ensuring that each school has sufficient AP courses available, as well as a strategy in place for recruiting students into these courses and supports in place to help students succeed.

- *At the system level*, the focus of the indicators is on the district policies and funding infrastructures that impact the availability of CR supports, including guidance counselors, professional development for teachers, and resources to support effective data generation and use. System-level indicators are crucial in that they signal the extent to which district-level resources are in place to carry out an effective CR agenda. Due to space considerations, however, the remainder of this article focuses on individual- and setting-level indicators.

Figure 1. CRIS Menu: Individual and setting-level indicators

Individual-Level Indicators

ACADEMIC PREPAREDNESS	COLLEGE KNOWLEDGE	ACADEMIC TENACITY
• GPA • No failures in core subjects • Completion of X-level math and science courses • Maintaining level of achievement in transition years • Performance on HS exit and benchmark exams • Participation in college-level coursework/college prep curriculum (AP, IB, Honors, etc.) • SAT/ACT score	• Knowledge of admission criteria, application process, and financial requirements for college • Completion and submission of application(s) to college(s) • Meeting with college adviser and/or having post-graduation plan • Independent study skills (e.g., note taking and effective time management) • SAT/ACT participation	• Attendance • Disciplinary infractions • Mastery orientation* • Self-discipline**

* *Mastery orientation*, also known as *learning orientation*, refers to the desire to develop competence and improve one's skills.

** *Self-discipline* is the ability to forgo more appealing choices at the service of a higher goal.

Setting-Level Indicators

ACADEMIC PREPAREDNESS	COLLEGE KNOWLEDGE	ACADEMIC TENACITY
• Trends in individual level indicators of academic preparedness • Teacher effectiveness/quality • Dropout rates (or high school completion rates) • Availability of college-level coursework/college prep curriculum (AP, IB, Honors, etc.) • Consistent grading policy	• Trends in individual level indicators of college knowledge • College-going culture: adult expectations of students applying to/attending college	• Trends in individual-level indicators of academic tenacity • Consistent attendance policy • Consistent disciplinary policy • Perceived safety of school • Instructional scaffolding* • Academic press** • Support for autonomy***

* *Instructional scaffolding* consists of providing students with assistance so that they can complete challenging tasks and activities.

** *Academic press* refers to pushing students to work hard and to think hard.

*** *Autonomy* is a sense of control over the course of one's life. Students are more successful when the adults in their lives support their need for autonomy rather than giving them little choice about how to think or behave.

Figure 1 presents the individual and setting-level indicators in the CRIS menu organized according to the dimensions of academic preparedness, college knowledge, and academic tenacity.

THE DESIGN-BUILD APPROACH

The CRIS framework is not a "one-size-fits-all" approach that requires districts to eliminate what they have already developed; rather, it positions districts to select indicators attuned to their local context.

Selecting Indicators

By selecting one or more indicators for each "cell" (e.g., individual-level academic preparedness, setting-level college knowledge) from the CRIS menu, districts construct an indicator system that incorporates the core principles of the CR framework but also affords flexibility and attention to local variation in capacity, needs, and opportunities.

Figure 2 portrays two sample CRIS menus; though the two districts represented are hypothetical, the indicators

Figure 2. Sample menu of individual- and setting-level indicators at District 1 and District 2

District 1

DIMENSION OF COLLEGE READINESS	INDIVIDUAL LEVEL	SETTING LEVEL
Academic Preparedness	GPA	Availability of Advanced Placement courses
College Knowledge	Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) completion rates	Trends in FAFSA completion rates
Academic Tenacity	Attendance	Trends in individual-level attendance

District 2

DIMENSION OF COLLEGE READINESS	INDIVIDUAL LEVEL	SETTING LEVEL
Academic Preparedness	On-track indicator (includes GPA, course failures, and attendance)	Teacher effectiveness: Availability of college-level curriculum for Common Core State Standards implementation*
College Knowledge	Student knowledge of college-eligibility requirements	Trends in knowledge of college-eligibility requirements
Academic Tenacity	Attendance	Academic press

* The Common Core State Standards Initiative is a state-led effort to provide a clear and consistent framework to define the knowledge and skills students should have within their K–12 education careers so that they will graduate high school able to succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing academic college courses and in workforce training programs.

Figure 3. Cycle of Inquiry (COI) tool

INDICATOR	DATA COLLECTION	DATA ANALYSIS/ MONITORING	DECISION MAKING	ACTION
Why was this indicator chosen? *What* dimension/s of college readiness (AP, AT, CR) does this indicator measure?	*How* are indicator data collected? *Who* collects the data? *What* is the timeline? *Who* monitors the process of data collection?	*How* are data monitored (e.g., what kinds or reports are generated)? *Who* monitors the data? *What* is the timeline? *Who* monitors the process of data analysis?	*What* are the decision rules in place (e.g., cutoff scores or prevalence of an indicator that prompts the need for intervention or change in practice)? *What* additional data and/or strategies are needed to determine the appropriate supports? *Who* makes decisions? *Who* communicates decisions to relevant stakeholders? *Who* monitors the process of decision making?	*Who* carries out the action? *How*? *Who* monitors execution? *Who* monitors effectiveness?

in each cell come directly from our work with four CRIS school districts. For illustrative purposes, the menus show only one indicator per cell, but districts can (and frequently have) selected more than one indicator per cell. In the figure, District 1 selected GPA as their individual-level measure of academic preparedness. District 2 is using their "On-Track" indicator, a composite measure of GPA, course failures, and student attendance locally validated as predictive of high school graduation but also aligned with CRIS menu indicators. Each district has selected a different indicator to measure the same underly-ing construct of academic preparedness. Even when two districts select the same indicator, the specific ways in which the indicator signals CR will vary depending on the local context. For example, students in one district may need a cumulative GPA of 3.0 to be likely to place into college-level coursework at their local community college, whereas students in another district might require a 3.2 GPA. In addition, the effectiveness of specific interventions toward improving CR will also depend on local conditions.

Using the Cycle of Inquiry to Design an Indicator System

Rather than simply asking districts to collect more data, the CRIS project utilizes a Cycle of Inquiry (COI) tool (Figure 3) to help districts think through the conditions that need to be in place for effective use of their indicators. The COI walks districts through a set of questions, including: When are the data available? Who ensures that the data are entered accurately? At what threshold is action warranted? What actions are then taken? Who carries the actions out?

The process of creating a COI for each indicator is simple in theory but challenging in practice. Districts typically collect data for state or other accountability purposes, but this usually results in "lagging" indicators that assess student performance only at the end of the school year. In contrast, a well-designed COI creates "leading" indicators that allow districts to engage proactively with students before they go off-track.[2] This approach requires districts to carefully plan the purpose, timeline, and actions associated with their indicators, i.e., build the system for each indicator that will allow for its effective use. In many cases, indicators are best examined in conjunction, as one indicator by itself may not be sufficient to identify the next steps that should be taken by a teacher, school, or district.

In devising a COI, districts often need to engage their internal research department to set benchmarks to identify who needs additional support to graduate college ready, a task traditionally reserved for state or local

....

2   For more information on leading indicators, see the Annenberg Institute for School Reform report *Beyond Test Scores: Leading Indicators for Education*, available at annenberginstitute.org/ publication/beyond-test-scores-leading-indicators-education.

policy-makers. CRIS also asks districts to return frequently and refine their COIs, especially after examining the strengths and weaknesses of the implementation process, which can be a time-consuming undertaking.

Engaging in the COI requires districts to deeply reflect on the meaning of their selected indicators and to make explicit the decision rules and cut scores that connect those indicators to action. The examples that follow, using two hypothetical districts, are drawn from our work at all four of the CRIS sites we work with and convey the kinds of issues and decision making that are prompted by the COI process:

Individual-Level Academic Preparedness

Prior to joining the CRIS project, District 1 was using GPA to identify students who needed support in order to finish high school "college ready." Students with a cumulative GPA between 2.0 and 2.5 were recommended for tutoring, and students below 2.0 were provided more in-depth intervention. In the process of creating the COI, the district leaders realized that the GPA cut scores of 2.0 and 2.5 ensured that students completing high school were academically eligible to enroll in college and receive locally provided financial aid, but the cut scores were not linked to any postsecondary outcomes such as college completion rates or college-level placement rates at local community colleges. As a consequence, the district obtained National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) data, which includes the postsecondary attendance and graduation dates of high school graduates, and is now examining what level of high school GPA is associated with postsecondary completion for the district's graduates.

Setting-Level College Knowledge

District 1 is participating in a pilot program to track students' Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) completion and aggregated these data to create a school-level indicator of college knowledge. The district used the data from the first year of the pilot to create a set of benchmarks for the percentage of twelfth-grade students who completed the FAFSA each month between October and April, and these benchmarks were then used to articulate FAFSA completion goals for each school. The COI designates which central office staff is alerted each month when a school is below the FAFSA targets, and a meeting is scheduled with that school's counselors to work on outreach to students who have not yet completed their FAFSA forms. Schools that remain below the FAFSA targets throughout the year are engaged in additional conversations over the summer in order to ascertain the reasons for low completion and to promote a stronger CR focus in their school culture.

Individual-Level Academic Tenacity

District 1 chose to use attendance as an individual-level indicator of academic tenacity. Even though the district was already tracking attendance, initial conversations made clear that they had been using this as a "lagging" indicator, focusing on attendance at the end of the course semester. In addition, the district targeted students for intervention if their attendance rate was lower than the benchmark established by state policy as a minimum requirement to receive course credit. Engaging in the COI prompted the district to (a) reconsider whether attendance data should be examined daily, weekly, or monthly instead of once per semester, to allow for timely intervention; (b) make decisions as to when to measure attendance – missing all day, any period, or first and last period – as

well as how many days a student could miss before being flagged; and (c) revisit the cut-off attendance rate to determine whether it constitutes the optimal benchmark based on their local context. Engaging in the COI process prompted this district to give careful consideration to the timing of the data collection and the optimal cut-off scores in order to ensure prompt intervention with the largest number of students within the constraints of the resources available.

Setting-Level Academic Tenacity

District 1 selected trends in individual-student attendance as a setting-level indicator of academic tenacity. In addition to trends in attendance, District 2 was also initially interested in tracking trends in individual student self-discipline – the extent to which students are able to forgo more appealing choices at the service of their academic goals. After some brainstorming, the decision was made to pilot instead one of the Tripod Project surveys (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation 2010), which measure academic press, or the extent to which teachers press students for effort, perseverance, and rigor. This decision was based on the perception that teacher academic press was more actionable (e.g., through professional development) than were trends in student self-discipline. Another consideration was that the district was already administering the Tripod survey, and therefore the data on academic press was already available.

These examples show how the COI serves an important function: helping districts to think through matters of timely and efficient data collection and analysis and make decisions that will link the data to early intervention and availability of resources (e.g., funds, effort, time) required for implementation. Care must be taken to identify goals that are feasible, given the workload of the parties responsible
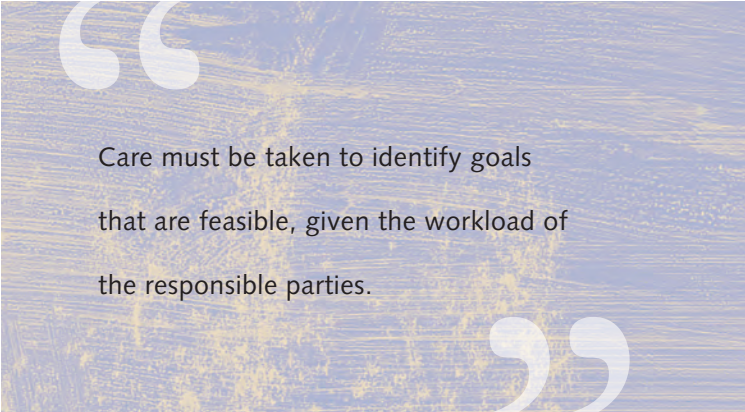
for utilizing and acting on the indicators. Engaging in the COI process also allows districts to foresee potential challenges and bottlenecks, including human resistance to change and internal politics, and to take proactive steps to handle those effectively.

