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Creating a College-Going Culture

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Students of color access higher education opportunities at rates far lower than their White and Asian peers, largely because they face restricted access to the resources at the K–12 level that support college preparation and college going. According to 2017 data from the National Center for Education Statistics, just 36 percent of African American and Latinx students enroll in a four-year university, compared with 41 percent for White and 65 percent for Asian students.[1] Low-income and racially diverse students more often attend schools with higher levels of segregation, lower levels of teacher quality, and fewer resources to support teachers and staff. Students from marginalized populations compete on an inequitable playing field.

The idea that students of color from disadvantaged backgrounds cannot compete at the same level is erroneous. Although individual experiences and home environments influence student achievement, research shows that school environments play an increasingly vital role in preparedness for college and career attainment. So how do we begin to create a stronger pipeline from kindergarten to twelfth grade, and beyond into higher education? How do we increase the level of access that historically marginalized populations have to institutions of higher learning? How do we create a school-wide college-going culture?

As educators, we have done little to provide satisfactory answers to children who ask the obvious questions: "If I don't like school now, why would I go to more school? If school is boring and I don't see myself reflected in what I'm learning and its relevance to my life, then why go for more?" We readily note that more education leads to higher earning power in the US labor market. We might talk about the greater options and flexibility these educational skills can afford a worker over the course

of his or her career. Yet we fail to put in the detailed, at times uncomfortable and difficult work to answer those questions in ways to which students can fully relate and that enable them to see the relevance of what they are learning now to who they are. Creating a true college-going culture means that the possibility of attending college is ingrained in the very fabric of the school, the curriculum, and how teachers operate their classrooms and interact with their students. It means preparing young minds not only for entry into a university environment but also for persistence and success once they enroll. College preparation is very different for students of color, because it also means being equipped with the tools to persist through a potentially culturally isolating and a sometimes even hostile racial environment. It involves both academic and social preparation in ways that belie the seeming simplicity of the idea of a "college-going culture."

Important components of a college-going culture include equipping students not only with the academic skills and knowledge for college success but also with the soft skills that we do not always think about when we talk about students being "college-ready." Schools with a strong college-going culture also employ staff who help all students access rigorous courses,[2] and include a curriculum that promotes student achievement[3] and equips them with the time management, study, critical thinking, and other academic behaviors and skills they need for college.[4] Students in urban schools often experience a watered-down curriculum in primary school, and only a small segment of the school population has access to the advanced classes necessary for college entry.

Classrooms must instead foster an environment where students are able to express opinions and to debate and critique ideas with which they might disagree. Students must have the opportunity to infuse their personal experiences into assignments and discussions, and have the confidence and resilience to accept thoughtful critique and embrace the experiences of others. Too few primary and secondary curricula are designed to build these sorts of skills—to engage with students' lives and embrace the individual diversity they bring to the classroom. Often students are relegated to the cycle of reading, copying, and spewing back what they heard from the teacher or the book, absent any real analysis or critique.

Teachers who effectively engage and empower students of color talk regularly about the number of opportunities students have to

incorporate their own experiences and their own voice in the classroom. Whether through the writing they do or the discussions in class, bringing the students' home or community environment into that room creates a space in which everyone can contribute. The effects this has on students' academic self-concepts and achievement are qualitatively palpable and quantitatively measurable, particularly when districts put these strategies to work not just in high schools but in middle and elementary schools as well. Habits—time management, impulse control, planning and prioritizing, organization, and study habits—are formed in middle school and last throughout adulthood. If we are waiting for high school, we are too late. By then, students have established hard-to-break habits. More often than not, they have been tracked into highly gifted routes or saddled with low expectations, whether in formal programs or teacher perceptions. As early as first grade, students can internalize how others see them in an academic space, and that starts to become ingrained in how they then perform and even see themselves. So how do we nurture students' academic self-concept early on, and not just wait until their junior year in high school to say, "Let's start thinking about what's next" and "You can do it" when they have been hearing for so many years that they can't.

