



College-Going Culture

what you believe, what you say, what you see, and what you do

Office of Equity and Access

Adapted with permission from Oregon GEAR UP (oregongearup.org).

NYC Department of Education

**COLLEGE
ACCESS
FOR ALL**

REACHING HIGHER

Create a school environment, policies, and teacher expectations that support all students' pursuit of a postsecondary education.

Strategies

- Create a college-going culture in schools.
- Consistently communicate the expectation of postsecondary education

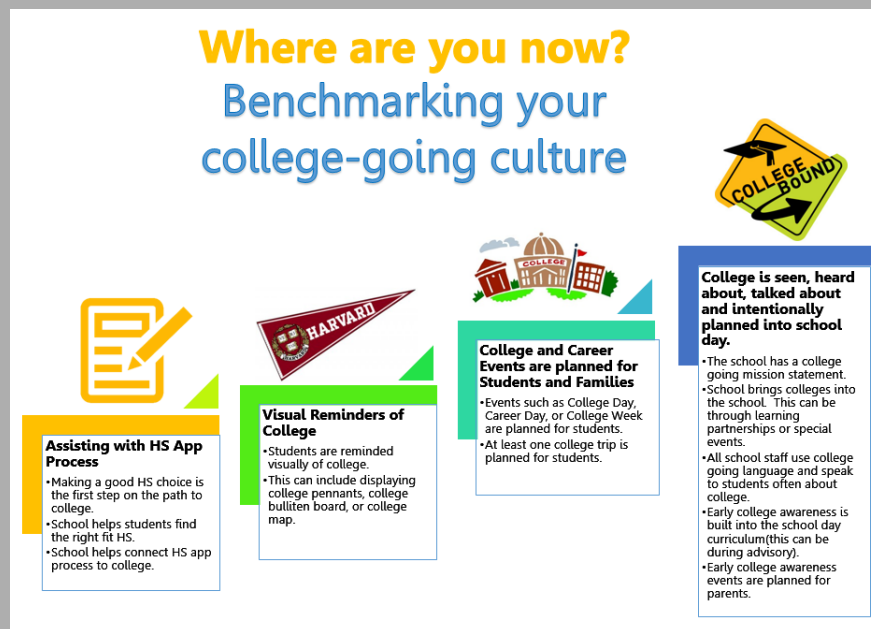


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Sources & More Information

UC-Berkeley, [Advancing College-Going Culture](#)

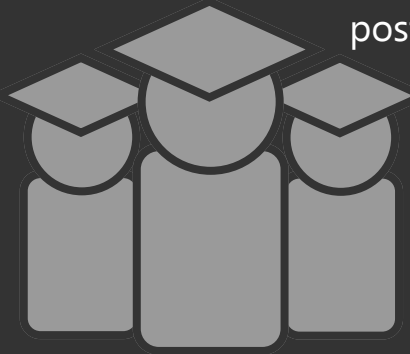
College Board, [Creating a College-Going Culture Guide](#)

UCLA, [Creating a College-Going Culture: A Resource Guide](#)

USC Center for Higher Education Policy Analysis, [Getting There—and Beyond: Building a Culture of College-going in High Schools](#)

WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

School culture and climate directly affect student learning and engagement as well as college aspirations and preparation. A college-going culture sets high expectations for all students and provides them with the academic preparation and other tools to meet those expectations. Students benefit from ever-present reminders of college expectations in visual reminders, verbal interactions and activities dedicated to exploring



postsecondary opportunities. All school staff, plus families, students and the community play a role in consistently echoing the expectation of college. **This is especially important for first-generation-to-college students and their families who should feel from the school that it is an expectation for them to attend and be successful in college and beyond.**

A school's culture is:
what you believe
what you say
what you see
& what you do

Educators, students and communities can set the tone by creating traditions, providing visual reminders, and regularly talking about the expectation for education after high school. This toolkit will provide several easy, low-cost ways to highlight a college-going culture.

A college-going culture sets high expectations for all students and provides them with the academic preparation and other tools





WHAT YOU BELIEVE

DOES YOUR SCHOOL HAVE A COLLEGE-GOING CULTURE?

The first step is to understand where your school is in terms of creating a college-going culture for students and families. A college-going culture can exist in schools where students are held to high academic standards, the school staff are committed to students' postsecondary goals, college is a visual reality, and everyone within the school community promotes and supports college expectations. Every middle school has already begun by assisting with the High School application process—**making a good High School choice is a NYC middle schoolers first step on the path to college.**

*In packet

Where are you now? Benchmarking your college-going culture



Assisting with HS App Process

- Making a good HS choice is the first step on the path to college.
- School helps students find the right fit HS.
- School helps connect HS app process to college.