LESSONS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Constructing and implementing a CRIS requires districts to undertake a number of technical, organizational, and political challenges. The first two years of this work have produced valuable lessons and helped identify key factors that influence the speed and depth at which districts can build their CRIS.
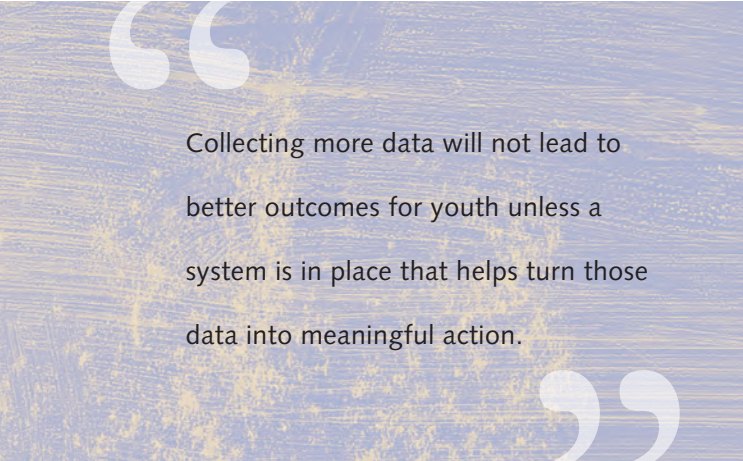
- *Cross-departmental buy-in:* A comprehensive CRIS will require input from many district stakeholders: district leadership for approval of a strategic plan that promotes the use of indicators; research departments to develop cut scores that signal CR; the IT department to effectively share data; principals, teachers, and other support services for implementation and intervention; and others. Involving these various stakeholders is needed to ensure the necessary cross-departmental buy-in required for effective implementation. The resources required to bring together these representatives can be substantial, and the process can potentially be challenging to staff who are being assigned new and unfamiliar roles and responsibilities.

- *Staff turnover:* Turnover of district staff and leadership has been particularly high in the large, urban districts participating in the project. Three of the four partner districts experienced superintendent turnover, the loss of the district's CRIS leader, or both. This turnover has resulted in ever-changing CRIS teams and, in some cases, loss of advocacy for the project, significantly blunting

momentum. Having a large, cross-disciplinary team helps mitigate this issue, but strong leadership is required to advocate for the importance and continuity of the CR work.

> Care must be taken to identify goals that are feasible, given the workload of the responsible parties.

- *Resource capacity:* Developing, implementing, and evaluating indicators requires considerable capacity, including: the staff needed to effectively support students identified as off-track; the ability to address the logistical difficulties associated with collecting indicator data, especially when it comes to student self-report of teachers' classroom practices; and the research capacity required in validating CR indicators. An effective CRIS will link indicators to specific measures of CR, but many districts do not have access to individual-level data on the postsecondary outcomes of their students. The necessary resources (time, human capital, and financial) need to be in place to ensure access to postsecondary data, the development of the COIs, and subsequent evaluation of interventions and supports.

- *Turning indicators into action:* The process of identifying indicators and collecting data is much more straightforward than deciding how to use the resulting data. To effectively use indicators, it is important to know what types of services are

available for "off-track" students, determine who accesses these services, and assess how well these various interventions impact the intended outcomes. Districts rarely have sufficient capacity to engage deeply in this type of inquiry. To complicate

> " Collecting more data will not lead to better outcomes for youth unless a system is in place that helps turn those data into meaningful action. "

matters, each school tends to offer a unique set of supports based on the priorities and resourcefulness of its leadership and on local partnerships. In addition to raising serious equity concerns, this also leaves teachers, counselors, and others with lots of data about which students need help, but little information on how to successfully intervene with students on a consistent basis.

- *Flexible data systems*: A CRIS will be more successful if the data are presented in a clear format, are pushed out to the intended user (instead of requiring the user to access one or more data systems to "pull" the data), and can be easily manipulated by the end user, for example, to examine student subgroups. The data infrastructure that schools use to implement their CRIS, which includes the hardware, software, and technical expertise of the IT department, may not be flexible enough to support how districts intend to use indicator data.

- *Indicator selection:* Districts may be interested in selecting indicators that they find meaningful to their local context or priorities, but do not appear on the CRIS menu. If that is the case, we encourage them to develop a plan to test the empirical relationship between their new indicator and CR, while simultaneously using a parallel indicator from the CRIS menu.

The first two years of the CRIS initiative have shown us that districts are increasingly concerned with CR and are re-evaluating existing practices and developing new ones to promote college access and success for more students. The issues discussed above shed light on the conditions that need to be in place for the successful implementation of a CRIS. Districts will develop a stronger CRIS if the indicators align with their strategic plans and internal capacity. Ultimately, collecting more data will not lead to better outcomes for youth unless a system is in place that helps turn those data into meaningful action. In the final year of the CRIS project, the JGC will continue to assist districts' COI development, validation of CR indicators, and efforts to track the effectiveness of supports and interventions. We will also pursue implementation research on the effective use of indicators with the goal of producing a set of CRIS-related tools for the wider field.

REFERENCES

Allensworth, E. M., and J. Q Easton. 2007. *What Matters for Staying On-Track and Graduating in Chicago Public High Schools: A Close Look at Course Grades, Failures, and Attendance in the Grade 9 Year.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago, Consortium on Chicago School Research.

Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. 2010. *Student Perceptions and the Measures of Effective Teaching Project.* Seattle, WA: Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Available for download at http://metproject.org/downloads/Student_Perceptions_092110.pdf.

Conley, D. T. 2007. *Redefining College Readiness.* Eugene, OR: Educational Policy Improvement Center.

John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities. 2011. "College Readiness Indicator Systems (CRIS) Toolkit." Interim product (November). Stanford, CA: Stanford University, JGC.

Pascarella, E. T., C. T. Pierson, G. C. Wolniak, and P. T. Terenzini. 2004. "First-Generation College Students: Additional Evidence on College Experiences and Outcomes," *Journal of Higher Education* 75, no. 3:249–284.

Perna, L. W. 2004. *Impact of Student Aid Program Design, Operations, and Marketing on the Formation of Family College-Going Plans and Resulting College-Going Behaviors of Potential Students.* Boston, MA: The Education Resources Institute.

Turner, S. 2004. "Going to College and Finishing College: Explaining Different Educational Outcomes." In *College Choices: The Economics of Where to Go, When to Go, and How to Pay for It,* edited by C. M. Hoxby. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

The K–12 College Readiness Pipeline in San Jose: Three Principals' Perspectives

Matthew Hewitson, Mary Martinez, and Emalie McGinnis

In San Jose, the principals of an elementary, middle, and high school in the same feeder cluster share data and align their indicators and supports to create K–12 college readiness pipeline.

District central offices provide centralized data and other support systems for schools, but it's in the schools where these systems are used on the ground to create a college-going culture, track student progress, and put college readiness supports and interventions in place. *VUE* guest editor Jacob Mishook spoke with the principals of three schools in the San Jose Unified School District that are part of the same feeder cluster. Matthew Hewitson is a second-year principal at Lincoln High School, a visual and performing arts magnet with a student enrollment of around 1,800 – 67 percent Hispanic and 55 percent eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. Mary Martinez is a fifth-year principal, most recently at Hoover Middle School, with 1,100 students and a predominantly Hispanic student population. Emalie McGinnis is in her second year as principal of Lowell Elementary School, a small campus with just over 400 students in K–5, with a

Matthew Hewitson is principal of Lincoln High School, Mary Martinez is principal of Hoover Middle School, and Emalie McGinnis is principal of Lowell Elementary School, all in San Jose Unified School District.

similar population to Hoover. They spoke about the successes and challenges of making sure their students are on track for college, starting in elementary school and continuing throughout middle school and high school.

ABOUT THE SAN JOSE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Tell us a little about the district.

EMALIE MCGINNIS

Our district is extremely diverse – it's very long and narrow and covers all ranges of economy, of geography, of life experience. I think that's one of the beauties of our district, but it's also probably its biggest challenge – how to serve students with that disparity in their experience of education.

MARY MARTINEZ

I was born and raised in Ohio, and I married a Mexican citizen and moved to Mexico, and that's why I became bilingual. We went back to California, and I was teaching in several different positions, but my last one was in a district that is predominantly white. I wanted to go into bilingual education and bilingualism to support struggling students in California. That's why I targeted SJUSD – for the diversity and the multitude of opportunities for educators to dive in and support struggling students, specifically Latino populations.

INDICATORS FOR COLLEGE READINESS

What kinds of data do you look at to know if your students are successful, and which are especially powerful?

MARY MARTINEZ

We look at attendance, behavior, academics, referrals, assessments, and different interventions that students are in, and the results from that, like GPA – all the things that can affect a student's performance. We combine a lot of the indicators into grade-level meetings with the teachers. We have a data manager who collects all the data and puts it up on a screen for teachers to look at. We also have one-to-one conferences, the administrator for the classroom and the teacher, four times per year. We look at the latest interim assessment, the number of Ds and Fs they're assigning to students, and the number of referrals outside class. We have conversations around where we need more support and ways to support the teachers and also find out what they're doing that's working really well so we can share that with the rest of the staff.

We have a data system called Infinite Campus for information such as attendance and tardiness. Another system called SWIS – Student Schoolwide Information System – tracks behavioral information. We can get a lot of information on students referred out of classes. We have a climate survey as well, given to students, staff, and parents, that gives us an idea about how students feel about the school environment: The teachers talk to me about college, if I have questions about my homework, I know who to ask – that type of question – and about respect and safety on campus, and then some of the same questions for the teachers.

EMALIE MCGINNIS

What's been very powerful for us this year is the introduction of Children's Progress, which is an adaptive computer assessment for kindergarten and first grade students who are not at benchmark around phonemic awareness and reading, and operations and numeracy. Our feeling is that if we shift our intervention down to K, 1, 2, and 3, by the time the high-stakes measures come in, we've already supported the students.

The climate survey Mary mentioned is a districtwide survey. There is also a districtwide college readiness survey used by the three sites in the San Jose CRIS network that was adapted by Hoover and Lowell from Lincoln High School's original version. Both sites ratcheted it down to appropriate levels of understanding for middle and elementary school students and held some of the questions constant across all those levels. We also have a survey that links to the forty-one developmental assets from Project Cornerstone – that's particularly helpful at addressing questions around climate and issues from the student perspective. Then we have the Student Success Team process – coming together as a team to talk about students and look at all different types of data and take a look at students from a 360-degree view. What I'm really excited about for next year is looking more at our writing performance assessments by grade level and being able to work one on one with teachers who don't feel comfortable teaching writing, or want to teach students who write to publish.

We've always been blessed with a lot of data. I think there's the opportunity with the [district's new] key performance measures [linked to college and career readiness] to get some standardization of what the data is so there's not just one person pulling the data at a site – it gets automated and centralized.

MATTHEW HEWITSON

Our district as a whole is fairly data savvy. We've had the benefit of having a technological infrastructure that makes a lot of data plans accessible to administrators and the teachers. We look at the state achievement data on an ongoing basis – that comes to us every summer – and one of the first things we do when the faculty gets back in August is pick that apart and drill down to a deep level.

Over the years as a district we have also been developing a number of our own internal assessments. At first, teachers around the district created them. In some subject areas such as math, the teachers created great benchmark exams, but not in others. Then we outsourced that to education consulting firms, but that didn't work well. Now we're back to doing some of our site-based benchmarks, in math particularly. In English we have writing proficiency assessments several times throughout the year. The grading is done by the whole English Department, and they also calibrate with other professionals so we can get valid assessments on our students' writing abilities.

We look at PSAT data. We use the EAP exam – an early assessment program from our California State University system in English and math for juniors – as a college readiness assessment tool. We look at our AP scores and our students' success in AP classes (see sidebar), SAT scores, and of course, ongoing course grades.

So there's a lot of different data points – one of the strengths in our district is the ability to bring all those together. We have a query program, Ease-E, where we can pull from all these banks of information – e-data, kids' grades, their behavioral interventions, matched with demographic information. That kind of efficient data mining makes our processes a lot easier.

How do school staff work in teams to analyze the data?

EMALIE MCGINNIS

Student Success Teams (SSTs) are a team of teachers, including the classroom teacher, who come together to talk about a student who isn't doing as well as would be hoped. The first step would be the teacher would sit down with the parent and go through

HIGH EXPECTATIONS FOR ALL: LINCOLN HIGH SCHOOL'S AP EQUITY PROGRAM

Matthew Hewitson

Four years ago, we had a fairly robust AP program, but we realized that there were much higher levels of participation by Caucasian, Asian, and high socioeconomic status (SES) students and very low levels of participation for Hispanic and low SES students. We really saw an opportunity gap there, and we also could see from the data that there were lots of students who we felt could do well in those classes but who were not signing up for them.

At the time, our AP U.S. history program was by far the biggest course. They do a huge amount of writing and get a huge amount of immediate feedback from the teacher. There was one teacher who taught AP U.S. history and a U.S. history course for English language learners. Over the course of the year, he would recruit students out of that class into his AP class, and these kids were legitimately passing his AP class with Cs or better, and a number of them were passing the AP exam as well.

We set out to increase AP enrollment and took down all sorts of institutional barriers – applications to fill out, teachers' recommendation, GPA requirements – except for hard academic prerequisites. Our message to students was that we would like everybody – *everybody* – to have at least one AP class, and that if you were ready to challenge yourself and make a commitment, we would find a way to help make you successful in that class. We created support systems for those students outside of class, especially tutoring based not on content but on skills like time management, note-taking skills, how to study for an exam. We created some events like an AP retreat at a YMCA camp in the mountains, targeting first-time AP kids, low-income kids, minority kids.

Four years ago, we had around 300 students, taking about 450 exams. Next year, we'll have 740 kids taking about 1,150 exams. Almost every kid we've added to the program is either Hispanic or a low socioeconomic status student. From the very beginning there was a high level of buy-in from the teachers. We had a few teachers that were not fans, and we made it clear to them that they could either get on board with us or we would invite them to no longer teach AP.

