



RETHINKING HIGH SCHOOL

preparing students for success in college, career, and life

A study by WestEd  *for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation*



ETHINKING HIGH SCHOOL

preparing students for success in college, career, and life

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“We should be educating **all high school students** according to a **common academic expectation**, one that prepares them for both postsecondary education and the workforce. Only then...will they be **ready for life** after high school.”*

READY FOR LIFE

*Rigor at Risk: Reaffirming quality in the high school curriculum. ACT (2007). p.6.



Introduction

*Should every student pursue higher education? Not necessarily. Should every student be prepared for and have the choice to attend college or pursue other types of post-high-school education? **Absolutely.***

PREPARING STUDENTS FOR THEIR FUTURE

Whether students ultimately decide to enter the workforce directly after high school or to pursue further education, each one deserves a high-quality academic education that lays the groundwork for success in adulthood. Today's high schools must prepare students to enroll in college or complete a training program, or to enter the workforce at a level where they are expected to think critically and solve problems, learn new skills, and be in line for promotion and career advancement.¹

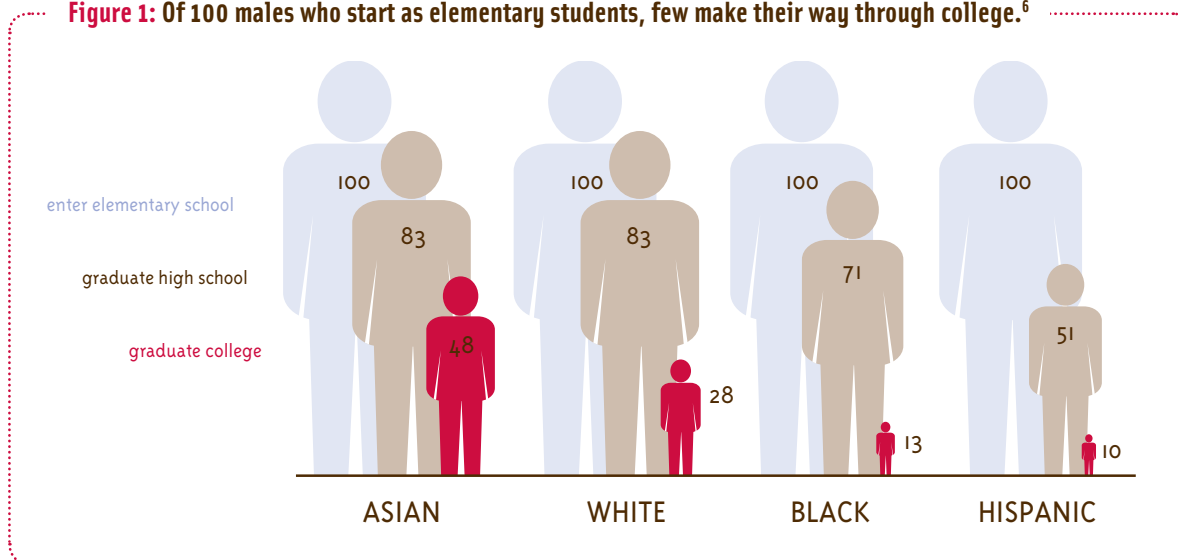
Attention to students' readiness for life after high school has never been more important. Today's young adults need more education than their grandparents just to maintain the same standard of living. In 1958, a high school graduate earned 18 percent more than the median U.S. income, but in 2001, a high school graduate earned 13 percent less than the median income.² The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that, between 2004 and 2014, 80 percent of the fastest growing jobs will require some postsecondary education or advanced training.³

Giving every student the opportunity to excel in college and career is critical. While graduation and college-readiness rates are improving, too many students are not being well prepared for their next step in life. On average, only 7 of 10 U.S. students graduate from high school in four years.⁴ Of even greater concern are persistent ethnicity-based achievement gaps, such as those illustrated in figure 1, which shows 51 percent of Hispanic male students earning a high school diploma compared to 83 percent of white and Asian males.⁵

REMOVING BARRIERS TO SUCCESS

Preparing high school students for success in post-high school learning or working endeavors requires that educators strategically address key barriers to students' academic achievement. This report highlights five factors that research has identified as impediments to secondary school success and examines how diverse reform-minded education programs are working to eliminate them for their students. In looking at these programs – all of them supported in part by the Bill and Melinda

Figure 1: Of 100 males who start as elementary students, few make their way through college.⁶



Gates Foundation – WestEd researchers found that each one has a particular strength, one approach (to a single barrier) so fully developed and clearly focused that it could be considered a foundation for success in the program's overall reform effort. Each barrier and the program focused most closely on it are introduced briefly below. A later section of this report explores each program in more depth.

HELPING STUDENTS SEE COLLEGE AS AN ATTAINABLE GOAL

Many students from low-income and underserved communities do not see higher education as a realistic goal. Lacking exposure to a college-going culture in their home or community, they need purposeful, consistent help from their school to develop a mindset that postsecondary education can be a real-

ity for them. **Lionel Wilson Preparatory Academy**, in Oakland, California, immerses students in a school culture ripe with the possibilities of higher education and helps them understand what's needed to get there.

STRENGTHENING ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

Research shows that access to a rigorous academic high school program is the single most reliable predictor of students' college success, especially for Blacks and Hispanics.⁷ Plagued by low graduation and college-going rates, **Mabton Junior/Senior High School**, in Mabton, Washington, committed to improving the education prospects of its predominantly Hispanic student population by implementing and expecting every student to follow a college preparatory curriculum.

ENSURING A COHERENT CURRICULUM FROM MIDDLE GRADES THROUGH HIGH SCHOOL

As students move up through the grades, many experience a gap between what they are taught in one course and what they are expected to know in the next one. **YES Prep Public Schools: Southeast Campus**, in Houston, Texas has created a coherent 6–12 system, where all pieces fit together and lead all students forward to the ultimate goal of college acceptance.

PROVIDING EXTRA SUPPORT DURING STUDENTS' CRITICAL FRESHMAN YEAR

Research shows that, left to their own devices, students who enter high school academically underprepared are far more likely than their better-prepared peers to fall off – and stay off – the college track. Catching underperforming students as they enter ninth grade and providing them with targeted

academic and social supports can position them to move through high school in a timely fashion and be ready to pursue higher education. **Bridgeton High School**, in Bridgeton, New Jersey, offers a ninth grade support net.

DRAWING OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH BACK INTO THE CLASSROOM

A student's decision to leave high school is costly both for the individual student and for society. Many youths who drop out of school come to regret their decision but can't find a pathway back to education. The **Gateway to College** program, at Portland Community College in Oregon, helps out-of-school youth complete their high school degree on a college campus while also earning credits toward an associate's degree.

Can early promise be sustained?