We do not assume that all students will go or want to go to college. Establishing a district-wide college-going culture is not about convincing every child to try for the Ivy League; it is about making that a realistic option for those who dream of doing so. It is about unveiling the sometimes hidden curriculum around college access that is only available to some districts, some schools, some small learning communities, some students. It is about shifting to a culture that opens possibilities to all, while remaining aware of the reality that creating that sort of environment for everyone is no easy task.

What's Missing in Many Schools

The entirety of this book calls for educators to radically rethink how we look at students, their situations, and their communities, and to create more culturally and socially responsive learning environments. Few teachers, however, are trained to integrate a student's outside individual and community experiences into the curriculum and classroom environment. Yet

research shows that employing a **culturally relevant pedagogy**—one that engages the individual growth of students, celebrates their culture, honors the culture of others, and analyzes real-world issues—produces significantly greater outcomes for students of color.[5] This three-pronged consideration of academic success, cultural competency, and sociopolitical conscious-ness increases the relevance of lessons for the students learning them. Lad-son-Billings's pivotal work calls for culturally relevant teachers to utilize students' culture as a vehicle for learning.[6] Simply put, when students see themselves reflected in the curriculum, they engage more in the learning process.

The academic success considerations might require a shift in how a teacher defines student achievement. In my work with teachers, hav-ing them talk about the different ways they define academic success and encourage students' individual growth reveals an array of examples of effective measurements. Instead of a child's success being measured solely in terms of maintaining or improving test scores, it might also take into consideration the way the student's classroom participation and engage-ment with other students flourished from the start to the end of a semes-ter. It might include a student's ability to connect what he or she learned in October to a lesson in January. One middle school teacher in a New York public school described "good faith" assignments that enable students to be the expert by having them write narratives about themselves—an assignment for which every student earns an A. In the first week of every school year, he would learn about his individual students through these narratives and could then build off of that week to week, incorporating relevant ideas and media (e.g., music and video) into lessons and class dis-cussions. These alternative but still rigorous measures of achievement—assessing growth from one month to the next, for instance—enhance academic confidence and success and enable teachers to learn about each of their students.

Of course, making education culturally relevant also requires that teachers learn about their students' culture and about the community in which most of their students live—and then reflect that understanding in how they engage with students and craft their lesson plans. But in addi-tion to that, they have to create an in-school environment that establishes the relevance of their students' experiences while also putting these expe-riences in the context of other diverse experiences. This helps build a skill

set for college, where students must engage in a culture outside their own. In many cases, this involves bringing the real world into the classroom space, requiring that teachers create environments for students to engage with these often-fraught issues, while also feeling comfortable leading those discussions.

Establishing these sorts of classroom environments also shifts us from a **pedagogy of poverty** to a **pedagogy of plenty**.[7] Rather than the traditional rote styles of K–12 learning, which centered more on memorization, homework with little feedback, and simply moving students on from here, a pedagogy of plenty thinks beyond just one particular classroom space and students knowing just one particular answer. It creates a place for students to broaden their learning experience and allows teachers to connect a much wider variety of lesson points for students. I often think about one seventh-grade teacher, Mr. Quest, who loved figuring out how to incorporate culture and the surrounding world into the classroom space, and even challenging school norms when doing so. There was nothing he was afraid to use as a learning tool. He had his students critique the Pledge of Allegiance and gave his students shared power in the classroom space and a platform to understand what the pledge means for their cultural environment. Quest said, "I told them it was optional. There was a school rule around [reciting] it, but I taught it breeds too much nationalism, which can be dangerous. However, if they wanted to pledge, I told them it was fine." It does not take too much imagination to see how this begins to create more-engaged learners able to critique the world around them.