Visual Reminders of College

- Students are reminded visually of college.
- This can include displaying college pennants, college bulletin board, or college map.



College and Career Events are planned for Students and Families

- Events such as College Day, Career Day, or College Week are planned for students.
- At least one college trip is planned for students.

College is seen, heard about, talked about and intentionally planned into school day.

- The school has a college going mission statement.
- School brings colleges into the school. This can be through learning partnerships or special events.
- All school staff use college going language and speak to students often about college.
- Early college awareness is built into the school day curriculum (this can be during advisory).
- Early college awareness events are planned for parents.



WHAT YOU BELIEVE

BUILD STAFF BUY-IN

A college-going culture starts with the expectations and attitudes of administrators, staff and teachers.

Administrators should lead **Staff Discussions** to discuss current data on academic achievement, college enrollment and student, teacher and parent attitudes as well as the merits of postsecondary education and the [importance of high expectations](#).

Ask staff: “What does college and career ready mean?” and discuss the various answers and how to achieve these outcomes.

CREATE A MISSION STATEMENT

Mission statements for schools and organizations serve as guiding principles for staff, students, parents and the community. In order to create a college-going culture, these stakeholders need a shared, expressed goal; a college mission statement should succinctly state the expectation of postsecondary education for all students as well as lay out an action plan with measurable goals.

Creating and adopting a college mission statement and action plan should be a collaborative, inclusive process that encourages buy-in of all stakeholders. This may involve educating administrators, staff, students and parents about the importance of higher education.

In addition to a well-crafted mission statement, it may be helpful to have a slogan that sums up your intentions in a digestible, catchy phrase. Keep it short—like what you would see on a bumper sticker.



COLLEGE

EXAMPLES OF MISSION STATEMENTS

“Hawtree Creek Middle School students will graduate as leaders equipped with a set of skills and body of knowledge that can be applied and utilized in high school, college and beyond.”

Hawtree Creek MS—Queens, NY

“At City Middle School our mission is to prepare EVERY student for success in high school and college.”

Example



WHAT YOU SAY (& WHO SAYS IT)

Talk regularly about the expectation of college with students and parents to reinforce the college mission statement. This message should come from **everyone**—administrators, teachers, staff, other students and the community.

FROM THE SCHOOL

- **Language Choices:** Pay attention to the little things, such as saying “*When* you go to college...” not “*If* you go to college...”
- **Announcements (in packet):** Take advantage of a captive audience and share facts and information about college preparation one day a week.
- **College Conversations (in packet):** Once a week, spend 5-10 minutes of dedicated time in Advisory or in a class to discuss students’ future plans and getting ready for college and career.

FROM PARENTS

- **Newsletters:** Send home monthly parent newsletters with conversation prompts.
- **Workshops:** Offer workshops for parents

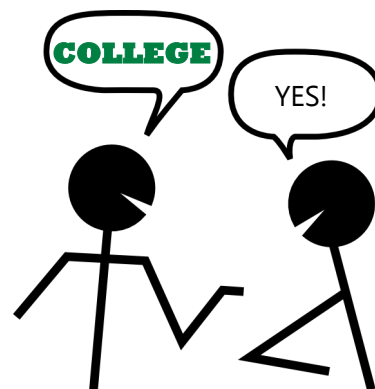
and students that encourage conversations about postsecondary plans.

FROM PEERS

- **High School Student Mentors:** Use high school students as mentors and tutors. Have high school students create a short presentation or activity for middle school students about college.
- **College Mentors:** Find opportunities for **local college students to come to your school** and talk with students. Some ideas include volunteer projects, tutoring, reading with students, holding a basketball tournament coached by college students.
- **Alumni Panel:** Invite high school alumni who are now in college (as well as their parents!) to speak to current students and their parents at a college information night to share what they wish they would have known.

► FAMILY RESOURCE GUIDE

Information and resources provided on how to start thinking and planning for college are included in the “Early College Awareness Family Planning Guide” in your binder.





WHAT YOU SEE

Broadcast your college visuals in the hallways, in your classroom and in your offices. Think of it as advertising—but instead of selling toothpaste or potato chips, you're selling postsecondary education.



College Pennants and Posters can often be donated—contact colleges and universities to see if they will provide them for you.

Computer Bookmarks: Set the home page on every computer to a college search site like bigfuture.com and pre-load college websites in the browser bookmarks.

Flags, T-shirts, Hallway Signs and any other way you can think to advertise the college message!

State Map: Put up a state map and label all of the community colleges, 4-year universities and trade schools.

Teacher Door Posters: Display each teacher's alma mater on their door.

College Door Wars: Turn it into a competition and get students and teachers excited about creating a college-going culture. Provide paper, scissors, college catalogs and other materials.