In 2004, *Rethinking High School*, developed by WestEd for the Gates Foundation, provided snapshots of five high schools across the country that were using inventive approaches to increase graduation rates and college readiness for their diverse student populations. The schools examined were Arrupe Jesuit High School, Denver, Colorado; Chicago International Charter School-Northtown Academy (CICS-Northtown Academy), Chicago, Illinois; Dayton Early College Academy (DECA), Dayton, Ohio; High Tech High (HTH), San Diego, California; and TechBoston, Boston, Massachusetts.

When first profiled, these schools were relatively new; four had yet to graduate a class. To find out whether the positive trends observed in 2004 have continued, WestEd recently reviewed updated school data, drawn from the 2004–05



school year and the first half of 2006–07. These new data suggest these schools are performing as well as or better than three years ago and that each one continues to embody important characteristics identified in the first report:

They serve ethnically and socioeconomically diverse students.

Each school is located in a low-income community and continues to serve its neighborhood students. Four of the five serve predominantly Black or Hispanic populations. The majority of students at all five schools come from families with no history of college attendance.

They are in high demand by students of all abilities.

Each school has experienced significant increases in the number of enrollment applications. At all five schools, the majority of students enter performing below grade level in math, English language arts, or both. Due to their success with students who have identified learning disabilities, TechBoston and HTH have seen an increase in applications and enrollment of students with a special education designation.

They provide students with extra learning time and support.

Students with weak academic preparation need more time and support to get up to grade level,⁸ and each of these schools provides both. In these schools students receive extra support from teachers outside of the standard school day (i.e., before school, after school, on weekends). Some schools also provide tutoring from community volunteers (e.g., students from local colleges and universities) and one grooms high-achieving students to be peer tutors.

They provide students with rigorous and engaging coursework.

Each school has strengthened course rigor and expanded academic offerings. At CICS-Northtown Academy, for example, the number of Advanced Placement (AP) courses increased from two in 2003 to five in 2006. DECA has tripled the number of students taking college-level courses, which range from social philosophy to beginning chemistry. All five schools report having academic requirements higher than their local district (e.g., additional years of math and science).

Their students are achieving academic success.

Students at all five schools have high attendance rates, surpassing their district's average by at least 5 percentage points.⁹ Four of the five schools are performing as well as or better than their local district on each of their state-



mandated tests.^{10,11} In addition, all five are meeting their Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) goals as mandated by No Child Left Behind. In four of the schools, 100 percent of seniors are passing their state's high school exit exam.¹² Four of the five schools had graduating classes in June 2006 and their rates look promising: Compared to the national norms of approximately 70 percent for the class of 2004,^{13,14} these schools report significantly higher graduation rates, ranging from 85 to 100 percent in 2006.¹⁵

Visit www.WestEd.org/RHS.htm for the complete report.

FOUNDATIONS FOR SUCCESS AT FIVE SITES

To broaden understanding of what it takes to keep students in school (or to return out-of-school students to the classroom) and on track for college, this report pulls from the high school reform movement to profile five Gates-supported sites¹⁶ that are showing evidence of success. Four of the sites are secondary schools; two of them are part of charter management organizations (CMOs)* and two are part of local school districts. The fifth site is a program designed to bring out-of-school youth back into the classroom. All of the sites serve an ethnically and socioeconomically diverse student population and, at some point and in some fashion, all have identified as their overarching goal ensuring that students are college-ready. Staff at these sites recognize that, in the end, not all of their students will opt for college right after high school: some may not be able to afford it; some may want to pursue other interests (e.g., trade school, the military); some may feel limited by personal circumstances (e.g., the need to help support their family, a pregnancy). But whatever students ultimately choose as a

next step after high school, these programs are committed to making sure students are academically prepared for higher education should they seek it.

The next section of this report provides a profile of each site. Rather than describing the multiple strategies a site may employ as it seeks to make good on its this commitment to college readiness, each profile highlights the particular aspect of a site's reform effort that appears to be the foundation for its success. This focus on a single strand of a site's overall effort is not meant to suggest that addressing any one issue suffices to ensure that all students achieve academic success, or that the highlighted approach is the only way to address a given challenge. In short, this report is not intended to be prescriptive, but, rather, to catalyze further thinking and action among practitioners and policymakers alike.

* A charter management organization (CMO) manages a group of charter schools, which are public schools that, under state law, operate with greater autonomy than a traditional public school. Charter schools often have greater control over budgets, staffing, and program. While exempt from many state education regulations, these schools are still accountable for student results.

Lionel Wilson College Preparatory Academy

CREATING A COLLEGE-ORIENTED SCHOOL CULTURE



OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA

2005-06¹⁷ SCHOOL PROFILE

LIONEL WILSON COLLEGE
PREPARATORY ACADEMY

| | | | | | |
|--------------------------|-----|--------------|---------|--------------------------------|------|
| Hispanic | 82% | Grade Levels | 6-12 | Did school make AYP? | Yes |
| Black | 18% | Enrollment | 476 | Graduation rates ¹⁸ | |
| ELL | 38% | Opening Date | 2002 | 2005 | 100% |
| Free/Reduced Price Meals | 79% | System | Charter | 2006 | 89% |

For years, many of Northern California's inner-city school districts have been failing students at an alarming rate. The high school dropout rate in the region's three largest districts has crept as high as 70 percent in some districts.¹⁹ In 2004-05, 18 of the 19 high schools in the Oakland Unified School District ranked in the lowest third statewide on the state's academic performance index (API).²⁰ Historically, many students in this district have not seen college as a realistic option.

For the past two academic years (2004-05 and 2005-06), Lionel Wilson College Preparatory Academy (Wilson), an Oakland charter school, exceeded the state graduation rate target.²¹ In addition, every one of its graduates was accepted to at least one four-year college or university.²² In this same time period, the district reported graduation rates of 61 percent and 64 percent, respectively.²³ Opened in 2002, Wilson serves students grades 6 to 12. Of its 476 students, a large majority is Hispanic (82%), with many in this population designated as English language learners. Seventy-nine percent of the students are economically disadvantaged and many will be the first members of their families to attend college.²⁴ Any student can apply to Wilson and no applicant is denied admission if space is available. Demand is high: As of March 2006, the school's wait list had 217 students.

FOUNDATION FOR SUCCESS: HELPING STUDENTS SEE COLLEGE AS AN ATTAINABLE GOAL

For many young people, thinking about higher education and careers starts long before high school. For these students, awareness of the value and possibility – indeed, the expectation – of going to college emerges through conversations and experiences with family, with neighbors or community members, or at school. For them, college is considered a natural next step after their k-12 schooling. But many low-income youth are not exposed to a college-oriented culture in either their home or their community. Nor do they receive critical information about postsecondary options from their school. As a result, college may not even be on their radar screen or, if it is, it may seem unattainable. In 2003, among 18- to 24-year-olds, only 24 percent of Hispanics and 32 percent of Blacks were enrolled in a two- or four-year degree-granting institution, as compared to 42 percent of white youth.²⁵

College? Claro!: Es Mi Derecho, Mi Futuro y Mi Realidad! "College? Certainly!: It's My Right, My Future, and My Reality!"