Simply put, what these teachers demonstrate is care. Thus a college-going culture intentionally engages a culturally diverse student body but also involves caring individuals. Although this might seem trite and too simplistic to some, education research on resilient students found that a favorite teacher who served as more than just an instructor for academic skills was among the most frequently encountered positive role models outside of the family circle.[8] A caring relationship with a teacher gives youth further motivation for wanting to succeed.[9] **Resilience theory** illustrates just how significantly a caring individual with high expectations in students' lives can help them persist and achieve. This need not require an adult's full immersion in every aspect of a child's life. In fact, research shows that students who experience such involvement in at least one facet produce better academic outcomes.[10] When students have at least one person in their

life who cares about them and has high expectations of them—perhaps a counselor or a church member who helps them work through issues of instability in a foster home—that becomes the turning point for their self-image, confidence, and academic trajectory. This kind of relationship builds internal resilience, exhibits care, and creates a support network where one might not be present otherwise.

Years ago, I interviewed a student, the oldest of eleven kids in an emotionally and verbally abusive home environment. In middle school, she already had to care for her younger siblings, and her mother did not care whether or not she attended school. Yet when she told me of her experience from kindergarten through sixth grade, she talked about the role of individuals who cared for her along her journey. A teacher noticed that she was not coming to school and got the district's permission to pick her up. Other administrators noticed how well she was doing in certain subjects and slotted her into higher-level classes. Leaders in college-prep programs made allowances for her given her lack of familial involvement and gave her access to college classes and college-prep information. And someone at her church helped her fill out her college application and complete the FAFSA, and moved her into her college dorm. She was fortunate to find such a series of concerned and caring adults, yet none of those adults had to make extraordinary interventions across multiple facets of her life. Collectively, with relatively modest involvement, they contributed to her own resiliency, enabling her to excel.

Schools and educators must build the kinds of environments that foster more of these types of resiliency-building engagements that provide culturally relevant classroom experiences and establish a pervasive college-going culture.

Key Components for Creating a College-Going Culture

The educational environments from which college-bound students readily emerge tend to display similar characteristics. They identify the strengths students have and build on them. They incorporate rigor in the classroom and push students to achieve. And, particularly in under-resourced, disadvantaged communities, they incorporate culturally proficient practices, so that students see themselves in the curriculum. Establishing all of these elements has become increasingly difficult in a

system focused on achievement on standardized tests. The race to prepare young people for tests leaves teachers little capacity to learn about their students' culture and community and prepare a lesson that incorporates those notions. Hence, although the long-term effects of these strategies are great, they often require additional time, skills, and training that are not available to teachers. Yet focusing on a handful of high-level components—curriculum; school culture and teacher beliefs; school events, environment, and exposure; and educational resources—can provide a few touchpoints where educators can start building an effective college-going culture.

Curriculum

A culturally relevant curriculum that honors students' experiences and brings their voice to the classroom enables them to engage in, see the relevance of, and connect with what they are learning. Previous chapters illustrate the importance of racially affirming and culturally supportive learning spaces to educational wellness. This same concept is the underpinning of creating a college-going culture. Educators at all levels must develop racial awareness and cultural competence to effectively engage students in the learning process and to build their desire to continue in their educational journey. This brings with it the challenge to discover ways to blend students' culture with another diverse cultural experience to provide both relevance of the known and discovery of the new.

In my conversations with teachers in urban schools about how they develop and use culturally relevant curriculum, they share that this extends beyond how students are reflected in reading material and rote assignments; it also taps into youth culture and engaging students where they are. Some teachers incorporate social media platforms, and others use more music, GIFs, or video in the classroom. Teachers who espouse a culturally relevant curriculum also try to incorporate real-world events in their classroom space. This can include discussions and assignments on the role that government and community institutions play in students' everyday lives, on the impact of unjust immigration reform on their communities, or on topics ranging from climate change in science class to the historical analysis of protests in concert with upcoming teachers' strikes.