We stopped using the term "pass rates" because those are about the teachers, not the students. The goal for the teachers is not to increase your pass rates, but to increase the number of students to pass the exam. But for those who do want to talk about pass rates, when we started the program our pass rates were at or above national averages. A number of folks said, if you do this you're going to ruin your AP classes – you're going to water them down. That's been proven wrong, because the pass rates of traditional AP students have increased by about 5 or 6 percent. For students new to the program, about 25 percent of them are passing those exams. Those numbers are getting higher each year. When you consider that a lot of these kids don't have anywhere near the academic background or developed skill set that the traditional AP kids do, they're doing very well.

their concerns and come up with an action plan together, and in six weeks we would revisit it. What makes it different for us is that the team is representative: me, my English learner instructional coach, my intervention specialist, someone from our special education team and our dropout prevention team. The data that we look at comes from all those different points. The parents are often the earliest data provider – there's a lot of background and contextual information they can give on their students. We rely on that system when something is not working for a student, and then we have other mechanisms for looking at the data on a larger scale. But we really believe in our Success Team process. We had an SST for about half of our students this year. Our goal is to know our students by name and need.

MATTHEW HEWITSON

Our faculty and administrators are organized in professional learning communities of from two or three teachers to eight or nine that meet two to three times a month or more, for the most part organized around course-alike groups – for instance, all the tenth-grade world history teachers. We look at the data from a broad perspective, comparing the school to other schools around the county and state, and then we drill down by department, course, and individual teacher. Every August these course-alike groups review goals that were set the previous year, report on whether they accomplished their goals, and set new goals for the upcoming year. Those goals go through our curriculum council and eventually through my administrative team. Over the course of six or eight weeks after the goals are refined, they form the basis for our annual school plan. Everything else we do – our budget, spending, and curriculum decisions – has to align with that school plan.

What kind of training is needed for principals to get the most out of the data systems? How easy are they for someone who is not technically savvy?

EMALIE MCGINNIS

For me the thing I always come back to is not that there's information that we don't have, but how challenging it can be to put it all together. That probably impedes our progress more than anything else. Because unless you yourself are very diligent and put it all together into a package – how many people are really going to do that? How many principals are trained to have that level of database sophistication?

Investing in turnaround facilitation training is important – not so much focusing on one tool or template for these conversations, because whether I facilitate or use a table or sit in a circle or sit down with a teacher, we want to know what questions we want to answer. For facilitation training to be scaleable, it can't be the principal leading all of it – it can't be at a school of a hundred teachers. So how do we build capacity? As a principal, I'm looking at accountability in a positive way, but I'm not trying to run the whole show, because it's not tenable. You'll burn out or you'll just become overwhelmed.

MARY MARTINEZ

I agree with Emalie. We have a data manager on our CRIS team – we go through all that information biweekly. That's valuable to me in my one-to-one conferences with teachers, and out of that comes the information on how to move forward. But we need really strong leaders in the school that have the respect of the other staff, because we can't do everything.

FROM INDICATORS TO SUPPORTS AND INTERVENTIONS

You have the data, but how do you connect it to interventions, and how do you know when interventions are effective?

EMALIE MCGINNIS

One thing we haven't talked about is the measure of reading level – a literacy-based intervention – and then there's an online math program. The whole thing about the in-school intervention and out-of-school intervention is important – in looking at our data this year, I can't really say that putting all that money into an out-of-school intervention had as much of an impact as interventions in the school day. We did the morning math intervention, and we did see a positive change in where students ended up, but it pretty much mirrored the positive change we saw for a literacy intervention during the school day. You would think you wouldn't see a similar level of growth, given that math was supposed to be something where you can fast track student achievement, so it gives one pause.

MARY MARTINEZ
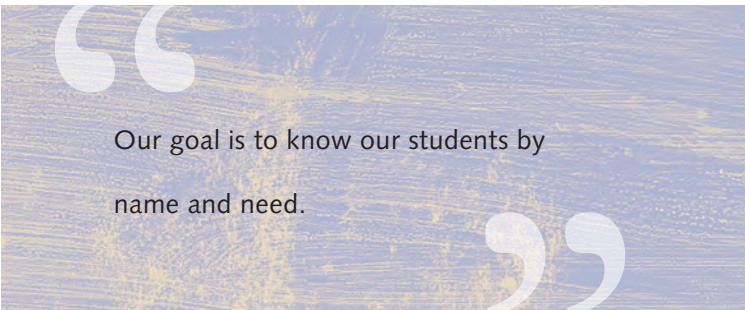
I wouldn't agree with that. We have an afterschool program that was so successful that we added two. A lot of it was students not understanding, not able to practice at home – they would come in after school and get a math class with one teacher, getting some input on how to do the problems and support. That improved not only their performance, but their confidence in themselves, which carried over to the classroom.

MATTHEW HEWITSON

We've tried a couple of pull-out interventions with mixed results. We've experimented with slotting intervention classes into our twice-a-week advisory periods to provide targeted re-teaching for groups of students who did not do well on a particular standard on an assessment. Initially we saw a big spike in grades, but we found that for students who weren't able to graduate from the intervention, over time their grades would sink back to where they were, and the student may have lost engagement and was not showing up.

Where we've seen the most success is where the teachers are doing constant, nonstop assessments within their own classrooms. They are the teachers that can adjust on the fly and realize halfway through a lesson, a third of my kids aren't getting it. We've got pockets of teachers who can do that, but we're not where we need to be yet as a faculty.

> " Our goal is to know our students by name and need. "

Are there any additional supports or information from the district central office around college readiness that would be helpful?

MARY MARTINEZ

What I see as a need for my school is a lot more services – like counseling services – for families who are struggling.

MATTHEW HEWITSON

We've gotten very good at working with our annual achievement data and goal setting around it. But we don't

have an effective process for gathering short-term data in real time and being able to turn around and do something with it within just a matter of a week or two.

Attendance and the social/emotional and mental health needs of our students are a huge gray area. Attendance is one area this CRIS grant is focusing on. We have significant numbers of kids that are missing significant numbers of days of school. We can tell how many kids are missing and for how many days, and we can look at other things like their grades, but we don't have a lot of information about the root causes, whether it's a transportation issue or a mental health issue, for example.

The CRIS grant has brought that to the forefront. At the same time, Dr. Matthews came in as superintendent, and he identified that early on as a priority. It's a new key piece of the strategic plan. Within the last couple of years, we've seen our district working with community partners to provide our students and families with the services they need so that when they do come to school, they can focus on being students. While that might not sound like it's directly a college readiness thing, it has a monumental impact on how well the students do in all these other efforts we're putting together.

THE K–12 COLLEGE READINESS PIPELINE

Has the language of college readiness reached down to the middle and elementary levels? Do you talk to your counterparts within the cluster about college readiness?

MARY MARTINEZ

One of questions that's covered in the [college readiness] survey is: I know what I need to do to prepare myself for college. We can see where for the elementary, middle, and high school student, there are different levels of their understanding of that question. It's really important for us to know where they are with that: I believe I can get to college, I know what I need to do to go to college, I know how much it costs to go to college, those types of questions. There's some student awareness, but it's not nearly where we want it to be. It's important that we start early, with developmentally appropriate measures, to get kids believing that they can go to college, to prepare themselves for college, to give them some sense that this is the expectation they have for themselves.

EMALIE MCGINNIS

We were able to talk to Matt, and he was sharing with us that cost [of college] is probably the biggest roadblock – not understanding the costs, not knowing how to apply for the FAFSA. We were able to bring in a speaker from our department of parent education to talk to our parents about preparing for college, which perhaps on the face of it seems a little strange or a little ahead, but we recognize that we have students who after our school will be at Lincoln.

MATTHEW HEWITSON

There are opportunities for collaboration when the principals of the school district meet twice a month in leadership network meetings. I work most closely with my immediate feeder schools – Hoover and a couple of the other middle schools. We've worked much more closely together over the last year than we ever have before and we've started to put together some authentic K–12 college readiness strands. It's still in the developing stages, but elementary is part of this program. We're collaborating on a K–12 writing strand so that from kindergarten on up through high school the kids are

hearing the same kind of terminology and being assessed in the same way. We backward-mapped the EAP writing assessment [the California college system's placement exam] down to kindergarten.

In a lot of the support systems we have now, like AP labs (see sidebar on page 19), we've got, say, an AP U.S. history teacher teaching an eleventh-grader basic five-paragraph essays skills. That's very expensive for us to pay that teacher – it's not a sustainable model. So we love the fact that we're moving to what we call a pre-AP program, kicking up the rigor and the key skill areas going all the way back to kindergarten. But without opportunities like the CRIS grant, those collaboration opportunities are not always there. Being a public high school administrator, there are a lot of days you're just trying to get through the day without the building burning down and the kids running off, and everyone else has their own goals to get through the day and their own environment on school campuses. Our district to some extent forces us to carve out the time to collaborate, and I'm glad they do, because it might not happen otherwise.

EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS

Do you connect with external organizations around college readiness or interventions?

EMALIE MCGINNIS

One partner for us this year is Sacred Heart, a community organization that does community action and mobilization, who worked with our parents this year on traffic safety and concerns. At the same time we were trying to bring in our parents and say, we want to tell you how to help your child at home. Attendance rates for the workshops were low – we weren't really getting down to the heart of the matter. And then we had this a-ha moment: We

might be really good educators, but we're not community organizers. And we have this group that comes in and is building capacity with our parents. They're going to work with us next year around the issue of literacy, and hopefully we'll go from seeing 30 percent of our target parents showing up to these meetings to 60 percent.

MARY MARTINEZ

We have two programs that are geared toward students: Afterschool All-Stars, who come from three to six and help kids with homework and activities, and Breakthrough, which students have to apply to and is all about getting kids ready for college. They go to Breakthrough classes after school for eight weeks and eight hours a day all summer long.

MATTHEW HEWITSON

Right now we have two key partnerships, unfortunately both short term. Gear Up out of San Jose State University provides two full-time counselors and one part-time counselor, for the most part graduate students working on their master's or PPS [Pupil Personnel Services] credentials. They work with one particular class – they started with these kids when they were in the sixth grade at Hoover, and now at Lincoln they are rising juniors. They meet constantly with these kids, evaluating their progress, identifying where they're falling down, and working with them for tutoring, or directing them to resources, or just somebody to talk to.

The UC Berkeley Fisher Fellows program provides a couple of counselors, graduate students working on advanced degrees, mostly in child development, who provide a lot of the same kind of services, except not limited to one particular class. The program is particularly geared toward getting more kids into the University of California system.

Between those two groups that's four more bodies, essentially college counselors, on our campus. And that's huge. We ourselves employ two full-time college counselors: one focuses more on college applications and readiness, and the other focuses more on at-risk students and graduation and is responsible for our AP equity initiative (see sidebar on page 19). Most of the high schools have one college counselor staffed by the district. One of my predecessors took a teaching position and turned it into a counseling position in the college and career center. Our teachers are supportive – they accept more students into their classes so that we can do that.

We're already making preparations for life without these two programs by developing a college readiness curriculum embedded in our social studies department, starting in the ninth grade where there's no state standard for social studies. Our ninth-grade geography teachers are going to hold college counseling workshops and trainings all through the fall. They might not be able to do one-to-one follow-up like the counselors do, but at least they can deliver a lot of the college knowledge and financial information that our students need.

Do you share data with community members and parents and families, and work with them about how their students are doing or what they can do at home?

MATTHEW HEWITSON

We do some limited work in that area. It's definitely an area of growth for us. We just went through our Western Association of Schools and Colleges accreditation process, which starts with a six-month self-study in which the parents and community members play a big role.

We've got a number of very active parent groups. We work a lot to develop interaction between our teachers and the parents of our English language learners. Five or six years ago those monthly meetings probably had three or four parents. Now we've got thirty or forty parents, and there's a lot of information presented around their student advocacy and how they can keep in close contact with teachers. We also work with other parent groups to make sure our communities are aware of the resources so they can be involved on a regular basis. Our grades are all online now so a parent can log in and check grades and attendance twenty-four hours a day.

We do several community meetings throughout the year where we will look at some of the broad achievement data at the school and welcome the parents to share in our goal setting. The school's site council, which looks closely at the data, has about six parents, who represent other parent groups. Earlier I mentioned the professional learning communities setting goals that become part of the school plan; one of the very first things that the site council does at the beginning of the year is approve that school plan. There is a regular discussion of what they are looking at – more of the general student data, say, world history classes in general, as opposed to specific teachers. The council reviews the plan and makes sure that the goals will address the instructional needs of the school.

That said, I can't claim that we have any great success with widespread authentic parent involvement with instructional issues. It is one of our priority goals within our six-year action plan. It's a huge struggle for us. We don't have a lot of problem getting them involved in events. We have lots of volunteers. They're always working with our arts program, at our football

games, doing fundraisers and stuff like that. But finding ways to keep a broad base of parents consistently involved with the instructional direction of the school, that's tough. We don't have any great answers for that.