– Lionel Wilson's School Motto

Wilson seeks different statistics for its students. It set out to create a college-oriented culture by:

- ❖ introducing college as a natural continuation of each student's academic career,
- ❖ providing a college preparatory curriculum and any academic support needed for student success,
- ❖ guiding students through the college preparation and application processes, and
- ❖ presenting students and families with options for overcoming financial barriers to higher education.

Introducing college as a natural continuation of each student's academic career

Wilson students are introduced to the idea of college as soon as they start school – kindergarten, that is. Wilson's two elementary feeder schools are part of the same charter management organization as Wilson (see Aspire Public Schools on page 9), and when their students first walk in the door, they see college banners hanging in the hallways. These elementary students also study in classrooms that are named after colleges. Each year, the incoming kindergarten cohort receives the name of a particular college mascot (e.g., the Cal Bears, the Stanford Cardinals), and that name remains with the class as it moves up the grades. Naming cohorts in this way starts familiarizing students at a very early age with a variety of colleges and

universities and instills the pride of being part of a "college class." The elementary curriculum also reflects this focus. Many essay assignments, field trips, and special events focus on the theme of college. As one principal remarks, "College becomes part of their vocabulary at a very early age."

The focus on college awareness continues at Wilson, which holds an annual college fair for its students. Recognizing the importance of a family's commitment to its student's college aspirations, Wilson requires that students attend the fair with their parents or guardians. Beginning in the 10th grade, school staff take students on field trips to visit colleges, including an overnight visit to experience campus life.

Wilson students are never discouraged from applying to the colleges of their choice, regardless of students' high school academic standing. Instead, school staff work with individual students to help them develop plans to improve their grades, make up any deficiencies, and otherwise enhance their college applications. In addition to offering such practical support, the school uses multiple strategies to encourage students to keep their eye on the goal. For example, during a weekly "town hall" meeting held every Friday afternoon, administrators lead a resounding call-and-response in which students are repeatedly asked if they are going to college. Wilson's large majority of Hispanic students respond in Spanish: College? Claro!: Es mi derecho, mi futuro, y mi realidad!

Others respond to the query in English: “College? Certainly!: It’s my right, my future, and my reality!”

Providing a college preparatory curriculum and support needed for student success

As a California-based college preparatory school, Wilson aligns its curriculum with entrance requirements for the state's two university systems: University of California and California State University (UC/CSU). The school also places a strong emphasis on English language arts (ELA) and mathematics and has put supports in place for students who need them. For example, students performing below grade level take double blocks of English language arts and math to build conceptual understanding and to review and hone skills. As a result, over the past three years, Wilson students have made steady gains – more than tripling the percentage of students scoring proficient or above in math (see Table 1).

TABLE 1: SCHOOLWIDE PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS SCORING PROFICIENT OR ABOVE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS (ELA) AND MATH²⁶

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|-------------|------|------|------|
| ELA | 15 | 22 | 24 |
| Math | 11 | 19 | 34 |

Wilson also offers students after-school homework help in a quiet and supportive setting. In addition, a “Go Smart” tutoring program is available for students performing far below the state standard. In this program, UC students tutor Wilson students after school three afternoons a week, providing individualized instruction and attention. →

Aspire Public Schools

Lionel Wilson College Preparatory Academy was the first school serving students grades 6–12 within the Aspire Public Schools Network. Aspire is a nonprofit charter management organization (CMO) whose founder and CEO, Don Shalvey, had the goal of introducing disadvantaged students to a college-oriented culture at a young age. Aspire schools provide students with rigorous coursework and the supports they will need to master it and, ultimately, thrive in their postsecondary efforts. Aspire’s management model promotes local flexibility, responsibility, and accountability, encouraging each site to adapt to meet the needs of its particular student population. The first Aspire public school, serving students k–5, opened in 1999 in a former grocery store in Northern California. Since then, 18 Aspire schools have been created throughout California, in both rural and urban locations, serving close to 5,000 students, primarily in low-income areas.



Guiding students through the college preparation and application processes

Student advocates and mentors

At Wilson, each incoming 6th grade student is assigned to an advisor who serves as that student's advocate and mentor for the next seven years. Each advisor – matched with no more than 15 students at a time – helps students select courses, encourages them to explore career opportunities, assists them with their college pursuits, and keeps tabs on their general well-being. Advisors also coordinate their efforts with the on-site college counselors. Ongoing communication among students, advisors, and counselors helps ensure that students progress in a timely fashion through the processes of selecting and applying to colleges and seeking financial aid.

High aspirations

Wilson staff encourage students to start investigating college possibilities early in their high school experience and to identify those colleges or universities they most want to attend, regardless of whether students think they can get in. Once students have identified their top choices, their advisor and other school staff help them think through which ones might be the best fit and what kind of performance it will take to be accepted at their desired schools. By getting this information relatively early in their high school career, students have more time to position themselves to get accepted, whether that means bringing up a grade point average, getting more involved in extracurricular activities, or anything else. All students are required to take a college test-preparation course, which is paid for by the school.

Presenting postsecondary options at an early age

Fostering a college-going mindset is not something that can wait until it's time to submit college applications. The effort must start early in a student's academic career. As one set of researchers note, "Higher education is not a single, discrete event that somehow occurs in the last year of high school. Getting an acceptance letter from college admissions is but a juncture in a long path of events that starts in middle school or before."²⁷ Research suggests that effective college preparation programs require early exposure — as early as 3rd grade — and focus on readiness rather than remediation.²⁸ That is, students should not only receive information about college at an early age, but should also have access to the academic courses and supports that will best prepare them for a postsecondary education.

Partnering with support services

Recognizing that students can never have too much support, Wilson guides eligible students to the California State University Educational Opportunity Program (CSU EOP), which offers admissions, academic, and financial assistance. Wilson also partners with the nonprofit College Summit, which provides low-income students and their schools and districts with tips and tools for ensuring that students are prepared to attend and succeed in college. The program provides intense training for school staff and provides students with detailed information on essay writing, financial aid, and application deadlines.

Presenting students and families with options for overcoming financial barriers to higher education

The majority of Wilson students live below the poverty level and face enormous financial challenges when it comes to paying for higher education. Thus, school counselors conduct extensive research on scholarships and grants available to students, and they work to get students the best possible financial aid packages. Students are each required to apply for two scholarships, and in 2006, Wilson's graduating class collectively received more than \$1 million in financial assistance from their respective colleges and universities.²⁹

For more information on Lionel Wilson College Preparatory Academy and Aspire Public Schools, visit www.aspirepublicschools.org.



