College Readiness:

A Guide to the Field

CRIS

COLLEGE READINESS INDICATOR SYSTEMS

Contents

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Introduction

In recent years, the education spotlight in the United States has shifted from focusing on high school graduation to postsecondary success. Acknowledging that to thrive in today's economy requires more than just a high school diploma, policy-makers and practitioners at the local, state, and federal level, along with their community partners, have turned their attention to equipping students with the skills and knowledge needed to enroll and succeed – without remediation – in a postsecondary program that leads to a degree (Conley 2007, 2011; Gates Foundation 2009). This shift in attention has been accompanied by a wealth of policies and initiatives aimed at preparing students to enter and succeed in college, including federal competitive grants programs, schoolwide reform initiatives, community-based education support structures, and many more. Over the past few years, the emergent field of college readiness has blossomed into an expansive effort involving multiple actors and spanning multiple sectors.

Considering the rapid emergence and growth of the field, as well as the numerous players involved, keeping abreast of relevant policies and initiatives is both a challenge and a necessity. A scan of the college readiness field can highlight successful strategies for increasing readiness, as well as gaps in research, policy, and practice, and can point to important roles for community, business, and philanthropic partners to play in developing a coordinated approach to college readiness.

Researchers at the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University (AISR) have undertaken to develop a brief guide to this burgeoning field, as part of the College Readiness Indicator System (CRIS) initiative funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The CRIS initiative, led in collaboration with the John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities (JGC) at Stanford University, aims to develop a collection of actionable indicators that measures the different dimensions of college readiness and allows for early identification of students who may need extra support to be able to finish high school ready to succeed in college. The CRIS initiative also aims to help districts develop a set of supports connected to these indicators.

As an offshoot of this work, our guide to the field highlights opportunities to address students' needs both in and out of school to ensure they have what it takes to be successful throughout college. To this end, we conducted a scan of the field, which drew on a review of education news coverage and publications by national education research and policy organizations from fall 2010 through summer 2011, supplemented with Web searches, covering a range of initiatives and organizations from the national to the local level, including school districts, states, and non-governmental organizations.

This brief highlights the findings from this scan. There has been some debate about whether preparation for college is the right goal for all students, given that only about 30 percent of young adults currently attain a bachelor's degree. Many experts treat "college readiness" and "career readiness" as synonymous, arguing that the same set of skills and knowledge that prepares young people for a four-year college program also prepares them for well-paying careers. Others argue that a focus on college readiness narrows educational options and ignores the needs of many young people (see page 16).

Since the CRIS project aims to help districts and schools prepare students for success in postsecondary education, in this brief we focus on college readiness rather than career readiness (although many of the initiatives we highlight focus on both: see pages 9 and 10, for example). We hope it will serve as a useful reference for all of those with an interest in preparing students to enter and succeed in college.

What is College Readiness?

What does it mean to be college ready? In 2010, the Obama administration released the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) blueprint, which proposes that states hold K–12 students to higher standards that promote global competiveness. Soon after, heeding this call, state leaders and partners began to develop college-ready standards as part of the Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSSI).[1] This initiative reflects in large part the blueprint's proposal that college-ready students have completed a rigorous elementary and secondary academic program in English language arts and math, as well as other key subjects, and that students are assessed regularly on their progress toward these standards.

To develop assessment systems that map students' college-ready trajectories, two overlapping coalitions of states – the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)[2] and the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (S-BAC)[3] – were awarded a substantial Race to the Top grant from the federal government. Like CCSSI, the PARCC and S-BAC initiatives suggest that a strong academic foundation is the cornerstone of college readiness.

For a long time, researchers have attempted to define just what it means to be college ready. Previous research suggests that being ready for college means having the academic content knowledge and skills needed to pass college-level courses (Conley 2007; Roderick, Nagaoka & Coca 2009). Common

[1] For more on the Common Core State Standards Initiative, go to www.corestandards.org.

[2] For more information on the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers, go to www.parcconline.org.

[3] For more information on the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, go to www.k12.wa.us/smarter.

indicators of readiness lend significant weight to academic measures of preparation, including course grades, standardized test scores, and the degree of rigor of courses taken. Additional research, however, suggests that motivational or non-cognitive factors can be important determinants of success in college (Dweck, Walton & Cohen 2011). These factors include maintaining a positive attitude toward learning and being able to persist when the going gets tough. David Conley (2007) also notes that being ready for college means having the "information, formal and informal, stated and unstated, necessary for gaining admission to, and navigating within, the postsecondary system" (p. 13). Accordingly, being college ready also encompasses having "college knowledge" that includes knowing how to apply to college and for financial aid.