COLLEGE READINESS, CURRICULUM, AND COMMON CORE STANDARDS IN HIGH SCHOOL

Has shifting to a greater focus on college readiness changed how you view your job as a principal?

MATTHEW HEWITSON

It really has. Only a little less than half our students graduate with A–G [University of California] eligibility. Two-thirds of those students are doing significant remediation prior to their first day at college, and there are a number of kids that are never even getting out of the remedial classes and get dropped by the university. It doesn't matter what the state achievement data show if only one-sixth of our kids are ready to hit the ground running in college. That's a really troubling statistic. For a long time, everything in education in our district and the state has been very content driven – max out these test scores that get published in the newspaper every summer. It's gotten us away from the goal of getting kids ready for life after high school.

How has an emphasis on college readiness and alignment with standards changed your curriculum?

MATTHEW HEWITSON

The two key alignments that we were looking at in our K–12 writing strand were with the common core standards and the EAP exam. We do a writing assessment in the eleventh grade. The

goal is to have students achieve satisfactory scores on that, and for students who fail that exam or score marginally, we are changing our standard senior-level English class to a writing-based curriculum, getting kids ready for their first year of college.

Curriculumwise, the shift to common core standards is a huge blessing. It's a total paradigm shift. We have been content driven for fifteen years, cramming in every last bit of information so students can memorize it and regurgitate it on these tests. The shift is to making sure that students have the skills that are necessary to go with all that content – writing, analysis, critical thinking. Our district curriculum department is well positioned to lead that shift. We've already been working on our key instructional initiative and asking our teachers to make pretty big structural changes to the way they conduct their lessons.

A lot of the curriculum resources in place are in the staging process right now – the on-the-ground changes in the classrooms probably won't come for another eighteen months. But there are a number of shifts – both directly and indirectly connected to college readiness – that I think are going to result in some profound increases in the number of kids who are ready for college success.

Supporting Minority Students in Science

FREEMAN A. HRABOWSKI III

At-risk, academically struggling students – especially young minority males – have reached high levels of achievement in STEM fields through a program focused on trust, high expectations, and effective college and career counseling.

When I arrived at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC), twenty-five years ago, I realized that large numbers of African American male students were not doing well academically, particularly in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). With Baltimore philanthropist Robert Meyerhoff, who was interested in supporting young black males, we started the Meyerhoff Scholars Program in 1988 to determine ways of increasing the number of African American males succeeding in these disciplines. Research showed then that many of these young black males were not succeeding in high school, and that they were often seen as disruptive and less engaged than other groups. There was evidence also that disproportionately low numbers of these students enrolled in advanced courses, and too few were entering and succeeding in college. It is troubling that research today shows similar results.

For more than twenty years, the Meyerhoff Program – which was broadened early on to include women,

Freeman A. Hrabowski III is president of the University of Maryland, Baltimore County.

students from other minority groups, and majority students interested in diversity issues – has helped students to achieve at the highest levels. Of the 700 students who have graduated from the program, more than 80 percent have gone on to graduate programs, and large numbers have received STEM Ph.D.'s and M.D./Ph.D.'s. Most important, half of the African American students have been male. The approach we have taken with all of the students has been strengths-based, as we are constantly helping students understand those assets they bring to the campus – from resilience and a determination to succeed to being tough-skinned because of previous challenging situations.

Our experience with the Meyerhoff Program has stimulated conversations among admission staff members, faculty, and staff in general about the need to help young African American males interview effectively for admission to the university. The fact is that large numbers of the applications we receive from African Americans are from young women, and we have found that faculty and staff often are more impressed by the enthusiastic and positive approach of these women in interviews. In contrast, young African American men tend to be less communicative and less willing to show enthusiasm. It became clear that we needed to explain to them how important it is when asked questions to demonstrate their passion for science through their answers. In fact, we essentially have been saying to male applicants that a "laid-back" approach will not be successful. Helping these African American males appreciate the need to think about their approach in interviews, in classes, and in preparation for their careers is critically important. It also has been helpful to encourage conversations among advisors, school counselors, and other faculty and staff – of all races – about

our approach to giving support to these students, including opportunities for interaction in groups and an emphasis on older black male students supporting younger students. Most important, we know we must ensure that young black males learn to interact with staff and students of all races so they will have broad support networks to help them as they face challenges.

Our experience with the Meyerhoff Program also has taught us the importance of building community among students to help them succeed academically, particularly in STEM. Other key components of the program include (1) peer support, (2) the involvement of caring adults, (3) assembling groups of students to talk freely about what they think and believe, and how they see the environment, (4) empowering students to do well in school, (5) giving students incentives for high achievement, (6) family involvement, and (7) providing community service opportunities – especially mentoring or supporting young boys. We've also learned important lessons from interviews with mothers and fathers of African American males in the Meyerhoff Program.[1] Though the individual experiences of families varied, many reported that they had emphasized high academic expectations; overcoming adversity; strong limit-setting and discipline; maintenance of family rituals; open,

…………..

1   Details of our conversations with parents, along with other lessons learned through the Meyerhoff program, are reported in our books on raising academically successful children, *Overcoming the Odds: Raising Academically Successful African American Young Women,* Freeman A. Hrabowski III, Kenneth I. Maton, Monica I. Greene, and Geoffrey L. Greif (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 2002), and *Beating the Odds: Raising Academically Successful African American Males,* Freeman A. Hrabowski III, Kenneth I. Maton, and Geoffrey L. Greif (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 1998).

consistent and strong communications; and open discussion of values. Interestingly, we have also learned lessons from some of these parents who can talk about their experiences with other sons who have not been as successful academically. We can often learn more from challenging and difficult cases than we can from successful ones.

Understanding the perspectives of experienced parents of academically successful black males is particularly important for school counselors because they and other educators have assumed many of the roles traditionally performed by parents. School counselors are great examples of positive role models. They can be particularly effective when they give students the chance to talk about their dreams and aspirations or provide them with opportunities to write about their experiences and thoughts. One challenge we face is that many young black men are not accustomed to expressing their feelings. However, once students trust a school counselor, they are often more willing and sufficiently comfortable to say what they truly think and feel.

It is important to help students dream broadly about possible careers – beyond the typical goals of sports and entertainment. One particularly effective strategy involves school counselors bringing in African American males from different professions to talk with the young men about their own stories, especially the challenges they faced when they were young. School counselors can also help students prepare for future careers by providing appropriate reading materials and opportunities for them to write and talk about what they've read, especially in relationship to their own lives. It's important for these students to know that it is possible to beat the odds.

At UMBC, we've worked closely with hundreds of high-achieving minority college students in the Meyerhoff Program, and simultaneously with a much younger group of at-risk students in the Choice Program, which we began in 1987 through the Shriver Center at UMBC (named for Sargent and Eunice Kennedy Shriver). UMBC students provide round-the-clock supervision for the young boys (mostly center-city African American youth), empowering them and engaging their families through a variety of services. Youth who enter the program typically fall into two categories: some are first-time offenders, and others come from households where drug use and other factors have put them at high risk. What we've learned from working with these young men over the past twenty years is similar to lessons learned in the Meyerhoff Program and with other African American males on campus. Key lessons include (1) teaching young boys and young men to listen to and analyze the advice they receive, (2) encouraging them to ask good questions, (3) helping them understand not to consider themselves victims, but rather to feel empowered to take ownership of their future, (4) working with students to identify their strengths, and (5) helping them recognize their ability to manage their own lives despite all kinds of problems. Giving African American students opportunities to write musical lyrics, for example, and to present their thoughts about important messages expressed through rhythm can be both inspiring and instructive.

The most important lesson we've learned through working with these different populations – high-achieving black males or first-time offenders – is that counselors and teachers can be supportive of these young black males by helping them learn to trust them, by letting students know how much they care, by setting high expectations for the students, by constantly emphasizing how much they believe in them, by focusing on the importance of hard work and respect for authority, and finally, by helping them develop a sense of self and a vision for their future.

HIGH SCHOOL TO COLLEGE TRANSITIONS: RELATIONSHIPS PAVE THE WAY

Eli Goldblatt

Eli Goldblatt is director of the first-year writing program at Temple University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

In 1970, I was applying to college from a decent suburban school outside of Washington, D.C. My father had died five years before; I was hurt and lost inside although my friends and teachers didn't know. Yet going to college was never in question for me. Nearly every adult in my mother's generation had gone to college, and most of my friends were busy talking about schools. My academic skills were weaker than my friends' because I'd gone to Army schools in earlier grades, but I was confident I could do the work in college. I didn't get into the schools I aspired to, but I found a place I liked and followed a well-paved road to start my adult life as others around me had done and were doing.

The kids I taught in high school years ago, and the kids I see sitting in comprehensive Philadelphia high schools today, face some of the same internal problems I faced years ago. Yet their next steps aren't assumed; high school and college don't seem parts of the same continuous system. A teenager sitting in her English class in a public high school in Philadelphia, Boston, or El Paso is likely to see nothing but a broken down street ahead, pockmarked and unnamed, leading a direction some have taken before but few have returned to describe. She doesn't really know what "they" will ask her to do in college, and truthfully the assignments she receives in her freshman composition class may well seem alien and impossible. Going to college for many students is a profoundly individual quest, and some do very well. Indeed, I have taught city students from unlovely schools who went on to be CPAs or elementary school principals. But often those are stories of personal triumph, of persevering when the way seemed utterly strange and lonely.

As director of a first-year writing (FYW) program in a large urban university, I've long helped to prepare college students for their later courses and prospective careers. At the same time, I visit regional high schools to understand their English curricula, work with faculty in regional community colleges on sharing ideas for writing pedagogy, and invest time and resources in neighborhood literacy initiatives that work with kids to enrich their reading and writing experiences and prepared them for college-level writing. Fewer and fewer students from Philadelphia public schools are attending Temple in recent years. I'd like to help reverse that trend with greater connection to city English teachers and their principals, to the staffs of afterschool programs, and to parent groups invested in making their children's literacy lives richer.

In my view, relationships that foster continuity across educational levels produce better transitions for students moving from high school to college and beyond. The highway that the privileged student contemplates is paved by social connections: guidance counselors who know colleges where previous students have succeeded, family members who went to college themselves, SAT tutors who teach the tricks of test taking, teachers who've heard from returning students about new college challenges. Even though college decisions are fraught with anxiety in a well-funded school, an underlying assumption of continuity from high school to college eases the worry. But for the kid

in a large urban school, college is a leap, and few can prepare even the best students for the environment ahead. Continuity through classroom knowledge, habits of mind, and shared expectations for the future give one group the advantage over the other in weathering the storms any first-year student will encounter.

One way to create that smoother passage to college is with lively interaction between high school and college teachers. At Temple, FYW faculty and I participate in the Instructional Rounds project through the Citi Postsecondary Success Program, which brings high school teachers into college writing classrooms and college instructors into high school classrooms in order to teach both sides what pedagogical practices work best, what expectations students will encounter in college, and how we can do a better job aligning our respective curricula to make the way smoother for striving students. We hope soon to begin working on a new thread in the English curriculum at one partner school to foster college preparatory writing from grades nine through twelve there.

At the same time, we work with city kids in afterschool settings to support literacy habits of mind valuable in college. My students and I engage actively with Tree House Books, a North Philadelphia nonprofit literary center for kids ages six to thirteen and their parents. More than a hundred Temple undergraduate and graduate volunteers work at Tree House each semester. In that storefront facility three blocks from campus, the children do their homework with college students, write and produce art for *The Ave* literary magazine, and perform their work aloud at regular readings in our Playhouse. In the summer they grow vegetables in the garden, develop oral histories of the neighborhood, and post podcasts of their findings on the Tree House website. I also work regularly with Philadelphia Futures, one of the best extracurricular enhancement programs for city high school students, in a summer workshop for students writing their college admissions essays. I arranged to have college faculty and students from the University of Arkansas visit Futures to learn about the model and bring back elements for their projects in rural eastern Arkansas. Through these and other programs, I believe interaction and conversation among teachers and students will pave the way for underserved schoolchildren to move into their young adult years in higher education.

In such efforts, we join with colleagues across the country. The Council of Writing Program Administrators, the national organization for college and university writing directors, has a strong commitment to access, retention, and completion through writing instruction and research on and off campuses. The National Writing Project supports best pedagogical practices in writing with seminars and summer programs for all teachers. The National Council of Teachers of English sponsors conferences, publications, research, and policy efforts to enrich writing and reading at every level of education. All three of these organizations, representing thousands of teachers and professors, came together recently to endorse and publish a valuable document called "The Framework for Success in Post-Secondary Writing" (http://wpacouncil.org/framework/). This position paper is now being used by school districts and college programs in many locations to sharpen the focus on pedagogies that will help make the dream of a college degree a reality for those who seek it. "Habits of Mind" is an excerpt from that document.