Mabton School District

SETTING HIGH EXPECTATIONS FOR STUDENTS AND STAFF ALIKE



MABTON, WASHINGTON

2005-06³⁰ SCHOOL PROFILE
MABTON JR./SR. HIGH SCHOOL

| | | | | | |
|--------------------------|-----|-------------|--------|--------------------------|-------------------|
| Hispanic | 94% | Grade Level | 7-12 | Did school make AYP? | No ³¹ |
| White | 5% | Enrollment | 447 | Graduation rates (94-95) | 65% ³² |
| American Indian | 1% | System | Public | Graduation rates (05-06) | 80% ³³ |
| Free/Reduced Price Meals | 86% | Migrant | 35% | | |

The Mabton School District is a small rural school system in central Washington state with a student population that is 94 percent Hispanic and 86 percent economically disadvantaged. Mabton operates only two schools, one a k-6 and the other a combination junior and senior high school serving grades 7 to 12. Like many districts throughout the country, Mabton Jr./Sr. High School (Mabton) has had a history of low graduation rates, which, in the mid-1990s, hovered between 65 and 75 percent.³⁴ In 1999, the district concluded that such rates were unacceptable. Significant self-reflection helped district and school staff realize they had not been holding their students – or themselves – to high enough expectations. If students were to be pushed – and adequately supported – to reach higher standards, staff knew that they, too, would need to perform at a higher level. Determined to meet this challenge, Mabton set out to transform itself into a system that would embody high expectations for everyone in the school community.

While much work remains to be done, early results look promising. For the 2005–06 school year, Mabton’s overall four-year graduation rate was 80 percent. This compares to the national averages in 2004 (the latest year for which national averages are available) of 68 percent for all students and 53 percent for Hispanic students.³⁵ In addition, almost half of Mabton’s alumni (49%) are currently enrolled in four-year (19%) and two-year (30%) colleges.³⁶

**FOUNDATION FOR SUCCESS:
STRENGTHENING ACADEMIC PROGRAMS**

A student’s access to a high-quality academically challenging high school curriculum has been found to have the biggest influence on whether he or she will earn a college degree. It is a more important variable than either race or family income and is also more significant for Black and Hispanic students than for white students.³⁷ Each site highlighted in this report operates with a belief that, given the right support, virtually every student is capable of handling a challenging college-preparatory curriculum. Transforming this belief from rhetoric to

For our students, going on to college is not a dream. It's a plan.

– Jay Tyus, Principal, Mabton Jr./Sr. High School

reality requires many things: Schools must first deliver and enroll students in a true college-preparatory curriculum characterized by academic rigor. Teachers and other staff must be prepared to provide whatever supports their students need in order to master this curriculum. This means that as schools raise expectations and course quality for students, they must also strengthen instructional quality, which may require providing greater support and targeted professional development for staff.

Mabton's 1999 decision to aim higher for high school students and staff alike set in motion an examination of almost every aspect of its high school's organization, from administrative structure to classroom teaching practices. Three components have been key to the school's transformation efforts:

- ❖ creating a shared vision of high expectations,
- ❖ implementing an academically rigorous curriculum, and
- ❖ examining and improving instruction.

Creating a shared vision of high expectations

The district recognized that real change would demand a shared vision, not a top-down decision. If high expectations were to become a reality, it was critical that key stakeholders be committed, particularly classroom teachers. Thus, Mabton officials involved lead teachers in the planning process from the very beginning, making them “ambassadors” for change. In this role, teachers reviewed research, visited other districts and schools sites that were successful, considered existing and new curricula, and communicated their findings to fellow teachers.

Washington State Achievers Program

Mabton Jr./Sr. High School is one of 16 schools in the state of Washington that receives support from the Washington Achievers Program. Created in 2001, the program works with large high schools serving low-income populations to increase the number of students enrolling and succeeding in college. In addition to supporting high school redesign efforts aimed at raising academic achievement, the program has a student scholarship program. Last year, approximately one-third of Mabton graduates received a full-ride college scholarship through the program. The Achievers Program reports that since its inception, its 16 member high schools have shown increases in³⁸ the number of college prep courses offered and the number of students enrolled in them, the number of students passing the state's reading and mathematics exams, and the number of graduating students meeting course requirements for admission to a four-year public university in Washington State.

To expand and enhance staff commitment, the district invited any interested teachers to join implementation committees that addressed such key issues as curriculum adoption and professional development.

The principal notes that, today in Mabton, “everyone is responsible for their piece of the puzzle to make sure students have the skills, abilities, and the thinking processes that allow them to be successful when they move forward.” College awareness efforts begin in the 5th and 6th grades when students visit college campuses. Seventh and 8th grade teachers prepare students for high school to ensure they enter performing at grade level. And the 9th to 12th grade teachers are focused on preparing their students for college.

Implementing an academically rigorous curriculum

Once staff members agreed on the goal of readying students for college success, they developed a plan for meeting the goal, a plan that started with the adoption of a rigorous curriculum for every student. The school eliminated all remedial courses in favor of exclusively offering college preparatory courses. Additionally, the district’s graduation requirements were changed to reflect the entrance requirements for a four-year college. “As a school, we raised the bar and the students are meeting the challenge,” reports the principal.

Today, this academic shift is apparent in the available courses and in course enrollment. In 1996, Mabton offered no AP classes; today it offers four, and it plans to add more next year. Moreover, 40 of 109 juniors and seniors are now in AP English, with many others in AP Biology and AP Spanish. Approximately



85 percent of Mabton High School students now take Algebra II, and the school offers Algebra III (i.e., pre-calculus) as well. While Mabton's staff are not yet satisfied with student progress in math performance, the improvements are encouraging (see Table 2). A few years ago, physics and chemistry were offered only every other year due to low enrollment. Today, both courses are offered every year. In fact, rising demand has led to the addition of a second section for chemistry.

TABLE 2: PERCENT OF 10TH GRADE STUDENTS MEETING OR EXCEEDING STANDARD IN MATH ON THE WASL (WASHINGTON ASSESSMENT ON STUDENT LEARNING)³⁹

| | |
|-------------|----|
| 1999 | 4 |
| 2001 | 10 |
| 2003 | 20 |
| 2005 | 20 |

Examining and improving instruction

While many districts talk of setting high expectations for students, Mabton staff recognized the need to set high expectations for themselves as well. In the course of planning, they had discussed the importance of ensuring that students were receiving the kind of instruction they needed to succeed in the more exacting coursework. That series of conversations led to what was perhaps the most difficult and critical part of the school's transformation: coming to grips with the understanding that, as teachers, they would need to evaluate and perhaps revise their classroom practices. Thinking back to the discussions, the principal recalls, "We had to quit making excuses for why our kids weren't doing well – because of poverty or mobility – and start examining what we were doing in the classroom!"