How does a teacher from a White, middle-class family overcome the awkwardness of talking to students of color about police shootings of unarmed African American teens or the challenges faced by undocumented immigrants? Unfortunately, what we find at times is how uncomfortable educators are in discussing race and racism in schools. Students often are the first to know about what is going on around the world because they are on social media platforms that provide them with in-the-moment accounts of what is happening in their local, national, and even international environments. So although teachers are reticent to broach social issues in class, students are primed to participate in classroom discussions on contemporary world issues that could be guided and facilitated by informed teachers. Are we afraid to engage in world issues because we feel as though class is not the place for it? Incorporating such issues may be easier for our history teachers and our English teachers, but do we see a cultural relevance for our science and math teachers as well? This might require that teachers change their lesson plans from one semester to the next, but the relevance of the curriculum and what it reflects is a primary starting point for a college-going culture.

School Culture and Teacher Beliefs

School culture involves the way teachers, administrators, and school staff collectively influence the functioning of the school and extends to how classroom practices and teacher–student interactions impact students' performance, self-efficacy, and academic self-concept. A culture of care and teachers' belief in each student's ability to access college enhance readiness for higher education. A culture of care involves a variety of individuals on the same school campus. For some students it is an administrator, for others it is their teacher, but students know when folks do not care about them. They know when their teacher is disengaged. They know when it is just a paycheck for their teacher. They know when their teacher is only going to be there for a year. Even when teachers and administrators pass them through, they can spot the spaces where care is present or missing.

Students can also sense the sort of belief that cripples their interest or shores up their resilience. When we talk to students outside the classroom and compare those conversations with our teacher interviews, the students

almost invariably pinpoint their teacher's opinion of them. So teachers might have those conversations at home or with their colleagues at work, and use those discussions, consciously or subconsciously, to identify the students they need to invest in rather than give up on in their class. That sort of belief shows up every day in what students choose to care about and what they choose to ignore.

So even though we have to talk about the hard academic skills and the curriculum, we also need to think about the role that care and belief play in the ways teachers and administrators engage with students. Whether they are offering a high five or a simple word of affirmation when talking with a struggling student, educators need to think about how to create a classroom environment that makes students believe in themselves and to create an overall school environment that demonstrates care.

School Environment, Events, and Exposure

In addition to considerations about curriculum and building a culture of care and belief, the school's physical environment, the events that take place on campus, and the ideas to which students are exposed play a vital role in building a college-going culture. From hallways that affirm student potential to themed classrooms, a student's surroundings need to reflect consistent exposure to college opportunities. Much about creating a college culture can seem overwhelming, but the small things add up, too, such as themed classrooms decorated or designed to correspond to a particular college or university. For example, a University of Michigan classroom with school banners and colors seeds a student's imagination of college life in Ann Arbor. As students switch classrooms, they learn about a different school and are exposed to a variety of options every day and every new school year. Even something as seemingly simple as altering the physical environment exposes students to new and different experiences, priming them and opening their imagination to different opportunities.

Resources

To a great degree, the resources a school provides very much overlap with the environment, events, and exposure just described. I list it separately

here because the concept of resources adds an element of external opportunities, experiences, and constituencies. This might include college and university visits not just during a student's senior year but throughout K–12 education. This begins to give students a sense of a college environment and fosters direct engagement between colleges, college students, and the next generation of scholars coming their way. Teachers can also invite friends and people from the surrounding community to present a wide variety of career options for students. Doctors, lawyers, and businesspeople are often the extent of career options that students imagine, unaware of the array of professional and vocational options available to them. Exposure to people working in various fields enables students to experience an environment that they have heard about but never encountered firsthand.

Practical Tips for Creating a College-Going Culture in Schools

Although creating a fully effective college-going culture requires a concerted, system-wide effort by administrators, teachers, and counselors alike, there are a variety of straightforward projects that schools and/ or individual faculty can institute to begin seeding such an environment. If the key components discussed earlier lay out a strategy for building the college-going culture, these practical illustrations begin to chart out some of the tactics one might employ. Over the years, my colleagues and I have encountered dozens of novel and innovative ways to promote college readiness in students. The next sections describe but a few of them.