Habits of Mind

Excerpted from Council of Writing Program Administrators, National Council of Teachers of English, and the National Writing Project, Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing, 2011, available at http://wpacouncil.org/framework.

Habits of mind – ways of *approaching* learning that are both intellectual and practical – are crucial for all college-level learners. Beyond knowing particular facts or completing mandatory readings, certain habits of mind teach students to approach learning from an active stance, and thus help them be successful in a variety of fields and disciplines. These habits of mind are cultivated both inside and outside school, and teachers can do much to develop activities and assignments that foster the kind of thinking that lies behind these habits and prepare students for the kinds of learning they will experience in college.

Curiosity, the desire to know more about the world.

Curiosity is fostered when writers are encouraged to:

- use inquiry as a process to develop questions relevant for authentic audiences within a variety of disciplines;

- conduct research using methods for investigating questions appropriate to the discipline; and

- communicate their findings to multiple audiences inside and outside of school in writing, using discipline-appropriate conventions.

Openness, the willingness to consider new ways of being and thinking in the world.

Openness is fostered when writers are encouraged to:

- understand their own perspectives in order to find connections with those of others;

- practice different ways of gathering, investigating, developing, and representing information; and

- listen to the ideas and responses of others – both peers and instructors – to their writing.

Engagement, a sense of investment and involvement in learning.

Engagement is fostered when writers are encouraged to:

- make connections between their own ideas and those of others;

- find meanings new to them or build on existing meanings as a result of new connections; and

- act upon the new knowledge that they have discovered.

Creativity, the ability to use novel approaches for generating, investigating and representing ideas.

Creativity is fostered when writers are encouraged to:

- take risks by attempting explorations of new questions;

- use new methods to investigate questions; and

- represent what they have learned about those questions in a variety of ways.

Persistence, the ability to sustain interest in and attention to short- and long-term projects.

Persistence is fostered when writers are encouraged to:

- commit to exploring, in writing, a topic, idea, or demanding task;

- grapple with challenging ideas, texts, processes, or projects;

- follow through, over time, to completion of tasks, processes or projects; and

- consistently take advantage of in-class (peer and instructor responses) and out-of-class (writing or learning center support) opportunities to improve and refine their work.

Responsibility, the ability to take ownership of one's actions and understand the consequences of those actions for oneself and others.

Responsibility is fostered when writers are encouraged to:

- recognize their own role in learning;

- act on the understanding that learning is shared among the writer and a number of others – students, instructors, and the institution, as well as others engaged in the questions and/or fields in which the writer is interested; and

- engage with and incorporate the ideas of others, giving credit to those ideas in appropriate ways.

Flexibility, the ability to adapt to situations, expectations, or demands.

Flexibility is fostered when writers are encouraged to:

- understand that writing assignments can be approached in multiple ways, and that the best approach for the specific task depends on the writer's purpose, genre, and audience;

- recognize that conventions (such as formal and informal rules of content, organization, style, evidence, citation, mechanics, usage, register, and dialect) are dependent on discipline and context; and

- reflect on the choices they make in light of context, purpose, and audience.

Metacognition, the ability to reflect on one's own thinking as well as the individual and cultural processes and systems used to structure knowledge.

Metacognition is fostered when writers are encouraged to:

- become aware of the processes they use to think and write in a variety of disciplines and contexts;

- reflect on the texts that they have produced in a variety of contexts;

- understand connections among choices they have made in the texts and the audiences and purposes for which the texts are intended; and

- use what they learn from their reflections on one writing project to improve their writing on subsequent projects.

COLLEGE PREP FOR PARENTS

Tara Dunn

Tara Dunn is director of education at The Concilio in Dallas, Texas.

"Hispanic parents don't care about education." This is a statement I hear a lot in my community in North Texas, coming even from educated, typically well-informed community leaders (trust me, I have heard it in person more than once). After all, there is a lack of parent involvement in our schools, and Hispanic students are dropping out in alarming numbers – the attrition rate of Hispanic students in Dallas County for school year 2010-2011 was 43 percent, according to the Intercultural Development Research Association, based in San Antonio, Texas (Johnson 2011). Between 1998 and 2009, 52 percent of Hispanic high school graduates from the Dallas Independent School District enrolled in college. Of those who enrolled, only 10 percent graduated from college (Hall & Johnson 2011). Can it be that our Hispanic population in North Texas doesn't see the value of a college education?

In fact, Hispanic and African American parents are at least as likely to emphasize higher education as both white parents and the population as a whole (Immerwahr & Foleno 2000). This finding shatters a persistent stereotype: that low levels of preparation for college can be traced to parents who don't value higher education enough. The bigger picture is that many of the Hispanic parents we work with are from rural parts of their countries of origin and haven't had the chance to receive much education themselves. They tell us that they don't understand how the school system works in the United States and are looking for skills such as how to read a report card or figure out their student's grade point average. Possibly the biggest difference between native-born and immigrant parents we work with is that the immigrant parents are often uncomfortable asking questions of school leadership and staff. They may perceive education as the sole responsibility of the schools, and family participation might be viewed as interference with what trained professionals are supposed to do (Molland n.d.). So participating in a parent-teacher meeting, for example, is intimidating.

These barriers to participating in their children's education is why The Concilio, the community organization I work for in Dallas, has a focus on preparing parents for their roles and responsibilities as their children's biggest education champions. Our Parents Advocating for Student Excellence (PASE) program takes parents through nine weeks of all areas of navigating the educational system, emphasizing that all efforts made toward their children's academic careers are the means to an end: postsecondary education and success in the workforce. The PASE program is customized for parents who have children in elementary, middle, or high school and includes an orientation session, seven lessons (a new lesson is introduced every week for seven weeks), and a graduation ceremony. Lesson topics include Understanding the Education System, Academic Standards, Promoting Reading at Home, and Success After High School. Each class is taught twice on the same day, in the morning and the evening, for ninety minutes. Classes are taught in the language of the parents, such as English or Spanish. Offering each lesson in duplicate sessions makes participating more accessible for families. Furthermore, we provide childcare providers at each class for families who have young children. Our program and services are completely free of charge for families who participate.

Our grassroots style of recruiting participants through past parent graduates of the program is very effective with turnout; schools often share their discouragement at getting parents to attend anything. And the results of PASE speak for themselves: parents who graduate from our program have students who complete high school at a rate of 90.2 percent, and 78 percent enter postsecondary education.

Hispanics make up the majority of Dallas County students and also represent the largest ethnic group in the county at 38.9 percent.[2] They are clearly much of Dallas's present and future, and it is vitally important that we are producing a workforce – whether they will be heading corporations, supporting small businesses, working in community organizations, or serving as public officials – that can lead our community effectively. My community's success or failure depends on whether or not our children are being educated, and that starts with our parents. The Concilio is working hard to make sure the truth comes out about Hispanic parents – that they do care about education, they just need knowledge about the school system, and skills about advocating for their children with school and district staff – so that our kids and, therefore, all of us, have a better chance at success.

REFERENCES

Hall, S., and L. K. Johnson. 2011. *Early Indicators of Future College Success for Dallas Independent School District Graduates, 1998-2009*. Dallas, TX: Dallas Independent School District.

Immerwahr, J., with T. Foleno. 2000. *Great Expectations: How the Public and Parents – White, African-American and Hispanic – View Higher Education.* (May, #00-2). Washington, DC: National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education; New York: Public Agenda; Philadelphia, PA: Consortium for Policy Research in Education; Stanford, CA: National Center for Postsecondary Improvement, www.highereducation.org/reports/expectations/expectations.shtml.

Johnson, R. L. 2011. *Texas Public School Attrition Study, 2010-11.* San Antonio, Texas: Intercultural Development Research Association, www.idra.org/images/stories/IDRA_Attrition_Study_2011.pdf.

Molland, J. n.d. "Tips on Getting Involved in School," National PTA website, www.pta.org/topic_tips_on_getting_involved_in_school.asp.

....

2   See http://quickfacts.census.gov.
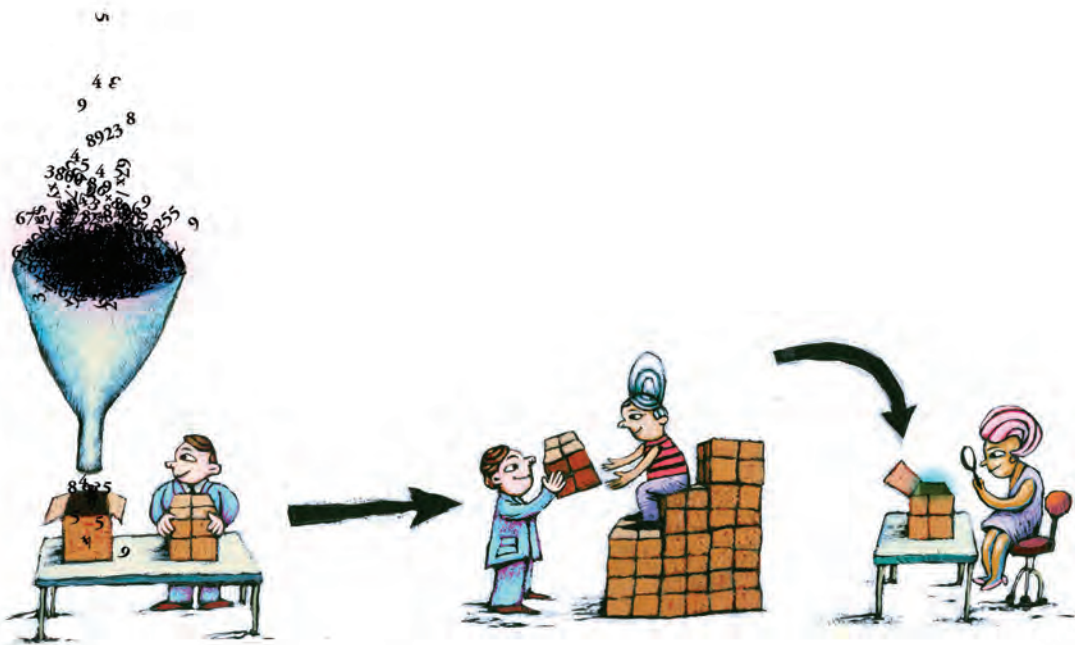
Helping Schools Measure and Support Their Students' College Readiness: The Central Office Perspective

Jamie Alter, Shane Hall, and Marcy Lauck

College readiness for all young people requires support from the district for all *its schools to make sure their students are prepared academically and know what they need to do to enter, pay for, and succeed in college.*

At the heart of the College Readiness Indicator Systems (CRIS) project is the work of staff within large, urban districts to not only develop indicators, but also connect those indicators with interventions and supports for students. Evaluating those student-based interventions and supports then sends signals back to the district about its effectiveness in ensuring all students are college ready.

A year and a half into the CRIS work, *VUE* guest editor Jacob Mishook corresponded with site liaisons from two districts and a partnership support organization that oversees seventy-six schools in New York City to better understand the indicators themselves, and also the connections being developed between those indicators and how they are being used in schools and classrooms. The three site liaisons are Jamie Alter from New Visions for Public Schools in New York City, Shane Hall from Dallas Independent School District, and Marcy Lauck from San Jose Unified School District.

Jamie Alter, formerly program coordinator for policy and research at New Visions for Public Schools, is a doctoral candidate at Teachers College, Columbia University. Shane Hall is senior analytics analyst at the Dallas Independent School District. Marcy Lauck is manager of continuous improvement at San Jose Unified School District.

How is your college readiness indicator system team working to use college readiness indicators to identify students who need supports?

JAMIE ALTER

Over the last five years, New Visions has partnered with DataCation to develop and roll out a comprehensive student information system in our seventy-five schools. This system captures students' progress beginning in the ninth grade, through high school graduation. In its current iteration, DataCation enables each school to inform and support instruction, professional development, curriculum planning, accountability, and policy.

New Visions' college readiness indicator system incorporates three research-based components of an effective student early warning system: clear benchmarks, easy-to-interpret and actionable data reports that synthesize data for different audiences, and real-time data reporting. New Visions' data work is informed by a set of clear benchmarks that provide the framework for understanding student performance and monitoring student progress. For example, the College Readiness Metric combines credit accumulation, core subject credit accumulation, Regents exam scores, and semester sequence – clearly indicating where a student needs to be on the graduation and college readiness trajectory over the course of eight semesters. We have also developed a set of tools (based on a set of clear benchmarks) designed for school staff, parents, and students. The School Snapshot, the Ninth-Grade Tracker, and the College Readiness Tracker convey data related to students' progress to graduation in a visually accessible, user-friendly format at different levels of aggregation. Functionality within the DataCation platform integrates data from different New York City Department of

Education (NYCDOE) data systems so that the data tools are always up-to-date and relevant. DataCation also allows schools to move from aggregated school-level reports to specific, data-rich student-level reports. The availability of real-time data at different levels of aggregation permits staff to monitor improvements or setbacks in student achievement and begin to identify patterns across time and within cohorts.

SHANE HALL

An early "quick win" pertains to the College Knowledge dimension.[1] Important measures for our district at the school level include completion/submission rates for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and ApplyTexas.