Bulletin Boards: Use school bulletin boards for a rotating display of college and career themes such as College of the Month, SAT Word of the Day or Cool Careers.

Incorporate your Alumni: Take photos of alumni students who are attending and/or graduated college and display on a prominent wall.



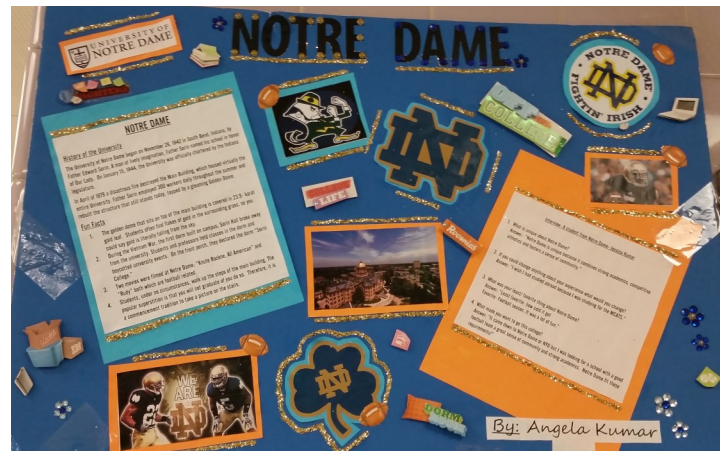
Alumni bulletin board at Patricia Mirabal Middle School in Manhattan.



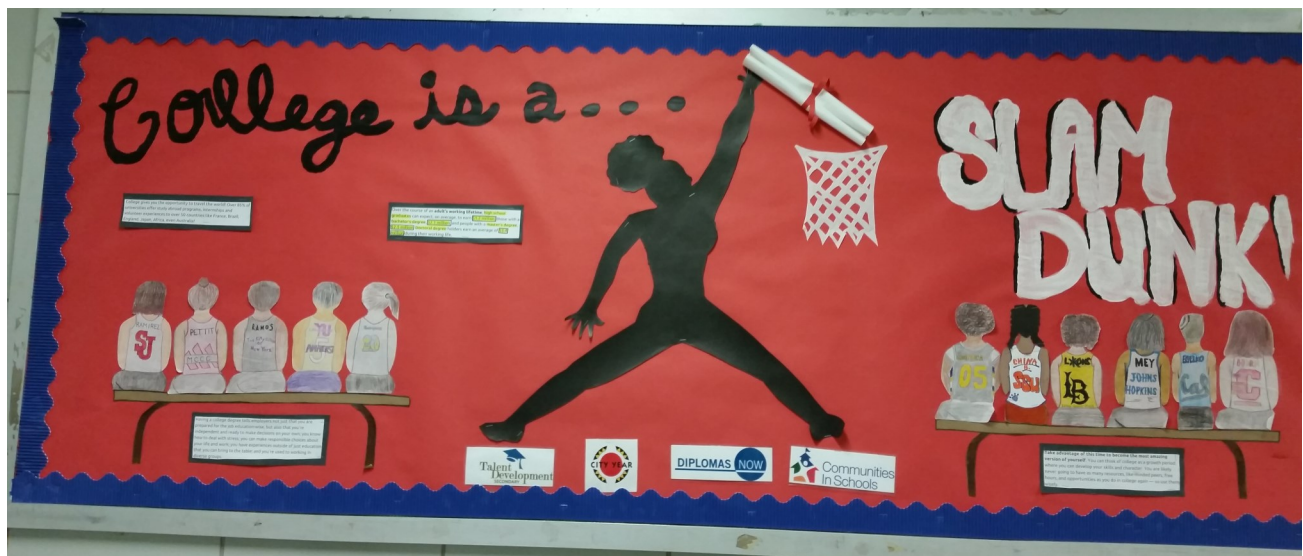
WHAT YOU SEE

GET CRAFTY

- **DIY Pennants:** Have students make pennants of local universities or have them design their own perfect college.
- **“I’m Going to College” Mirrors:** Spruce up the bathrooms or buy cheap magnetic locker mirrors and decorate with affirming messages about higher education.



Students created posters for College Day at Edwin Markham Middle School in Staten Island. These are displayed in the entryway of the school.



A college bulletin board at John Ericsson Middle School in Brooklyn.

► POSTERS

Download or order posters that spotlight the importance of college and careers. Find cheap color printing at Costco or other discount stores.