Reenvision Group Work

Reenvisioning group work involves the creation of intentional groups, rather than having students self-select their teams. This might mean creating a diversity of experiences in a group, or deliberately creating teams that force more advanced students to interact—perhaps even rely on—students who might not typically excel or engage. Students learn from being able to teach, so how do you create intentional groups in which students might learn from one another? An assignment that requires both the scholarly attention of some high-achieving students and the personal experience

and cultural relevance of a struggling student encourages participation and input from both participants.

Utilize Good-Faith Assignments

Good-faith assignments, such as the example noted earlier, can undergird a student's self-efficacy and academic self-concept by assessing work, at least in part, on metrics that each student can readily achieve. So rather than grading a student on syntax and grammar, a good-faith assignment might seek to tap into the knowledge he or she brings to the group or the classroom. If it is an assignment that allows students to talk about something they know about—their home, their community, or their environment—they can confidently share their expertise and earn a good grade. These assignments do not replace the core educational requirements, but they help build students' academic self-concept in ways that, eventually, give them the wherewithal to tackle those challenges too.

Become an Interior Decorator and a Proud Alum

Colleges and universities have no better champions than their alumni. Teachers can demonstrate their school pride in the classroom, building a college-tinged environment while also serving as an ambassador of higher education in general. We all, especially as children, absorb elements of our surroundings. And hey, who doesn't enjoy the occasional chance to talk up their alma mater? Each classroom representing one specific school enables students at the middle school and high school levels specifically to learn about many different colleges and universities as they go from period to period, increasing their exposure to an array of college and universities.

Monthly College Days and College Rallies (Students and Teachers)

Taking the proud-alum concept one step further, teachers, teacher groups, or school-wide faculty and administration might create college days, when everyone celebrates a university or set of universities. Perhaps everyone wears a college T-shirt or sweatshirt. A district might even get local colleges to donate paraphernalia to support the rallies, leaving

students with gear that, who knows, might help sway their higher-education decisions in the future. One college counselor in South Los Angeles established "College-Gear Day" at her middle school. This was a uniformed school, but students got to wear college gear one day a month, which was a welcome change from their daily monotonous attire. These monthly college days do not have to involve full-fledged fairs or an entire event that takes a lot of planning and effort from school staff, but can merely include a lunchtime rally or simply wearing college paraphernalia. A huge annual college fair is great and gives students insight into the wide variety of options they might have after high school, but monthly college days provide the sorts of consistent exposure that help establish a persistent college-going culture.

Power in Naming

Some schools have shifted the terms they use, both in classrooms but even for students themselves, and I have observed a remarkable effectiveness in some of these changes. Some schools, for example, refer to young people as scholars rather than students, and teachers work to evoke the cognitive and creative extension that the term implies. This sort of renaming elicits a sort of distinction that students can see themselves. Other schools have shifted the structure of block schedules to more closely resemble university courses, or they have renamed schedule blocks to reflect different colleges or universities. Even simply naming things differently can influence students' perspectives and create a stronger college-going culture.

Have the Conversation

Students often perceive their teachers as superheroes or as alien entities. They are surprised when they see teachers at the grocery store or find out they have kids of their own: "You have a life outside these doors?!?" Students many times have difficulty accepting that their teachers weren't born teachers and have little knowledge of their teachers' educational journey. Sometimes, it is as simple as having a conversation about what it took for you to get to where you are that humanizes and actualizes. There is power in telling students you didn't get straight As your entire life, or that you

struggled at times in college and even changed your major a couple of times. A teacher's background story not only humanizes the teacher but also, more important, provides a reference point for the student that he or she did not have before. Some teachers make sharing their life a game; others add it in as a weekly event, a story about their experience and about their road to college. Ultimately, these conversations reveal that everyone has peaks and valleys, and hearing about teachers' road to and through higher education is critical for students to hear.

