

# Want to get more kids into college?

We do know one important fact from quite a bit of research:

*Students choose college if they are educated and raised in a culture where college is valued and emphasized.*

**What helps students decide to go to college?**  
That's the question every teacher, counselor, and administrator wants an answer to.

*There is no "quick fix" to college attendance rates, but there is hope!*

Here are a few specifics:

1. Students who decide to go to college early get there more often.
2. Families that lack college information or resources don't send many children to college.
3. Schools where counselors collaborate with other staff members and students send more students to college.

In schools where students go to college, certain common factors are obvious.

These schools *create a COLLEGE CULTURE that all students and their families experience.* Where such a culture exists, all students are prepared for a full range of postsecondary options through structural, motivational, and experiential college preparatory opportunities. In these schools...

- **School leadership is committed to building a college culture**
- **All school personnel provide a consistent message to students that supports their quest for a college preparatory K-12 experience**
- **All counselors are college counselors**
- **Counselors, teachers, and families are partners in preparing students for college**

<p>Schools with a "college culture" usually exhibit most or all of the following <b>NINE CRITICAL PRINCIPLES of a COLLEGE CULTURE:</b></p>		
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>College Talk</u></b></p> <p>Clear, ongoing communication among students, teachers, administrators, and families about what it takes to get to college.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Clear Expectations</u></b></p> <p>Explicit, clearly-defined goals, communicated in ways that make them part of the culture of the school.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Information &amp; Resources</u></b></p> <p>Comprehensive, up-to-date college information and resources, easily accessible by all students, families, and school personnel.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Comprehensive Counseling Model</u></b></p> <p>View of counseling that makes all student interactions with counseling staff opportunities for college counseling.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Testing &amp; Curriculum</u></b></p> <p>Information about and access to "gatekeeping" tests (PSAT, SAT, etc.) and courses (A-G, AP, etc.) for all students.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Faculty Involvement</u></b></p> <p>Informed, active participation from school faculty in the creation and maintenance of a college culture.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Family Involvement</u></b></p> <p>Meaningful engagement on the part of family members in the process of building a college culture.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>College Partnerships</u></b></p> <p>Active links in a variety of forms between the school and local colleges and universities.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Articulation</u></b></p> <p>Ongoing coordination between counselors and teachers among all schools in a feeder group.</p>

**Schools that want to change their college-going rates can work to balance their delivery of all nine of these principles. Start with an honest inventory, then move to change!**

# Nine Steps to Building A College-Going Culture

1. **College Talk:** A college culture requires clear, ongoing communications with students about what it takes to get to college and what is expected of them to stay on the college path. In their role of preparing all students, all school staff refer to college, share their experiences and thoughts, and provide opportunities for students to informally ask questions about college.

2. **Clear Expectations:** All students prepare for a full range of postsecondary options and the explicit goals of this preparation is clearly defined, communicated and part of daily school culture, such that students, family, teachers, administrators, and staff recognize the role that each plays in preparing students for college.

3. **Information and Resources:** Students have access to college information and resources. The information is comprehensive, up-to-date, and accessible. Counselors and other college resource centers or programs work in concert to provide thorough coverage of materials. School faculty is aware of what is available and regularly incorporates it into daily classroom practices.

4. **Comprehensive Counseling:** All counselors are college counselors. All student interaction with counseling staff are opportunities for college counseling. All counselors are informed and have access to college training, such as the Counselor Breakfast and UC admissions training. All decisions about students' coursework and career options are made with all postsecondary options in mind.

5. **Testing and Curriculum:** Students are knowledgeable about the PSAT, ACT, SAT, and SAT II, and testing dates. In addition, the school is committed to providing the necessary resources ensuring that students are prepared for the tests and that testing fees are not barriers. Student access to preparatory coursework like Algebra and Geometry is normal. Moreover, the school pledges that students have access to at least the basic A-G college preparatory curriculum.

6. **Faculty Involvement:** School faculty is active in the creation and maintenance of college culture. They are up to date on important "college knowledge" (admission requirements, types of institutions, etc.) and participate in ongoing professional development to allow them to be active in preparing students for college. This also includes integrating college information and the very idea of college into regular classroom activities.

7. **Family Involvement:** Parents and/or other family members are informed partners in the process of building a college culture. They have opportunities to gain knowledge about the college planning process as well as being aware that their children and all students have the potential to go to college. The counseling and college resource staff are available to answer any questions and help make decisions about students' academic futures.

**8.College Partnerships:** Forming active links with local colleges and universities is vital to the creation of a college culture. This facilitates college-related activities, such as field trips to college campuses and fairs, academic enrichment programs, and raising awareness of and aspirations toward college.

**9.Articulation:** Students should have a seamless experience where the college message is shared by counselors and teaching staff from elementary, middle and high school. Work being done at each school site should be coordinated with activities at other levels.