Synthesizing this and additional research, researchers at JGC have developed a working definition of key components of college readiness. For the purpose of this brief, being ready for college means having the knowledge and skills needed to enroll and succeed in college and has been conceptualized by JGC as comprising three dimensions: academic preparedness, academic tenacity, and college knowledge.

- Academic preparedness refers to the academic knowledge and skills students need to succeed in college. These include content-area proficiencies and key cognitive strategies that span content areas, such as the ability to formulate and solve problems, conduct research, and construct an argument or complete tasks with precision or accuracy.

- Academic tenacity is defined as the "underlying beliefs, attitudes, values . . . and accompanying behaviors that drive students to embrace and engage with challenging work, and to pursue academic achievement," and is also key to students' academic success both before and throughout college (Gates Foundation 2009; Conley 2008).

- College knowledge captures the ability to gain access to postsecondary institutions as well as successfully navigate through college. These "contextual skills and awareness" enable students to, among other actions, apply to college and for financial aid, develop appropriate relationships with peers and professors, and be resourceful learners and self-advocates (Conley 2008).

A Brief Overview of the Field

To better conceptualize the field of college readiness, it is also useful to have an understanding of the key players involved. As noted, initiatives aimed at preparing students for postsecondary access and success extend beyond the school walls. Additional players in this field include district, state, and federal departments of education; national coalitions led by foundations and nonprofit organizations; local nonprofit and community-based organizations; school reform and educational management organizations; universities and research centers; and the business community.

In the following sections of this brief, we highlight common strategies and approaches within each of the three college readiness dimensions that emerged from our look at the field and provide examples of how various initiatives and policies have used these strategies in their efforts to increase college-going and completion rates across the country.
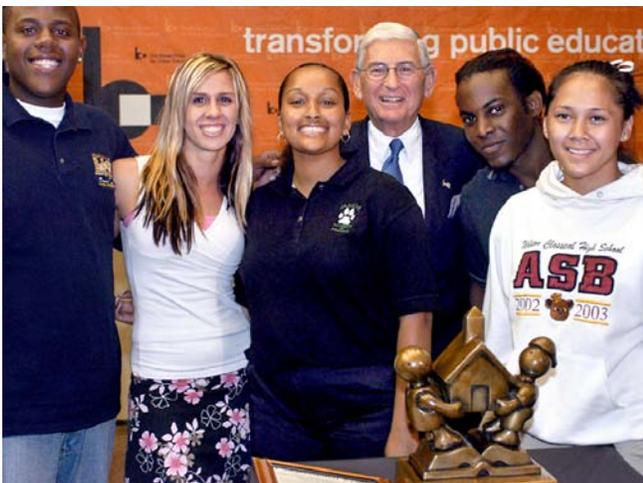
Rather than presenting a comprehensive view of the field, each section highlights representative initiatives that are spearheading this work within each dimension. While the main text of this brief presents dominant policies and initiatives that span multiple sites, readers may refer to the sidebars for vignettes of how the strategies are carried out by various players at the local and state levels.

The three college readiness dimensions – academic preparedness, academic tenacity, and college knowledge – are the CRIS network's framework; they don't necessarily represent the way that players in the field define their work. Many initiatives address two or even three of the dimensions and use different language to describe their goals. We use the three dimensions as a useful frame for thinking about this complex field and to give a sense of what strategies have emerged for addressing different aspects of students' readiness – not as rigid categories. This "field" is also not static. As policies shift, new actors enter the field, and data and research drive changes in strategy. This brief is meant to provide a snapshot in time of the college readiness field and represents a necessary oversimplification.

We hope that this scan of the field can help policymakers and practitioners at the local level examine the range of strategies for improving college readiness currently at use in their district or community and identify aspects of college readiness that are un- or under-addressed. It might also suggest strategies and places where the capacity of outside partners can complement district- or school-based efforts. In addition, we highlight a number of initiatives that aim to coordinate investments and programs across a whole neighborhood, district, or city.