ApplyTexas is a common application by which a student can apply for admission to any public college or university in the State of Texas, as well as participating private institutions of higher education. To provide campus principals and counselors with information about their schools, we created a report on our MyData Portal system to which principals, teachers, and counselors can log in and see their schools' ApplyTexas completion rates, as well as how they compare with other high schools in Dallas Independent School District (ISD). Counselors reported that seeing how their schools compare with others fosters competition to raise ApplyTexas completion rates.

With FAFSA completion, Dallas ISD created another type of report on

....

1   For more on college knowledge and the other dimensions of college readiness (academic preparedness and academic tenacity), see the article "Building and Implementing a College Readiness Indicator System: Lessons from the First Two Years of the CRIS Initiative," by Oded Gurantz and Graciela N. Borsato, in this issue of *VUE*.

MyData Portal. Like the ApplyTexas report, campus-level users can view FAFSA submission and completion rates for their school compared to others. However, this report contains an added feature in which the user (usually a counselor) can download a spreadsheet of all students that shows their FAFSA completion status, or filter the data to capture only certain students, such as those with incomplete FAFSAs or who have not begun their application. This feature assists counselors by identifying students who need intervention in starting or completing their FAFSA. Dallas's participation in the national FAFSA pilot enables weekly updates to these data, helping ensure timely information for counselors to use.

Our CRIS team also has developed a new tool that we hope will better link indicators to intervention. This Excel-based tool combines academic achievement metrics with survey-based measures of key cognitive strategies to better assess students' academic preparedness. We hope to conduct a Year 2 study, piloting this tool in a limited number of middle and high school campuses, demonstrating the data and helping campus teams identify students in need of additional support.

MARCY LAUCK

The CRIS work specifically supports the San Jose Unified School District's (SJUSD) commitment to data-driven decision making. Our plan is to build on existing, good systems to reinforce behaviors that apply more resources to our students in most need. This is driven primarily by the publication of our Key Performance Measures (KPMs) that will both guide and hold the organization accountable for results. [2]

....

2   For more on San Jose Unified School District's Key Performance Measures, see www.sjusd.org/opportunity21/key-performance-measures.

From your position, how have you seen CRIS indicators used at the school level (school leadership, teaching, and counseling staff)?

SHANE HALL

School-level usage of the indicators has been somewhat limited overall. However, usage varies across campuses, with some schools using them more than others. Preparing for a new state assessment system (the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness, or STAAR) has dominated the time and attention of campuses, pushing other concerns to the background.

JAMIE ALTER

The student data management platform DataCation comprises five portals with an array of tools enabling educators, parents, and students to track student progress on college readiness indicators and use the data to make key decisions. For example, administrators and school leadership teams use real-time, school-level data on students' credit and Regents gaps to think through scheduling and programming strategies, tutoring and course recovery or course acceleration interventions, and instructional changes. Department and grade teams or individual teachers utilize the data tools to quickly drill down to student achievement at the individual level, identify students at risk, determine appropriate interventions and support, and continuously monitor improvement in student performance. Counselors use data about college readiness indicators to gather and communicate information on student progress, ensure proper programming for students, monitor interim progress, and monitor progress to graduation.

MARCY LAUCK

This has been the heart of CRIS work in San Jose. At all levels, indicators are tied to student supports, and as cycles of inquiry are refined, we are seeing encouraging improvements in student outcomes from improved attendance, better and more precise identification of student needs, increased participation and closing of opportunity gaps in Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) coursework, and increased GPAs for students benefiting from targeted, subject-specific interventions.

What are some examples of connecting indicators to interventions for students?

MARCY LAUCK

There are as many as there are indicators. At the high school level, students missing six or more days of school and with a D or F in any core course – an academic tenacity "cut point" – were assigned to teacher mentors. "AP Potential" students have been identified and recruited for participation in AP coursework. And high school students' gaps in college knowledge were identified in the College Readiness Survey and are being addressed by the college counselor in ninth-grade courses.

JAMIE ALTER

New Visions College Engagement and Career Readiness (CECR) staff supports schools in connecting indicators to interventions for students. Specifically, they are providing technical assistance to schools' College Access Teams in using data from the College Success Snapshot to set school-level college readiness goals and identify strategies and external resources to reach those goals. Data from the snapshot has helped schools examine their allocation of personnel and identify the need for formalized college guidance, such as dedicated programming to support students through the postsecondary transition or a college advisory course that allows students to engage in postsecondary research.

We are also assisting teachers in co-examining College Readiness Trackers with students and parents during one-on-one meetings, using the data to set goals and develop an academic plan (including key interventions to reach those goals) and co-monitoring their progress over time. Finally, we are supporting grade teams in identifying almost-on-track students, implementing targeted interventions to address areas such as their credit accumulation deficits, and tracking student progress to college readiness over time.

SHANE HALL

As I mentioned earlier, we are enabling high school counselors to download a spreadsheet of student-level FAFSA data, filtering by FAFSA completion status if they wish. Armed with this information, counselors can intervene, for instance, to help students complete their FAFSA applications or get applications started. This summer, Dallas ISD Counseling Services is participating in a summer college access study that examines two types of interventions – personalized support from a school counselor and a series of text message reminders – designed to help students complete necessary pre-enrollment tasks, such as financial aid applications, placement testing, and, where applicable, on-campus housing arrangements.

What is needed to make CRIS data more useful for school-level staff?

JAMIE ALTER

New Visions is seeking to expand and refine visualization tools that provide school-level staff with access to key

longitudinal data that can inform instructional and structural decisions and deepen capacity-building around data utilization by, for example, developing case studies about a school's effective data-use practices and providing staff with micro-level data and reports on student skill attainment connected to the Common Core State Standards.

SHANE HALL

Many Dallas schools face a struggle to meet state and federal accountability standards. The new STAAR system, a program of more rigorous state assessments, only increases this pressure. As a consequence, meeting accountability standards often dominates the work at the campus level. One of the most important things the CRIS team can do with the data and indicators is to present them in such a way that schools see that college readiness is linked to, not separate from, these accountability concerns. Improved success on STAAR exams boosts college readiness, and improved academic preparation and tenacity improves college readiness and boosts performance on these assessments.

Is your site tracking interventions and supports for students? In what ways? What else needs to happen to have a better sense of the effectiveness of the supports provided to "off-track" students?

MARCY LAUCK

As our CRIS schools pilot indicator development and related interventions for their at-risk students, juggling the many resources and connections among those who are invested in students' success remains a highly complex and time-consuming process. As we scale the work beyond our pilot schools, we will need to address the most effective

ways to systemically track interventions to keep everyone informed about the progress of students they support. To this end, the San Jose Unified School District is developing Key Performance Measures cross-functional study teams of fifteen to twenty participants to create action plans that will result in system momentum towards success on any given measure. The team will be co-led by senior managers within the organization and will meet approximately once a month. The district is also exploring the use of OnTrackE-DU's social networking platform to create a common understanding of the needs, status, and interventions for at-risk students to make more efficient use of available support resources, optimize existing programs, and share efforts and outcomes with other schools working on the same challenges.

JAMIE ALTER

We have developed a "Learning Framework," aligned with Common Core, the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessment consortium, and the new teacher evaluation system that defines best practices, systems, and strategies that should be present in all schools to produce growth in student outcomes.
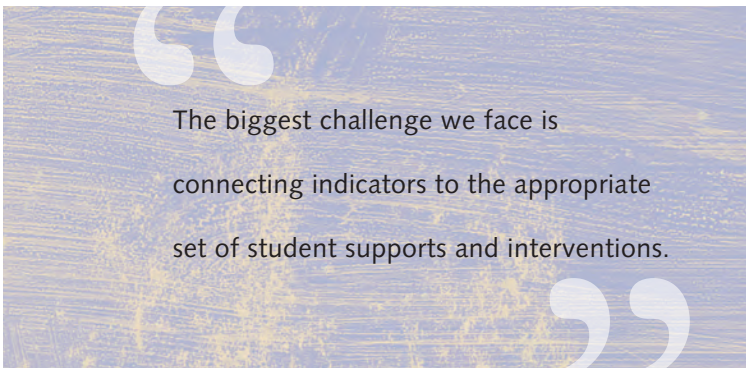
Based on longitudinal analysis conducted by the University of Chicago, the Learning Framework identifies five key areas of focus that will support schools' improvement of student achievement: Rigorous Ambitious Instruction; Leadership; Strong Professional Capacity; Student-Centered Learning Environment; and Parent and Community Engagement. New Visions has built out strategies and action items in support of these five areas. New Visions' knowledge management staff will then use the framework, together with a detailed analysis of school performance metrics and student outcomes, to judge and improve the effectiveness of specific

elements of programs and interventions. Together with increasingly sophisticated data analysis, it enables us to define the "black box" of classroom instruction, making transparent the effective school practices that can then be replicated and scaled.

What successes, opportunities, and challenges do you see for your district's college readiness indicator system?

MARCY LAUCK

Our teams have done a great job! But our next step and biggest challenge will be in scaling the CRIS efforts to guide the overall KPM cycles of inquiry at all forty-two schools, including the standardization of data collection and reporting the use of data and goal-setting based on those measures' cut points, and the monitoring of implementation strategies for interventions and supports based on the data analysis.

> The biggest challenge we face is connecting indicators to the appropriate set of student supports and interventions.

JAMIE ALTER

Much of the data in DataCation provides insight into a student's achievement at a single moment in time. New Visions is beginning to expand its thinking around student data to systematically look at the impact of strategies, teachers, or classes over time. Specifically, New Visions' longitudinal data

work helps the organization understand students' needs, challenges, and progress over the course of their four years in school and how this intersects with school structures. New Visions' "stock and flow maps" aggregate this longitudinal data at the school level to understand how aspects of a school or program contribute or impede students' growth and ultimate success.[3]

As we examine these maps, patterns emerge that suggest the root causes of visible outcomes and provide insight into areas needing improvement in schools' operations, staffing, and structure. We have also recently developed a College Success Snapshot that includes a range of college knowledge and postsecondary success indicators for graduates of New Visions' Partnership Support Organization schools. The College Success Snapshot is connected to the bottom line issues for high schools: graduation, postsecondary readiness, and college enrollment, and points to successes and areas for improvement in high school academic curriculum, and guidance and college access support services for students. The goal of this tool, and the corresponding theory of change, is that access to key pieces of postsecondary data will drive school-level decision making to inform positive postsecondary outcomes – including college enrollment and completion – for students.

New Visions has created a host of tools and supports to measure and foster academic preparedness and college knowledge. However, we have not

....

3   For more about stock and flow maps, see Fairchild, S., G. Carrino, B. Gunton, C. Soderquist, A. Hsiao, B. Donohue, and T. Farrell, *Student Progress to Graduation in New York City High Schools. Part II: Student Achievement as Stock and Flow: Reimagining Early Warning Systems for At-Risk Students* (New York, NY: New Visions for Public Schools, 2012, available for download at www.newvisions.org/publications).

focused on developing and tracking a set of academic tenacity indicators. Our CRIS work seeks to deepen our understanding of student academic tenacity, particularly students' ability to regulate their progress toward mastery on the Common Core State Standards.

SHANE HALL

The strength of Dallas Independent School District's CRIS is twofold: first, the early research we have done in college readiness and postsecondary enrollment and completion patterns provides us a picture of our graduates' level of college preparedness, as well as their levels of enrollment in and graduation from college. Prior to receiving the CRIS subaward, we completed an eleven-year longitudinal study of college enrollment and completion by our graduates. We further developed a College Readiness Measurement Model, which included indicators on content knowledge, cognitive strategies, academic behaviors, and college skills and awareness. It identified indicators in which we already possessed the needed data, as well as metrics in which additional data were needed. In short, Dallas ISD put a lot of thought into college readiness indicators.

Our second strength lies in the wealth of data we have as a district that provide valuable insight into our students' college readiness. Our MyData Portal contains extensive academic achievement data for measuring academic preparedness. We have bolstered these data with our College Readiness Survey, which includes measures related to key cognitive strategies, academic tenacity, and college knowledge. Dallas ISD also participates in the national FAFSA pilot, giving us ongoing access to FAFSA completion and submission details on our students. We successfully completed a three-year interlocal agreement for data sharing with the Dallas County Community College District, where many of our graduates enroll upon graduation from high school.

Dallas ISD has developed reliable indicators of college readiness and is working to develop others. However, the biggest challenge we face is connecting these indicators to the appropriate set of student supports and interventions that will help improve student college readiness. A second weakness is developing reliable setting-level indicators for academic tenacity. This dimension of college readiness remains the most elusive to measure, especially at a setting level. We are continuing our efforts to find better measures of tenacity, then find appropriate actions to foster student tenacity.

By the end of the CRIS-funded work, we hope to have a full set of indicators at the individual, setting, and district level for our College Readiness Measurement Model. We also hope that collaboration with campuses will help us identify appropriate interventions for different indicators. Support from district-level administration, which supervises principals, is essential. With a new superintendent, who has made college and career readiness a centerpiece of his improvement plan for Dallas ISD, we have an opportunity to maximize support for these indicators and related interventions.