Mabton is committed to creating an environment in which everyone is expected to learn, including the principal and the school's

Alicia's* Success Story

Beginning in the 7th grade, students at Mabton are assigned an adult advocate who helps each one develop a personal academic plan and identify any support the student may need in order to meet his or her academic goals. Advocates also help students with study skills and any personal issues that may arise; in the process, they also help students learn to advocate for themselves. In one instance, for example, an advocate helped an academically ambitious student who faced steep odds in getting to college. Alicia had come to Mabton from Mexico as an 8th grader, speaking only Spanish. As a high school student, she worked hard and was excelling academically. But her family, which struggled financially, tried to persuade her to support her family and not pursue a high school diploma, much less go on to college. The school, staff, and, most notably, Alicia's advocate identified her talent and motivation and supported her goal of going on to college. She graduated as class valedictorian at Mabton and is now in her third year at a state university with plans to become a doctor.

* "Alicia" is a pseudonym.



most experienced teachers. A district-level staff member now mentors the principal, and the school's administrative structure has been shifted to enable the principal to provide greater support for teachers. In many schools, a principal's instruction-related efforts are undermined by his or her need to spend untold hours on paperwork and other noninstructional management responsibilities. In Mabton, the principal's chief role is now that of instructional leader, working closely with staff on all things related to curriculum and instruction. In turn, the vice-principal is responsible for noninstructional aspects of the school, such as attendance, discipline, and parent communication.

To further support teachers, Mabton has established on-site coaching positions. These individuals, who spend a lot of time in classrooms doing what staff call "elbow-to-elbow" coaching, have been especially helpful in helping teachers build confidence in teaching the new, more rigorous courses (e.g., advanced math). One significant objective is to create a system in which teachers are continuously assessing student performance, measuring their own effectiveness, and adjusting their instruction accordingly. "We're getting pretty good at looking at our students' data," says the principal. "We know our students and we know them pretty well."

For more information on Mabton School District, visit www.mabton.wednet.edu.

YES Prep Public Schools - Southeast

CREATING A UNIFIED 6-12 SYSTEM



HOUSTON, TEXAS

2005-06^{40, 41} SCHOOL PROFILE
YES PREP PUBLIC SCHOOLS –
SOUTHEAST CAMPUS

| | | | | | |
|----------|-----|--------------------------|------|---------------------------------------|---------|
| Hispanic | 96% | Grade levels | 6-12 | Did school make AYP? | Yes |
| Black | 2% | Enrollment | 665 | Graduation rates | 100% |
| Asian | 1% | Opening date | 1998 | College Acceptance Rate ⁴² | 100% |
| White | 1% | Free/Reduced Price Meals | 80% | System | Charter |

*In Houston, Texas, the high-poverty and predominately Hispanic neighborhood known as the East End historically had a low high school graduation rate. In the 1990s, East End parents, educators, and community members recognized a disconcerting education pattern related to that low rate: students who had been doing reasonably well in elementary school begin to slip academically when they hit middle school, slowly disengaging from learning as they moved toward high school. In 1998, YES Prep Public Schools - Southeast was founded to change this pattern, providing its inner-city students with a rigorous, engaging, and – equally important – **consistent** college preparatory curriculum from middle through high school.*

Serving students in grades 6 through 12, Southeast has achieved an impressive record of success. For the 2005–06 school year, its students significantly outperformed Houston Independent School District (HISD) students on the state's assessment, with a large majority of its students at every grade level meeting standard in reading/English language arts and mathematics (see Table 3). All Southeast seniors take the SAT college entrance exams, and from 2000–01 through 2005–06, their average scores were higher than those of students in both the HISD

and the state as a whole.⁴³ Eighty-seven percent of its graduates are the first in their family to attend college,⁴⁴ and they are attending such rigorous institutions as Barnard, Duke, George Washington, Smith, Stanford, and Yale.⁴⁵ Fewer than 5 percent of them have had to take remedial courses in college.⁴⁶ In the six graduating classes thus far, students collectively have been granted \$13.1 million in financial aid from colleges, universities, and outside organizations. In 2006 and, again, in 2007, *Newsweek* featured the school in its “Top 100 High Schools” list.⁴⁷

It's possible for students from low socioeconomic backgrounds who don't have older siblings and moms and dads who have gone to college to get there... to graduate from college and to be successful...we can make it happen."

– Keith Desrosiers, School Director, YES Prep Southeast

TABLE 3: TEXAS ASSESSMENT OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS (TAKS) 2005–06: SOUTHEAST CAMPUS (SEC) VS. HOUSTON INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT (HISD)⁴⁸

| Grade | % Met Standard Reading/ELA | | % Met Standard Math | |
|-------|----------------------------|------|---------------------|------|
| | SEC | HISD | SEC | HISD |
| 6th | 96 | 82 | 95 | 63 |
| 7th | 97 | 71 | 98 | 57 |
| 8th | 96 | 79 | 94 | 57 |
| 9th | 100 | 82 | 95 | 43 |
| 10th | 98 | 78 | 86 | 49 |
| 11th | 99 | 77 | 100 | 69 |

FOUNDATION FOR SUCCESS: ENSURING A COHERENT CURRICULUM FROM THE MIDDLE GRADES THROUGH HIGH SCHOOL

As students move through elementary school, many experience a gap between what they are taught in one grade or course and what they are expected to know when they start the next one. Without effective intervention, the knowledge or skill gaps students bring with them to middle and high school persist and can be exacerbated by a continuing lack of coursework consistency at these next stages. Such gaps are one indication of a system that lacks coherence and, therefore, short-changes its students.

In a coherent system, every piece makes sense and relates to a predetermined education goal. Applied to curriculum, coherence means that courses follow one another in a logical sequence. It means school staff have discussed and agreed what content should be covered in each course, how it generally should be taught, and how well students should be expected to learn it. And it means that course content is aligned to standards, assessments, teacher professional development, and the kind of high quality instruction needed to ensure that students master a rigorous curriculum.

At Southeast Campus, where acceptance to a four-year college or university is a graduation requirement, staff know that if students are to reach this high bar they must engage in a coherent curriculum that is aligned to college entrance standards. This type of curricular consistency is not easily attained. It takes careful, collaborative planning and, then, continuing communication and mutual support among teachers and other staff. Key to Southeast's efforts in this area have been:

- ❖ combining two levels of schooling – middle school and high school,
- ❖ planning coursework backwards from the end goal, and
- ❖ working together as a school community.

Combining two levels of schooling – middle school and high school

In many districts, students feed from multiple elementary schools to fewer middle schools. From these middle schools, students then come together at one high school, where the freshman class invariably reflects a variety of academic experiences. By combining middle school and high school, Southeast has established a single road by which all of its students travel through these important grades, enabling teachers to work together to plan and deliver a comprehensive and coherent 6–12 curriculum.

Planning backwards from the end goal

Essential to a coherent curriculum is a carefully thought out map of what students should learn and in what order. Commonly referred to as a “scope and sequence,” this plan helps guide teachers by identifying the specific content to be covered in each lesson, unit, and course, as well as the logical sequence of courses. At Southeast, school staff start this mapping process from their end goal of college acceptance for every student.