Exposure

As noted earlier, exposure is a huge part of creating a college- and career-going culture, but it does not have to be a grand program or field trip to Big State University. Teachers have come up with a variety of ways to bring the college experience into the classroom and expose students to various careers. One might split the class into teams on both sides of a divisive topic and then ask a couple of local attorneys to describe the idea of a law school's moot court and prep the teams for debate. Or more simply, one might bring in a college friend who has come to visit and have her talk about her career and how she got there. Bring her to the classroom to share, or have a school-wide assembly with a handful of local owners of small businesses. Exposure does not always have to be a field trip away from the school; it can involve bringing surrounding community members and personal networks into the school.

Leverage Community Partnerships to Present Multiple Pathways

Sometimes we don't readily think to offer this career exposure. We might do a better job of providing exposure to colleges and universities than we do to different career and vocational pathways. We can remedy that by bringing in folks to talk to our students: a beautician who talks about beauty school and licensing requirements for the job, a mechanic who started out as an apprentice at a dealership and then made the leap to open his own garage. These visits expose students to other career trajectories that they might never have thought about otherwise—and provide that wide variety of options in hopes of finding

a career that resonates with every student in the room and taps into students' natural talents that they might not even know could be part of a viable career option.

Know Your Role, Biases, and Limits

Teachers are care providers, not just educators. Each one has a critical role in caring for students. Collectively, we need to do more to help teachers embrace their role as caregivers and figure out how they can best serve students. As noted earlier, providing care does not mean addressing all the challenges and ills a child suffers. In fact, small, everyday affirmations and supportive words often have a more powerful effect on a student's self-efficacy and self-image. Taking time as an administrator to know your students' names and asking about their day can humanize you in students' eyes—*and them in your eyes, too.* Do you know why that student is always in trouble or always late? Simply taking the time to hear students is an important part of creating and demonstrating a culture of care.

Teachers, counselors, and administrators also need to take stock of their biases. Which students do we think are destined for greatness, and which students do we not engage with as much? How we categorize students and stratify them into different groups and classifications—even in our own minds—affects how we treat them. Teachers might never verbalize their biases, but young people know when teachers already have a way of seeing them, and they can read both the implicit and explicit biases teachers have toward certain sets of students.

In discussing the role of being an educator and care provider, educators do not often talk about their personal limitations. Teachers note with pride how well their students do despite the school's limited resources, but they far less often discuss the toll that supporting such achievement takes on their own lives. In addition to all the creativity, passion, and expertise a teacher brings to the classroom, does he or she also bring the stress and the raggedness that comes with providing those personal energies? Self-care, for both students and teachers, is a critical element of an effective college-going culture, and we need to talk more about the day-to-day limitations we all face.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- A college-going culture provides a broader array of postsecondary options for students and is especially vital in improving the college enrollment and completion rates for students of color. Although creating the most effective college-going culture requires a comprehensive effort across a school district or system, teachers can use a variety of easily digestible and implementable projects to make school more relevant for students—and make students more resilient for the challenges they will face along the way.

- School communities in general and educators in particular need to recognize the impact that social and cultural supports have on both students' academic success and our belief in their potential. Making this significant shift in mindset—recognizing teachers' indispensable role in the care for and belief in students—can make a huge difference in academic achievement and preparation for higher education.

- To make these sorts of shifts and create a true college-going culture, schools and communities must provide teachers with the support they need. The responsibility of care for and belief in students must extend beyond the classroom, especially when financial and similar resources are limited.

Questions from the Field

In our conversations with teachers, very important questions regarding creating a college-going culture arise. The following are a few that I hope are helpful in your work with students.

1. *How much of creating a college-going culture falls on teachers, and how much on guidance counselors or college counselors? Given that teachers' capacity is stretched so thin as it is, what more can they do?*

Creating a college-going culture is a school-wide effort. It is not only a teacher's responsibility, or only a counselor's, or the sole responsibility of the family. Some might suggest that it is all up to parents to provide that environment and capacity for students, but everyone plays a role. That is why in this work, we often talk about the small things teachers can do. If you can make that one small shift, it might impact one student. It isn't difficult to provide richer feedback to our students or to be more affirming or to create group assignments that allow our students to engage with one another. If we can think about this in terms of smaller shifts and not overall changes or overhauls, we have options that we can accommodate.