College Readiness and Smart Education Systems

Jacob Mishook

A "smart education systems" connects a district, its partners, and an organized community to provide all its students with a comprehensive web of supports and opportunities, in and out of school, that will ensure college success.

In the past decade, educators and policy-makers have realized that graduation from high school, for many years a key metric of academic success for both students and school systems, is no longer enough to ensure economic success in adult life. Students must now graduate from high school ready and equipped to succeed, with-out remediation, in a higher education institution (Conley 2007) to access twenty-first-century jobs requiring critical thinking skills.

The move toward preparing students to be college ready has taken several forms. More rigorous academic standards, aligned with the knowledge and skills required for college, have been voluntarily adopted by most states. These Common Core State Standards have been developed for math and English language arts and are in the early stages of implementation. Two multi-state consortia are developing assessments tied to these higher

Jacob Mishook is a senior research associate in district redesign and leadership at the Annenberg Institute for School Reform.

standards, with the expectation that both standards and assessments will be rolled out in 2014.

Ensuring that all students are college ready poses very significant challenges to urban districts, which serve large numbers of poor and historically lower-performing subgroups. In New York City, for example, only one in four high school students is college ready (Santos 2011), and only 13 percent of African American and Latino students are college ready (Levin 2012). In Dallas, only 3 percent of African American students graduate ready for college (Howard 2012).

So what is the role of the school district in this new era of college readiness? Clearly the traditional, school-centered approach will not be sufficient to the task. Urban communities will require a more comprehensive response, including both in- and out-of-school educational opportunities for young people, as well as a diverse set of in-school education providers – a "portfolio model" – managed and supported effectively by the district.

Certainly districts (and again, urban districts even more so) are dealing with a number of policy crosscurrents that threaten a consistent focus on preparing students to succeed in college. During this economic recession and weak recovery, budgets have been slashed, falling most heavily on district central offices as they seek to preserve the jobs of principals and teachers on school sites. The continued growth of the charter school sector and the development of portfolio school districts, especially in large urban districts, has presented new challenges to district governance and mission. On the other hand, there has been an influx of federal resources to states and districts through the Race to the Top program, School Improvement Grants for the lowest-performing schools, and State-wide Longitudinal Data Systems. The

Obama administration has been clear in its guidance to states that college readiness needs to be woven into standards, assessments, and data systems.

And many forward-thinking districts, including those involved in the College Readiness Indicator Systems (CRIS) project, have taken upon themselves the task of building indicator systems that can identify students who are off-track to be prepared for college and are beginning to tie indicators to supports and interventions for those off-track students.[1] Furthermore, they are collaborating with higher education institutions and community-based organizations to share data about students' trajectories through K–12 and persistence and graduation from college.

THE ANNENBERG INSTITUTE AND COLLEGE READINESS

The CRIS project continues a decade-long approach by the Annenberg Institute for School Reform (AISR) to developing capacity, tools, and resources for districts and communities to better prepare students for these higher expectations. The focus on college readiness indicators by AISR weaves three interrelated strands of its work over the past decade – the "smart district" approach, which includes the use of data to inform decision making at the district, school, and classroom levels; community organizing and engagement for school reform, which has provided bottom-up accountability for ensuring college readiness for all students; and the notion of a "smart education system," which reconceptualizes student learning, taking into account the opportunities inside and

....

1   For more about the CRIS initiative, a partnership between the John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities and the Annenberg Institute for School Reform funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, see the inside front cover and preface of this issue of *VUE*.

outside of schools, requiring a high level of collaboration between districts and their communities.

Our work points the way toward educational systems that use multiple forms of data about students, value cross-sector partnerships to provide students with needed supports, and demand mutual accountability for the success of young people across institutions: K–12 systems, higher education institutions, community-based organizations, and city governments.

DESIGNING "SMART DISTRICTS"

The "Smart District" concept emerged from School Communities that Work: A Task Force on the Future of Urban Districts, convened by AISR, which brought together researchers, policymakers, and district leaders to reflect and strategize on the future of the American school district. School districts, historically, have been reactive to state and federal policies and derided for inefficient practices and staff unresponsive to school needs (Allen et al. 2005). A "smart district," by contrast, is one that is nimble and responsive, while at the same time keeping a strong commitment to results, equity, and community (School Communities that Work 2002).

Even before the current focus on college readiness, the Task Force understood many of the key issues and barriers facing school districts in designing and building a system to prepare all students to achieve at high levels, including the reliance on narrow measures of achievement, a lack of connections between data and effective supports and interventions for students, and the lack of effective collaboration between districts and communities around a notion of mutual accountability for student outcomes (Ucelli, Foley & Mishook 2007).

One of the primary tools to emerge from the Task Force was the Central Office Review for Results and Equity, or CORRE, which has been implemented in a dozen urban districts across the country. CORRE is a facilitated process where a group of stakeholders, both inside and outside the school district, come together to pose questions around major district issues and collect data from central office leaders, principals, teachers, school board members, parents, students, and other community members. The analysis and set of recommendations developed by AISR touches on district operations, connections with community, and central office culture.

Across the CORREs there have been findings and recommendations relevant to building a system to support college readiness. For example, districts would, in their mission statements and high-level documents, routinely talk about having high expectations for all students. However, in practice, expectations for students across all stakeholder groups were mixed. "College isn't for everyone" was a typical statement. Beyond the district mission statements, it was clear that the actual distribution of resources across these districts did not match the rhetoric of high expectations. For example, in one large district in the South, the availability of Advanced Placement courses across schools varied widely and was related to schoolwide socio-economic status. Addressing these expectation and resource gaps after the release of the CORRE reports became the work of the districts and the trained CORRE teams.

THE USE OF DATA IN SMART DISTRICTS

The use of data to improve education poses both technical, analytical, and cultural issues. The passage of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2002 led

to more stringent and consequential accountability systems for students, schools, and districts. Tracking student achievement data – and designing user-friendly ways to use that data effectively to impact classroom practice – became increasingly important. At the same time, developments in database technology opened up new possibilities for districts to create rich data systems with multiple indicators of student achievement and development. However, most districts relied on multiple, antiquated, non-user-friendly databases, which existed on different computers in different locations in different formats. Mieles and Foley (2005) provided one of the earliest descriptions of the technical challenges in building data warehouses that could link together these multiple, and often cumbersome, data systems in a user-friendly format for central office staff, principals, and teachers.

Building on that work, from 2006 to 2009 the Annenberg Institute investigated data use and indicators in four districts – Hamilton County (TN), Montgomery County (MD), Naperville (IL), and Philadelphia. Drawing on the concept of "leading indicators" from business and economics, we wanted to learn if districts looked at indicators that are:

- *Timely and actionable*: They are reported with enough time to change a course of action in order to improve lagging outcomes.

- *Benchmarked*: Users understand what constitutes improvement on leading indicators, whether through longitudinal comparison of the same data or through research-based criteria.

- *Powerful*: They can offer targets for improvement and show progress – or a lack of progress – toward a desired outcome before that outcome can be expected to occur.

(Foley et al. 2008; see also Supovitz, Foley & Mishook 2012)

Many of the indicators used by these districts focused on key transition points in the early grades (e.g., reading by third grade), or on-track/off-track indicators in middle and high school that predicted whether a student would graduate or drop out, such as being "over-aged and under-credited" at the end of ninth grade. Beyond the indicators themselves, however, these districts had invested heavily in creating a "culture of data use" in their schools. Teachers and principals were comfortable examining data. As importantly, adults in these school systems had the precious resource of time to look at indicators and decide on courses of action for students needing additional supports and interventions.

Data use must go beyond the focus on student achievement to provide information to the entire system about the effectiveness of its supports for teachers and students. In AISR's Smart District Framework (Foley & Sigler 2009; Ucelli, Foley & Mishook 2007), districts' responsibilities are:

1. Provide schools, students, and teachers with needed and timely supports and interventions.

2. Ensure that schools have the power and resources to make good decisions.

3. Make decisions and hold people throughout the system accountable for using indicators of school and district performance and practices.

The ability of teachers and entire schools to use data to improve practice, then, is mediated by district capacity to accomplish numbers 1 and 2, not just 3. And while a number of studies point to district weaknesses in this regard (Corcoran 2007; Honig et al. 2010; Supovitz 2006), the research on data systems has been preoccupied with its effects on students, teachers, and schools, rather than on the policies, practices, and culture of the larger system.

In our leading indicators research, for example, we found that nearly all indicators were focused on schools and not on measuring the impact of district actors, policies, and funds. Central office staff were very interested in measuring the impact of their work but did not know how to effectively measure their supports. This oversight threatens to exacerbate the imbalance between data use for accountability versus support rather than reduce it. In addition, it undermines practitioners' and policymakers' understanding of best practice at the district or system level, in contrast to the school level.

SHIFTING TOWARD INDICATORS FOR COLLEGE READINESS

At the time of the leading indicators work, these districts were primarily focused on indicators that predicted success defined as high school graduation. As we have shifted to a set of higher expectations for students defined as college readiness, not only will the technical work of building data systems need to shift to include different indicators, it will quickly become apparent that school districts cannot do this work alone.

At the very least, a shift to college readiness indicators will require much closer relationships with institutions of higher education, which receive and educate students from K–12 systems – and often complain about the very high numbers of students requiring remedial coursework. But to focus purely on developing data systems across P–16 systems will miss the multitude of organizations within communities that provide out-of-school learning experiences for students, college access and college knowledge services, and mentoring and tutoring programs. And it will not take into account the work of education organizing and engagement

work being done by parent and student organizations, often facilitated and supported by organizations like AISR.

SMART EDUCATION SYSTEMS AND COLLEGE READINESS

There is increasing support in the United States for a system of learning for young people that encompasses not only time in school spent on "traditional" subjects, but connects them to out-of-school time (OST), deep and multiple connections to higher education and careers, and deeper relationships with related social supports like health care.[2] This reconceptualization of learning for young people outside of the regular school day and the school walls will require significant collaboration across educational, municipal, cultural, and private organizations to create such a "smart education system" (Simmons 2006).

Partnerships between schools and external organizations providing extended time out-of-school are needed to create opportunities for students to be exposed to meaningful applications of academic content as outlined in the Common Core State Standards in English language arts and mathematics, as well as more traditional social and cultural supports.

Indeed, this shift toward college readiness can provide a frame around which communities and school districts organize and collaborate. However, the focus on college readiness indicators is currently being conceived as a district- or state-focused one and does not take into account the ways in which external organizations – higher education institutions, community-based organizations, and networks of external providers – provide needed

....

2   See, for example, the Broader, Bolder Approach to Education agenda: www. boldapproach.org.

college readiness supports for students outside of schools. While data systems being built and refined through initiatives like CRIS are critical as far as understanding how students are being prepared for postsecondary education, there is often still a disconnect between the college readiness work being done and data collected within schools and outside of schools. This is why AISR has taken a systems-level approach to college readiness and is seeking to better understand the intersections between schools and outside organizations.

In the districts where we work, there is a clear desire for tighter collaboration between school districts and external organizations, whether that's the local community college district, parent advocacy organizations, or local college access partners. Building a smart education system with college readiness as a main pillar, however, poses technical, political, and cultural challenges.

FOCUSING ON ALL ASPECTS OF COLLEGE READINESS

Not surprisingly, most college readiness initiatives both inside and outside of school districts focus heavily on students' academic preparation and less so on developing students' "academic tenacity" or "college knowledge" (AISR 2012a). In communities where there are initiatives focused on tenacity and college knowledge, districts and external partners need to be clear about how to measure those initiatives, since readily available data like attendance and grades will not be sufficient. In Dallas, for example, the district contracts with three external college access partners to provide services that directly touch on college knowledge – for example, preparing college applications, FAFSA, and mentoring for students who are in

college.[3] Dallas ISD has been careful to document the work of those partners to develop indicators of effectiveness and is conducting ongoing internal evaluation of that work.

DATA SHARING

One of the main avenues for increased collaboration around college readiness is through the sharing of data. Analogous to the findings from AISR's data warehousing study (Mieles & Foley 2005), information about young people resides in different institutions, in different databases, in different formats, and often for different purposes. Until recently, districts have lacked the ability (or incentives) to systematically and easily share data with external organizations.

That is beginning to change, though there are still formidable technical and legal barriers. In Chicago, for example, Chicago Public Schools, partly through a grant from the Wallace Foundation, has partnered with the city, the library system, the parks department, and nonprofit organizations to share data about children's in- and out-of-school time experiences (Mishook & Raynor 2010). Several CRIS sites are beginning to explore ways to share data across institutions. The Texas College Access Network (TxCAN) has been bringing together higher education institutions, community-based organizations, civic and philanthropic umbrella organizations, and several districts in North Texas (including Dallas ISD) to start working through the tangle of technical, privacy, and institutional issues to share data more widely. And in New

....