To enhance the likelihood that students will be accepted to the colleges or universities of their choice, all Southeast students are required to take at least one Advanced Placement (AP) course and its related exam. Southeast staff plan the entire 6–12 curriculum backwards from these AP courses. Their guiding question is this: If students are to be ready to succeed in this course, what will they need to have learned in their prior course? As they develop the scope and sequence for the curriculum, Southeast staff also work to align coursework to assessments, instruction, and to both student and teacher support systems, including professional development. School data suggest that this strategy has been successful. In the class of 2006, 71 percent of seniors scored high enough to pass their respective AP exam(s); and 100 percent were accepted to at least one four-year college or university.

Working together as a school community

Achieving a high level of education coherence requires all members of the school community to share the same vision and agree on a plan for achieving it. At Southeast, vertical and

YES Prep Public Schools

In 1998, a group of concerned parents, teachers, and community leaders led by Teach for America alumni Chris Barbic started the first YES Prep public school, to alleviate the high rates of illiteracy, truancy, and crime experienced by students in Houston’s East End. Yes Prep’s Southeast Campus opened as one of Texas’ first charter schools, serving students grades 6–12. YES (Youth Engaged in Service) Prep, a charter management organization in the greater Houston area, has developed a coherent 6–12 instructional system that has experienced considerable success in preparing students for postsecondary schooling.



horizontal curriculum alignment is accomplished through extensive teacher collaboration. The task of developing meaningful lessons in each particular content area is undertaken by all teachers in that subject area from grades 6 through 12 working as a team. Because each teacher then understands what he or she needs to teach in order to move students to the next level, all teachers can focus on how best to connect with their respective students in order to successfully teach the content.

By engaging in this curriculum work, teachers grow, communicate, and support each other. They become a strong community of accomplished individuals who ensure that 100 percent of their students reach the not-so-impossible goal of college.

For more information on YES Prep Public Schools, visit www.yesprep.org.

A YES Student's Success Story

Helen Oviedos was 13 years old, attending a local middle school, and becoming increasingly disengaged as she neared high school. A native Spanish speaker, she had limited English skills, which caused her to fall behind. She skipped school and eventually joined a gang. At that point, Helen's mother enrolled her in Project YES,* which subsequently became YES Prep. Helen remembers the transition from her old school to her new one being difficult. Her lack of interest during her earlier schooling meant that she was starting at YES far behind academically. Although teachers offered extra support, Helen was initially reluctant to accept it. But she says that, at some point, "a light just went on for me. I realized that I wanted to go to college and that I wanted to better myself." She became determined. To gain ground, she sought her teachers' help before and after school and would often call them in the evening for additional guidance and support. Helen caught up academically and graduated, eventually earning her bachelor's degree from a state university. Today, she is proud to identify herself as a teacher at Southeast.

* In 1995, prior to the creation of YES Prep Public Schools, Chris Barbic co-founded Project YES, a middle school charter program in Rusk Elementary in Houston, Texas.



Bridgeton High School

HELPING STUDENTS MAKE A SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION INTO HIGH SCHOOL



BRIDGETON, NEW JERSEY

| | | | | | |
|-------------------------|-----|------------------|--------|--------------------------------|------------------|
| Black | 51% | Grade level | 9-12 | Did school make AYP? | No ⁵¹ |
| Hispanic | 28% | Enrollment | 1,079 | Graduation rates | 84% |
| White | 21% | Student Mobility | 36% | 9th grade dropout rate (04-05) | 15% |
| Asian/Pacific Islanders | 1% | System | Public | 9th grade dropout rate (05-06) | 11% |

Located in southern New Jersey, the eight-school Bridgeton School District serves an area that was once heavily dependent on manufacturing and food production but is now primarily agricultural. This shift brought more migrant families to the area, which translates into a more itinerant student population. The district's one high school – Bridgeton High School – has a student mobility rate of 36 percent, more than three times the state average of 10 percent.⁵² A large percentage of Bridgeton's residents live below the poverty level. Although the state of New Jersey ranked highest of the 50 states in household income in 2005, with a median of \$61,672,⁵³ prosperity has passed by Bridgeton. In 2006, almost half (49%) of area households earned less than \$29,999.⁵⁴ Bridgeton High School had been plagued for years by low attendance and high dropout rates. Aiming to turn these numbers around, in 2004 the school community made some significant changes, chiefly, implementation of the Talent Development reform model, which included restructuring from a large comprehensive high school into five small academies designed to give students more personalized attention. One academy focuses on credit recovery and three have a combined academic and career focus: arts and humanities; math, sciences, and medical; and business and industrial technology.

The fifth of these smaller learning communities is the 9th Grade Success Academy, intended to help new students make a successful transition from middle school to high school. Created just a year ago, it is already showing promising results. From 2004-05 to 2005-06, 9th-grade attendance rates rose (from 80 percent to 85 percent), chronic absenteeism – defined at Bridgeton as missing more than 20 days of school each year – fell for 9th grade students (from 29 percent to 15 percent), and

the number of students dropping out during this first year of high school declined from 55 to 35.⁵⁵ Equally important, more students are now passing core courses. During this same two-year period, the percentage of students passing Algebra I rose from 61 percent to 86 percent, and the percentage of those passing English I rose from 76 percent to 90 percent.⁵⁶ Thus, not surprisingly, more students are on track for promotion from 9th grade to 10th grade. At the end of the 2004-05 school year,

The 9th grade is a very unstable time in children's lives, not only physically, but socially, when they're adjusting to high school. Keeping them away from any distractions and helping them focus on academics is key.

– Michael Valella, Bridgeton 9th Grade Success Academy Teacher

73 percent were promoted to 10th grade; the following school year, 77 percent were promoted.⁵⁷

FOUNDATION FOR SUCCESS: PROVIDING EXTRA SUPPORT DURING STUDENTS' CRITICAL FRESHMAN YEAR

Every year in a student's education is important, but research shows that the first year of high school can be especially significant – and particularly precarious.⁵⁸ Getting off on the wrong foot can mean the difference between a student graduating ready to succeed in college, receiving a diploma but no college acceptances, or, at its worst, dropping out.^{59,60} Yet many students entering large, nonselective (i.e., open enrollment) urban high schools start their freshman year already behind, performing below grade level in English language arts, mathematics, or both.⁶¹ So, in addition to having to deal with the multiple social and emotional pressures associated with transitioning to a new setting, they need to catch up academically. It is little surprise that in some large urban high schools, as many as half of 9th grade students are not promoted on time to 10th grade.⁶² The impact of this delay is alarming. Research shows that compared to students with on-time promotion to

the 10th grade, students who are not performing well enough to be promoted by the end of their first year of high school are three-and-a-half times less likely to stay in school and graduate within five years.⁶³ When a school can help students to overcome these academic and social hurdles, it moves them into a more promising position to earn their high school diploma and to pursue a postsecondary education.