WHAT YOU DO

A college-going culture celebrates postsecondary education regularly and gives students the information and skills needed to succeed. For NYC middle school students the first step of their post-secondary plan is completing the High School (HS) Application. The level of student and family engagement in this process is what will ensure a good fit HS match and set them on the path to college. Create school traditions and regular practices that encourage aspirations and highlight the HS application process, while connecting it to how this will affect their post-secondary plans. **You are already doing it! By helping your students with the HS application process you are setting the path to college.**

CONNECTING THE HIGH SCHOOL APPLICATION PROCESS TO COLLEGE

- **Career and future planning:** Have all students research careers; this will help them with **choosing a HS that fits their interests.**
- **Mirroring the college app process:** Applying to HS is going to be much like applying to college: connect how these steps will be similar for choosing colleges to apply to.
 - Using HS directory to research
 - Visiting schools
 - Understanding your interests and passions
- Teach students and families about **key college prep indicators** to note in HS info including:
 - Graduation rate
 - College enrollment rate
 - Availability of AP classes
- **Create a HS Pennant Board:** Have students create pennants for HS which they are interested to attend.
- **HS Application Events:** Celebrate 8th graders

HS matches much like seniors acceptance to college.

- Post photos of the 8th graders with where they are going to HS and where they want to go to college.

*In packet

Congratulations John B. who will attend Harvest Collegiate High School!



► High School Application Resources

Included in your binder are resources to assist with the HS application process such as workshop templates.



WHAT YOU DO

PARTNER WITH COLLEGES

- **Presentations and Guest Speakers:** Find opportunities for **local college students to come to your school**. Some ideas include volunteer projects, tutoring, reading with students, or holding a basketball tournament coached by college students.
- **Summer Programs:** Partner with local postsecondary institutions to offer summer camps and workshops either on campus or at your school.
- **Virtual Visits:** Ask professors and current college students to serve as pen pals with students or classes, either via mail or video chat service like Skype.

HELP STAFF BE KNOWLEDGABLE

- **Professional development for all staff:** Continue the conversation about college and career readiness. Read [books and articles](#) in Professional Learning Communities or share [research briefs](#) during staff meetings that specifically highlight the benefits of exposing MS students to college.
- **Staff Workshops:** Help staff help students by holding workshops or offering coaching on how to incorporate early college awareness inside and outside the classroom.

MAKE IT FUN

- **College Gear Day:** Choose a day of the week or month for students and staff to wear college-related gear. Offer incentives or small prizes for participants.
- **College Rivalry Days:** Take advantage of your state's college rivalries to plan fun (and educational) activities about college around major sporting events.
- **College Sports:** Take a group of students to watch a local college sports team.



- **College Arts:** Take a group of students to see a local college play, dance performance or step competition.





RESOURCES

Early College Awareness Curriculum

The **National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC)** has created a five session lesson plan for building college awareness with students in grades 7 and 8: www.nacacnet.org/research/KnowledgeCenter/

Curriculum: www.nacacnet.org/research/PublicationsResources/Marketplace/Documents/SBS_MiddleSchool.pdf



"My Future, My Way" is a college-planning workbook designed for middle school (MS) students from the U.S. Department of Education. You can download the guide: studentaid.ed.gov/sa/sites/default/files/my-future-my-way.pdf or request print copies by visiting www.FSAPubs.gov. There is also a MS Online Checklist to prepare for college: studentaid.ed.gov/sa/prepare-for-college/checklists/middle-school

College Board's, "CollegeEd Middle School Student Workbook" gets kids thinking about the path to college and is accompanied by an educator guide.: secure-media.collegeboard.org/digitalServices/swf/college-ed/middle-school-student-workbook/index.html There is an accompanying parent guide that can be distributed to families for use at home or used in parent-student workshops.

College Board's, "Big Future" page includes additional resources for college-planning workshops with students, including handouts, presentations, lessons plans, and case studies: bigfuture.collegeboard.org/

Kids2College (K2C) brings early college awareness and a college-going culture to your community. The Sallie Mae Fund provides the national curriculum and training free of charge to schools and community groups: www.kids-2-college.org/

The **DOE's Office of Post-Secondary Readiness** annually updates its **College Handbook**: schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/63B71DD0-CD35-43F5-AF58-7670AD4771EC/0/CollegeHandbook2015.pdf a comprehensive guide to the college application process. Though targeted primarily at high school students, you may find excerpts to be helpful and appropriate for your middle schoolers.

Our materials were adapted from the **Oregon GEARUP** program. Many more helpful resources for early college awareness can be found through their website: oregongearup.org/resources and are free!

COLLEGE-GOING CULTURE PLANNING GUIDE

	Activity	Lead Person/Group	Materials/Needs	Timeline
WHAT YOU BELIEVE (how will you build staff buy in?)				
WHAT YOU SAY				
WHAT YOU SEE				
WHAT YOU DO				



COLLEGE ACCESS FOR ALL

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