3   For more on Dallas ISD's work in this area, see the article "Helping Schools Measure and Support Their Students' College Readiness: The Central Office View," by Jamie Alter, Shane Hall, and Marcy Lauck, in this issue of *VUE*.

York City, the City University of New York (CUNY) has partnered with the New York Department of Education to share data on the large number of high school graduates that attend the CUNY system (AISR 2012b).

> We need to broaden the definition of "supports" to include actions at the central office and partner support organizations.

TRACKING INTERVENTIONS AND SUPPORTS IN A SMART EDUCATION SYSTEM

Building effective college readiness indicator systems is critically important, but it cannot stop at determining whether a student is "on-track" or "off-track." Just as important is measuring the effectiveness of supports and interventions at the classroom, school, and system (district and community) levels and tying those measurements and evaluations back to the original "on-track" and "off-track" indicators. These supports and interventions can be in-school or out-of-school; we need data systems that can seamlessly track the effectiveness of both types. It is also critical to note that the traditional discussion around supports and interventions is focused almost exclusively on students and schools, which is insufficient. We need to broaden the definition of "supports" to include actions at the central office and partner support organization levels as well.

BUILDING COMMUNITY DEMAND AND COMPREHENSIVE SUPPORTS FOR COLLEGE READINESS

The term "college ready" has been widely adopted and embraced by policy-makers, district leaders, and other reform support organizations. However, in many communities, there is uncertainty and confusion about what "college ready" means. How do I know my child is college ready or not? Does this mean all students should go to college? Why is a high school diploma no longer considered a strong indicator of college readiness? Why do opportunities for college preparatory curriculum exist at some schools and not others?

There is a role here for organizing groups, community-based organizations, chambers of commerce, and civic umbrella organizations to:

- explain clearly what is meant by "college readiness";
- select clear criteria for measuring school systems on college readiness;
- build community demand for college readiness;
- coordinate supports for students to prepare them for college, including financial assistance.

There are already examples of these community-wide advocacy and coordinating organizations. Strive in Cincinnati has brought together a multitude of local organizations to advocate and support college readiness and has inspired Strive-like organizations in other cities, including Dallas, a CRIS site. SAY Yes to Education in Syracuse is coordinating college readiness supports for students, and in Pittsburgh (another CRIS site), the Promise has guaranteed a level of financial assistance for all Pittsburgh Public Schools graduates who maintain a B average in a higher education institution.

COLLEGE READINESS: A COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY

The increased expectations for students to be college ready has presented additional challenges for urban districts already struggling to increase high school graduation rates and maintain supports and services in this severe economic downturn. These financial realities, combined with political shifts, have increased pressure on large, urban districts to adopt a choice-based portfolio system that would radically shrink the size of district central offices and decentralize authority and decision-making ability to schools.

While there is a case to be made for this type of educational system, it privileges autonomy over collective action and responsibility, as well as the district's emerging role in providing a nuanced picture of college readiness for all students. The work of AISR over the past decade demonstrates that only a system-wide commitment – to district capacity, external partnerships, data sharing, understanding community needs and resources, and equity – can ensure that urban communities can collectively rise to the challenge of ensuring all students are college ready.

REFERENCES

Allen, L., E. Osthoff, P. White, and J. Swanson. 2005. *A Delicate Balance: District Policies and Classroom Practice*. Chicago, IL: Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform.

Annenberg Institute for School Reform, Brown University. 2012a. *College Readiness: A Guide to the Field*. Providence, RI: Brown University, AISR. Available for download at http://annenberginstitute.org/publication/college-readiness-guide-field.

Annenberg Institute for School Reform, Brown University. 2012b. *Data Collaboration in New York City: The Challenges of Linking High School and Post-Secondary Data*. Providence, RI: Brown University, AISR. Available for download at http://annenberginstitute.org/publication/data-collaboration-new-york-city-challenges-linking-high-school-and-post-secondary-data.

Conley, D. T. 2007. *Redefining College Readiness*. Eugene, OR: Educational Policy Improvement Center.

Corcoran, T. B. 2007. *Teaching Matters: How State and Local Policymakers Can Improve the Quality of Teachers and Teaching*. CPRE Policy Brief RB-48. Philadelphia, PA: Consortium for Policy Research in Education. Available for download at www.cpre.org/teaching-matters-how-state-and-local-policymakers-can-improve-quality-teachers-and-teaching.

Foley, E., J. Mishook, J. Thompson, M. Kubiak, J. Supovitz, and M. K. Rhude-Faust. 2008. *Beyond Test Scores: Leading Indicators for Education*. Providence, RI: Brown University, Annenberg Institute for School Reform. Available for download at www.annenberginstitute.org/publication/beyond-test-scores-leading-indicators-education.

Foley, E., and D. Sigler. 2009. "Getting Smarter: A Framework for Districts," *Voices in Urban Education* 22 (Winter):5–12. Available for download at http://annenberginstitute.org/VUE/wp-content/pdf/VUE22_Foley.pdf.

Honig, M., M. A. Copland, L. Rainey, J. A. Lorton, and M. Newton. 2010. *Central Office Transformation for District-wide Teaching and Learning Improvement.* Seattle, WA: Center for the Study of Teaching and Learning at the University of Washington. Available for download at www.wallacefoundation. org/knowledge-center/school-leadership/ district-policy-and-practice/Pages/ Central-Office-Transformation-District-Wide-Teaching-and-Learning.aspx.

Howard, G. 2012. "By the Numbers: Few Black Students Leave DISD College-Ready," *Dallas Observer Blogs* (April 16), http://blogs.dallasobserver.com/ unfairpark/2012/04/look_at_this_ shocking_report_0.php.

Levin, S. 2012. "Preparing Students for College Is Kind of a New Thing, Education Officials Say," *Village Voice Blogs* (January 19), http://blogs.villagevoice.com/ runninscared/2012/01/preparing_stude.php.

Mieles, T., and E. Foley. 2005. *From Data to Decisions: Lessons from School Districts Using Data Warehousing.* Providence, RI: Brown University, Annenberg Institute for School Reform. Available at http://annenberginstitute.org/publication/ data-decisions-lessons-school-districts-using-data-warehousing-0.

Mishook, J., and A. F. Raynor. 2010. "The Critical Role of Data-Informed, Cross-Sector Partnerships in Smart Systems," *Voices in Urban Education* 28 (Summer). Available for download at http://www.annenbergin-stitute.org/VUE/vue28_mishook.

Santos, F. 2011. "College Readiness Is Lacking, City Reports Show," *New York Times* (October 24), online edition, www.nytimes.com/2011/10/25/ education/25progress.html?pagewanted=all.

School Communities that Work: A National Task Force on the Future of Urban Districts. 2002. "School Communities that Work for Results and Equity." *In Portfolio for District Redesign.* Providence, RI: Brown University, Annenberg Institute for School Reform. Available for download at http://annenberginstitute.org/publication/ portfolio-district-redesign.

Simmons, W. 2006. "From Smart Districts to Smart Education Systems. A Broader Agenda for Educational Development," pp. 181–204. In *City Schools*, edited by R. Rothman. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

Supovitz, J. 2006. *The Case for District-Based Reform.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

Supovitz, J., E. Foley, and J. Mishook. 2012. "In Search of Leading Indicators in Education," *Education Evaluation Analysis Archives* 20, no.19. http://epaa.asu.edu/ojs/ article/view/952

Ucelli, M., E. Foley, and J. Mishook. 2007. "Smart Districts as the Entry Point to Smart Education Systems," pp. 41–56. In *City Schools*, edited by R. Rothman. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

COACHING FIRST-GENERATION STUDENTS TO COLLEGE SUCCESS

Simon Moore

Simon Moore is executive director of College Visions in Providence, Rhode Island.

When Pam, a freshman from Rhode Island, arrived for her first day at Salem College in North Carolina, she felt intimidated. As the first person in her family to go to college, she immediately recognized the privilege and college know-how of her peers.

"I noticed many families walking around and filling out paperwork. It was as if they knew exactly where they were sending their kids to, what they needed to do there, and what to expect on the very first hours of arriving," she says. "Unfortunately, that was not my case at all. I had to fly by myself to a state thirteen hours away from home due to the fact that my mom was sick during the time, my sister was in another country – not to mention that we were also short in money at that moment."

As the founding director of College Visions, a community-based nonprofit in Providence, Rhode Island, I have the opportunity to empower low-income, first-generation youth like Pam to enter, succeed in, and graduate from college. In Providence, a district in which the vast majority of students are from low-income families, less than half of public school graduates enter college. Of those who do, only 45 percent will earn a degree within six years, according to National Student Clearinghouse data. The reality is that many low-income, first-generation students enter college at a disadvantage. Yet lack of readiness does not equate to an inability to succeed.

Our model bridges the K–12 to higher education gap by sustaining strong connections with students starting in the summer before twelfth grade and continuing all the way to college graduation. Students are referred to College Visions through our partner youth development organizations or friends and family. This year sixty new rising twelfth-graders are starting College Visions and joining 240 college student participants. College Visions offers two high-quality sequential programs. The College Access Program (CAP) coaches twelfth-graders to navigate the admission process and enroll in college. Upon matriculation, participants transition into the College Success Program (CSP), which provides ongoing support to facilitate college persistence and completion.

Young people don't typically arrive at College Visions polished with all the tools for college success, such as a strong time management skills, awareness of campus resources, capacity to navigate bureaucracy, or the ability to forge connections with faculty and staff allies. But I believe each of our students has the ability to develop those tools.

Our process at College Visions begins before college. The CAP creates a foundation for college success by guiding students to make college choices that promote college completion. For example, students and advisors pay close attention to college graduation rates. Financial aid is integrated into every step of the admissions process, ensuring students choose an affordable option. Advisors connect students to campus-based support programs designed to ensure under-represented students succeed (nearly half of our students enter college through these programs). And College Visions twelfth-graders engage with our college students and learn from true peers about college life and what it takes to succeed. The hallmark of the CAP is one-on-one advising, and each student meets with

his or her advisor every other week throughout senior year. This individualized support is supplemented with a variety of workshops for students and their parents and continues beyond twelfth grade.

"As I entered college, I had to learn many new habits because I was not fully prepared for what was coming," says Henry, a College Visions student at the University of Rhode Island. "I had to learn how to prioritize my social life against my academics and extra-curricular activities. Due to the amount of freedom new college students are exposed to, it is hard to manage choice-making."

With the help of the CSP, college students like Henry develop the habits, knowledge, and resources to graduate. One-on-one advising sessions continue to be a key program element through which students might map out their weekly schedule, devise a plan for attending office hours, or identify the best person on campus to provide help with a research paper. CSP advisors are a critical resource for CSP students, but their primary approach is always to help students identify and engage with campus support networks. Pam explains, "Before entering college, my College Visions counselor always mentioned the fact that there were tutors available at the colleges, but I was too proud to even initiate contact to get help studying. Thankfully, I got over my stubbornness as another College Visions counselor kept insisting on it to me for my second year (truth is, I should have listened earlier!)."

Individualized support is bolstered by workshops with a range of purposes from FAFSA completion to providing a forum for peer-to-peer conversations on common challenges in college. "I remember going to a College Visions workshop in which two big lessons were to sit at the front of the class and introduce yourself to the professor after the first class," says Servio, a student at Rhode Island College. "That advice went a long way, as it really has helped me get into the groove of certain classes and also helped me build quality relationships with some of my professors."

While it's essential to be honest about the very real challenges our students face, the deficit-based notion of low-income, first-generation status is limiting. Lack of academic preparation, insufficient financial resources, no family support, and limited exposure to higher education – too often these connotations of the low-income, first-generation label predict failure in college. Yet low-income, first-generation students who enroll in college demonstrate outstanding leadership, ambition, and resilience. By going to college, our students take a bold step outside the norm in their communities. Effective advising requires a mutual belief in students' ability to take ownership of their success. This is only possible when students and advisors alike recognize the assets low-income, first-generation students bring to College Visions when they walk in the door.

College Visions advisors strive to build a holistic, multidimensional understanding of students' lives and a deep belief in their ability to enter and graduate from college despite facing many obstacles. The impact of our model is evident in the outcomes: 95 percent of College Visions students enroll in college, 89 percent persist to their second year, and 67 percent graduate within five years. Pam exemplifies this success. Despite a daunting first day on campus, she entered her junior year this fall and is on the path to graduation. There are invariably challenges, but strong advisor/advisee relationships provide the forum to collaboratively find solutions and promote growth. By sustaining these relationships, College Visions has supported students like Pam to develop the habits, confidence, and knowledge to succeed in higher education.

Annenberg Institute for School Reform

AT BROWN UNIVERSITY

This book is printed on Environment® Paper. This 100 percent recycled paper reduces solid waste disposal and lessens landfill dependency. By utilizing this paper,

• 4.14 trees were preserved for the future.

• 2,979,128 BTUs of energy were conserved.

• 12.4 pounds of solid waste were not generated.

• 1,787 gallons of wastewater flow were saved.

• 389 pounds of greenhouse gases were prevented from forming.