Attended by all Bridgeton High freshmen, the school's 9th Grade Success Academy is intended to bring underperforming students up to grade level and to help Bridgeton's youngest students successfully deal with the social and emotional challenges inherent in transitioning to high school. Creating a sense of belonging and eliminating the possibility of anonymity are key aims. Operating as a school within a school, the academy has its own administrator and is housed in its own section of the building, separate from the upper grades. To help students acclimate to high school, the Success Academy focuses on

- ❖ increasing student attendance,
- ❖ developing students' study and social skills, and
- ❖ providing opportunities for academic acceleration.

Increasing student attendance

The Success Academy concentrates first on getting kids to school since the more time students spend in school, the more they will learn. Students' attendance is monitored closely and tracked over time. Large attendance charts decorate the hallways, highlighting individual students' attendance achievements. For example, students whose attendance is 90 percent or better receive rewards and recognition through monthly pizza parties and other prizes.⁶⁴ Such efforts send students the clear message that their attendance is valued.

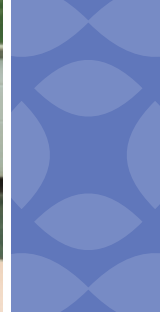
Developing students' study and social skills

All Success Academy 9th graders participate in the "freshman seminar," designed to help them develop or strengthen study skills, develop computer literacy, and learn about postsecondary education and career opportunities. Part of the seminar curriculum addresses the social skills needed to successfully navigate high school and function in a setting where more maturity is expected. Another academy component is character education, which provides students with tools to deal with confrontation and helps them learn to work collaboratively. One Bridgeton administrator says behavioral issues among students often crop up during the early months of freshman

Talent Development High Schools

In 1994, researchers at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland, developed a model for schoolwide high school reform called Talent Development High Schools with Career Academies (TDHS). It was developed specifically for large high schools experiencing serious problems with student attendance and discipline, poor academic achievement, and low graduation rates. With the overall goal of readying all students for college, the TDHS model has several organizational, curricular, and instructional objectives, among them creating a positive school climate, preparing all students to take and succeed in high-level courses in English and math, engaging parents in their children's college-oriented efforts, and supporting staff through professional development and peer coaching. Schools that implement TDHS restructure into "small learning communities" or academies that offer students a more intimate learning environment than is found at large traditional high schools. All students enroll in the 9th Grade Success Academy and, in the 10th grade, enroll in one of several different theme- or career-based academies, each of which serves 250–350 students and is college preparatory in nature. The intent is to have students choose the theme or career of most interest to them and then stay in that smaller learning community for the remainder of their high school experience.

The TDHS model is now being implemented at 113 high schools in 40 districts in 15 states, reaching close to 150,000 students. The average TDHS school enrolls over 1,330 students, the majority of whom are students of color and economically disadvantaged.⁶⁵



year but begin to diminish by mid-year as students learn to handle conflicts more positively. Over the span of one year, Bridgeton's Success Academy saw a dramatic decrease in the number of in-school suspensions of its students, from 482 in 2004–05 to 279 in 2005–06. Out-of-school suspensions also decreased by almost half, dropping from 363 to 186.⁶⁶

Opportunities for academic acceleration

Because a large majority of Bridgeton's students enter 9th grade performing below grade level, there is an intense effort to quickly get them back on track academically. The objectives

are to accelerate students' academic learning and to help them develop the skills necessary to embark on a rigorous college preparatory curriculum. During their first semester in the Success Academy, underperforming students are required to take double blocks (i.e., 84-minute) of both English language arts (ELA) and mathematics each day. During the first semester, these courses use a Talent Development curriculum and accompanying materials designed to bring students up to grade level. The first-semester ELA course, "Strategic Reading," develops reading comprehension and fluency using teacher modeling, mini-lessons, and cooperative teamwork.

Uneven Access to Necessary Courses

One might assume that all students have access to a rigorous college preparatory curriculum. But too often, that is not the case. In some schools, access to even basic college preparatory courses⁶⁷ is limited,⁶⁸ and higher-level courses are even harder to come by. In its most recent transcript analysis, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) looked at the availability of advanced courses in English, math, science, and foreign language and found that more than a quarter of U.S. high school students had no access to such courses at their home school. Only 58 percent had access to at least two courses, and only 22 percent attended schools offering four or more advanced courses.⁶⁹ Low-income students and students of color are less likely to attend high schools offering advanced classes. Hispanic students, for example, are much less likely than other student groups to attend schools that offer the advanced math courses considered critical to college entry and success.⁷⁰ Sometimes, lack of access is a matter of resources. But lack of access can also be a matter of policy, with students' access limited by a school's tracking practices or by explicit or implicit rules about who is "qualified" to take an advanced course. Such policies tend to reflect a belief that certain students are just not "college material."

By the end of the first semester, students in the double-block courses are expected to perform at grade level in both ELA and math and, thus, be ready to succeed in the district's standard college preparatory courses. Students take these college prep courses at an accelerated pace (also in double blocks) during their second semester. In this way, they catch up to students who entered 9th grade performing at or above grade level and have been taking the district's standard college preparatory curriculum at a normal pace. Taking the courses at the regular pace has allowed this latter group of students to take elective courses as well.

Ideally, by the end of their first year in high school, all students in the 9th grade cohort will be ready for promotion to the 10th grade where they can move into an academy of their choice.

For more information on Bridgeton High School visit www.bridgeton.k12.nj.us.

For more information on Talent Development High Schools, visit www.csos.jhu.edu/tdhs/.



Gateway to College at Portland Community College

RECONNECTING OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH TO EDUCATION



PORTLAND, OREGON

PROGRAM PROFILE⁷¹
GATEWAY TO COLLEGE AT
PORTLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE

| | | | |
|--------------------------------|--|---|--|
| Average enrollment age | 17 | Opening date | 2000 |
| Average pre-enrollment GPA | 1.7 | Target population | Out-of-school youth, ages 16–20 ⁷⁴ |
| Average pre-enrollment credits | 7.8 (22 required for HS diploma in Oregon) | Students earning a credential to date ⁷² | 107 high school diplomas 21 associate degrees |
| System | Program | Students served to date ⁷³ | 1540 |

Students who drop out of school prior to getting a high school diploma are not easily categorized. There is no single cause that applies to all or even most students.⁷⁵ A decision to drop out is complex, is often very personal, and usually results from a slow process of disengagement from school.⁷⁶ The dropout issue, of concern nationwide, is particularly significant in Oregon where a recent study reports that only 33 percent of the state’s black students graduated from high school in 2004 – the lowest rate in the nation.⁷⁷ While many out-of-school youth face personal and financial barriers that hinder their return to the classroom, many do, in fact, want to return. A recent study found that dropouts “almost universally expressed great remorse for having left high school and expressed strong interest in re-entering school with students their age.”⁷⁸