There is a role for counselors, of course. Maybe part of that is to go to the workshops conducted by the different colleges and universities, so that the counselors learn each year about updates in admissions requirements. The University of California system has a UC Counselor's Conference every year. Counselors can also be readers for college applications at different colleges and universities, which provides a different level of insight that they can use to advise students. So rather than getting too caught up in the huge transformational pieces, I try to get people to think about the things they can do at a small scale that may help the counselor, help the school, or help the teacher make a shift that is not too overwhelming.

2. *How can teachers, administrators, and counselors stay up to date with the constantly shifting and increasingly competitive college entrance requirements?*

Many admissions officers and college and university recruiters are charged with going out to different schools, and particularly to different communities and neighborhoods—both those that have historically sent students to their school and those that have not. Sometimes just bringing those individuals to the campus again and getting them in front of more faculty and staff is helpful. So when we bring college representatives to campus to see

students, we can also make sure that counselors and administrators learn more from the college representatives as well. Sometimes keeping up to date also involves going to the conferences, workshops, and seminars that many of these schools offer. We might not always have the time to attend or even know that these events are happening, so tasking a couple of counselors with keeping an ear to the ground for new updates will help all of us advise students better. Even then, we need also to consider the different colleges or universities in which students might have interest, but with which we have no relationship. Even beyond getting the school to send information, providing opportunities for teachers and counselors to learn more about colleges of interest to students is important.

How do we forge relationships with these schools and build a sense of connection? That might involve appointing a liaison between the university and the school, someone who sits in a college center and regularly meets with students who express interest in that school and/or its programs. The connections established with university representatives can provide resources to help us understand what is happening on their campus, and then how we can integrate that into the college-going culture on our own campus. Those conversations are useful as well.

3. *College isn't for everyone, so why do we even talk about this? Why do we talk about "college ready for all" if all students aren't going to college?*

   We have to expand the way we think about "college ready" to accommodate the notion that we want all students to have that option if they so choose. It is really about providing all students with the opportunity and the resources for them to make that decision. We have to create an environment in which students are equipped to be able to make that decision come senior year because we provided them with the information and resources along the way. I think we also need to consider expanding the

terminology to "college and career going" instead of simply "college going." Part of that is exposing students to other trade, vocational, and career opportunities that they might not come into contact with otherwise. That could include apprenticeships and shadowing opportunities to provide a pathway and exposure opportunities to vocational and trade arenas. That consistent exposure, again, puts students in a better position come senior year to make a decision, because they have seen and learned about a variety of options and opportunities.

Recommended Resources

Conley, D. (2007). *Redefining college readiness.* Eugene, OR: Educational Policy Improvement Center. Conley provides a comprehensive definition of college readiness, and strategies for developing and achieving essential skill sets. Segments of this reading also focus on providing relevant information for schools and students to foster college readiness.

Knight, M. G., & Marciano, J. E. (2013). *College ready: Preparing black and Latina/o youth for higher education—A culturally relevant approach.* New York, NY: Teachers College Press. This book highlights the narratives and perspectives of Black and Latinx students and families and includes the supports and hindrances related to their college readiness and access. This book provides support for teachers and school administrators in creating a culturally relevant, school-wide, college-going culture.

Conley, D. (2010). *College and career ready: Helping all students succeed beyond high school.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. This book describes best practices and clear examples of what actual high schools are doing to foster college and career readiness. The uniqueness of this book is its intentional inclusion of career readiness and work preparedness for all students.

Curry, J. R. (2015). African Americans and career and college readiness. In J. R. Curry & M. A. Shillingford (Eds.), *African American students' career and college readiness: The journey unraveled.* Lanham,