Gateway to College is a dropout recovery program designed to give “out-of-school” youth a second chance at achieving academic success. Founded in 2000 at Portland Community College (PCC) in Oregon, the program offers young adults, ages 16 to 20, an opportunity to earn concurrently a high school diploma and an associate’s degree (or significant college credit) through a participating community college system. The Gateway to College program (Gateway) operates as a partnership between a community college and the local school district(s) in its service area.⁷⁹

At PCC, the average Gateway participant enters the program at age 17 with a grade point average of 1.7 (on a standard scale of 4.0) and with 7.8 course credits, compared to the 22 credits Oregon requires for high school graduation. Gateway results show

that, given the opportunity, many young adults can reverse course, return to a school-based learning environment, and succeed academically. When participants in the PCC campus Gateway program were surveyed and asked to compare their Gateway and high school experiences, 75 percent said they were more likely to come to their college classes prepared, with assignments completed, than they had been in high school, and 72 percent said they attended their college classes more regularly than they had attended their high school classes.⁸⁰

Participants’ renewed commitment to education is also evident in the fact that 73 percent of students who have received a high school diploma through the Gateway program have continued their postsecondary education.⁸¹

*Any door is the right door back into school
and back into your future.*

– Gateway to College motto

FOUNDATION FOR SUCCESS: DRAWING OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH BACK INTO THE CLASSROOM

To help students return to school and achieve success, Gateway to College uses three key strategies:

- ❖ providing scheduling flexibility ,
- ❖ establishing a supportive environment, and
- ❖ developing individualized academic plans.

Providing scheduling flexibility

Since students leave school for different reasons, they face different obstacles to returning and succeeding in their coursework. Gateway's students are typically employed at least part-time and many are supporting families. To pursue their educa-

tion, they need flexibility – a key component of the Gateway model. Students in this program have the freedom to proceed through the curriculum at their own pace, provided that they take all the courses appropriate for their area of study. To accommodate students' wide-ranging personal schedules and extracurricular commitments (e.g., job, childcare), the program offers flexible courses of study (e.g., part-time, full-time, summer), as well as morning, afternoon, and evening classes.⁸² For most students, the time from "re-entry" to earning a diploma is between one and three years.

Gateway to College

Initially created in 2000 at Portland Community College, the Gateway to College program has since been replicated in 12 community colleges in partnership with 49 school districts in 10 states.⁸³ The Gateway experience begins with and builds on a student's commitment to succeed, which is initially demonstrated through the student's willingness to participate in a lengthy application process. All prospective Gateway students must complete an application that includes several essays, undergo a personal interview, and attend a two-day session during which their academic readiness and commitment to the program are evaluated through a series of reading, writing, and math assessments.⁸⁴ In recognition that many out-of-school youth no longer consider themselves high schoolers, Gateway has been designed to have all classes take place on the campus of a community college, where they are taught either by college faculty or by Gateway staff. All Gateway classes are at the college level.

Establishing a supportive environment

Gateway's extensive student support system is another important aspect of the program, and flexibility extends to this area as well: Students have access to as much, or as little, support as they need. During students' first term, known as the foundation term, they are assigned to a "learning community" of entering students that serves as a small, supportive peer group. Everyone in the cohort takes the same four first-term courses: reading, writing, math, and a college survival-and-success class. During this time, students refresh their skills, gain basic knowledge, and learn more about the college system. While the goal is for students to become independent learners, many report that the bonds created within their foundation term cohort remain strong, with these peers serving as an informal support system even after students have progressed beyond their first term.⁸⁵

Upon enrollment, all Gateway students are also matched with a resource specialist who serves as mentor, advisor, and advocate. In addition to working directly with students to provide academic, social, and emotional support, a resource specialist refers students to outside services as needed. Available supports include health care, nutrition counseling, teen parenting programs, childcare, transportation, job placement, youth housing programs, substance abuse treatment, mental health programs, and English language instruction services. One resource specialist says the position requires her to serve multiple roles – "advisor, guidance counselor, role model, friend, and parent" – depending on the student and his or her immediate need.⁸⁶ But the director of the Gateway program at PCC, Linda Huddle, describes the role more succinctly. Resource specialists, she says, are "the cement" that holds the program together.

David's* Gateway to College

David dropped out of high school when he was 17. He was 10 credits short of the 22 needed for graduation and had a grade point average of 1.1. After leaving school, David worked in a fast food restaurant until he was 19. He began to regret leaving school, but he didn't see any options for returning. Then, through a friend, he learned about the Gateway program. Upon acceptance, he was matched with a resource specialist who met with him almost daily for a period to provide extensive encouragement and support. Committed and bright, David quickly earned his GED and decided to continue his education. He transitioned into the Gateway program and eventually earned his high school diploma with a substantial number of credits (approximately 75), well on his way to an associate's degree. Last spring, David earned his associate's degree (with a 3.2 grade point average) and is now at Portland State University as a pre-med major.

*"David" is a pseudonym.



Developing individualized academic plans

Once students have successfully completed the foundation term, they move into the transition phase, during which they are fully immersed in regular college-level courses (with college students who are not necessarily in the program) and begin to move at their own pace. During the first transition term, they also take a career development class to help them think about their college major and what career path they want to follow. Gateway currently offers more than 50 career majors, training programs and services related to industries important to the local economy. During this period, each student works

with his or her resource specialist to develop an individual academic plan that identifies the courses needed if the student is to pursue a particular career or academic major. The plan also addresses how the student will fulfill requirements both for high school graduation and a community college associate's degree. At the beginning of each subsequent school term, the student meets again with his or her resource specialist to re-visit and, if needed, update the individual plan.

For more information on Gateway to College visit www.gatewaytocollege.org and www.pcc.edu/pccprep.

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9 Arrupe Jesuit High School is compared to Denver Public Schools because the school is located in the same city and draws from the same student population.

10 Arrupe Jesuit School is a private Catholic school and does not take the Colorado-mandated school tests. Therefore, Arrupe's academic performance cannot be compared with its local Denver City district or any other school district in Colorado.

11 Each of these schools is located in a different state with its own state assessment. Therefore, it is difficult to summarize assessment-related findings.

12 See endnote 10.

13 The latest year for which national data are available.

14 Diplomas Count (2007).

15 The four schools' graduation rates are not necessarily calculated using the same formula.

16 While Bridgeton High School in Bridgeton, New Jersey, is not a Gates Foundation grantee, it is a Talent Development High School, which is a model that is supported by the Foundation.

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83 PCC has plans to replicate Gateway to College at 20 colleges nationally; some replicated programs are already underway. Data provided by Gateway to College, collected October 2005.

84 Students must meet a minimum eighth grade reading level to participate in the Gateway program. Youth who do not meet this requirement can enroll in one of several programs to help bring them to grade level.

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