Academic Preparedness

This section presents a few of the common strategies used to help students gain the content-area knowledge and skills and the key cognitive skills needed for success in college. The following strategies, as well as brief descriptions of related policies and initiatives, are highlighted below:

• Align standards, curricula, and assessment to college-ready expectations

• Use data to drive college readiness policies

• Intervene early to keep students on a college-ready track

Align standards, curricula, and assessment to college-ready expectations

Ensuring students' strong academic preparation for postsecondary education has been at the heart of college readiness initiatives and policies; as a 2010 Achieve report pointed out,

> States [are] becoming increasingly aware that their high schools, which [have] changed little since the mid-20th century, [are] not producing the twenty-first-century graduates needed to

compete and succeed after high school in an increasingly complex and interconnected world." (p. 7)

Toward this end, many in the field are working at the policy level to align rigorous academic standards, curricula, and assessments to definitions and indicators of college readiness. A substantial amount of this work lives at the state policy level, with a number of overlapping coalitions of states working to raise standards and ensure alignment between K–12 and postsecondary expectations. An early example is the American Diploma Project, convened by the Education Trust and Achieve Inc. in 2001, through which thirty-five states have worked to increase alignment.[4]

Driven by the ESEA blueprint's focus on preparing students for higher education, CCSSI, along with PARCC and S-BAC, the two state consortia funded by the federal education department's Race to the Top initiative,[5] currently spearhead federal efforts around this dimension by aiming to develop common academic standards and assessments that foster and measure academic preparedness. Led by the National Governor's Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers, CCSSI

[4] For more information on the American Diploma Project, go to www.achieve.org/adp-network.

[5] See the earlier section "What Is College Readiness?"

Individual states have also taken on the challenge of aligning pre- and post-secondary standards. In Florida, for example, as part of the College and Career Readiness Initiative, the state legislature voted to expand its college readiness assessment system. Under new legislation, all students who express an interest in college are now allowed to take the Florida College Entry-Level Placement Test during their junior rather than senior year in high school, while there is still time for them to further prepare in their senior year. Seniors who are not yet prepared for college based on these measures are provided remedial services (Florida Department of Education 2010).

Several states and school districts are using dual enrollment policies to put students on an early path toward college success. The Hidalgo Independent School District (HISD) in Texas, for example, has adopted an Early College High School model throughout its schools as a way to expose students to rigorous, college-level coursework as early as ninth grade. Rather than viewing dual enrollment as an enrichment opportunity for students who are ahead of the curve, HISD encourages all students to complete the Recommended High School Program, Texas's college readiness curriculum. This policy is reflective, in part, of the Texas push to promote college readiness. Dual enrollment policies in Texas are supported in large part by House Bill 1, fiscal legislation that provides additional funds for programs aimed at increasing college enrollment and completion rates (Jobs for the Future 2009).

represents one of the largest and most influential players in the field of academic preparedness, with all but four states having adopted these standards by late 2011. CCSSI's goal is to develop rigorous standards in English language arts and mathematics that, when mastered, indicate that students are ready to complete credit-bearing freshman year courses.

The standards align with our definition of academic preparedness in two ways. First, they measure important content knowledge and skills that students need to succeed in college, namely English language arts and math content. According to CCSSI, the standards are meant to be rigorous measures of real-world skills and knowledge. Second, the standards strive to measure key cognitive strategies that students can apply across subject areas, including the ability to form a logical, coherent argument; conduct research; and analyze various forms of media.

In the same vein, PARCC and S-BAC are overlapping coalitions that together represent forty-two states – and the two- and four-year colleges that receive a majority of those states' college-goers – whose purpose is to develop and implement assessments that provide the information states need to increase their college-ready graduation rates. These initiatives are aligning standards and assessments to college readiness expectations by using the Common Core State Standards as their indicators of what students should know and be able to do. The initiatives will also produce capacity-building tools, including data portals and instructional materials that can be adapted to the classroom to help teachers prepare students for postsecondary success (Center for K–12 Assessment & Performance Management at ETS 2011). States, districts, and educational publishers are working to develop complete curricula to help teachers put the new standards into practice.

Use data to drive college readiness policies

The recent emphasis on data-driven policy and practice has extended to the college readiness world as well. Much of this work has been led by national nonprofits that have developed college readiness indicators, such as the College Board's Accuplacer Diagnostic and the ACT College Readiness Standards and Assessments.[6] Both data tools measure students' academic preparedness for college based on predetermined standards, and both have been used by states and districts to better measure college preparation, target interventions, and set policy.

Investments by the U.S. Department of Education and foundations support better alignment of data systems at the state and district level to drive college readiness policies by promoting data system partnerships that track and analyze data as far back as pre-kindergarten or kindergarten. Through a federal Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems Grant, the Kentucky P–20 Data Collaborative produces high school feedback reports on the postsecondary performance of each high school's graduates that help teachers and administrators tweak curriculum and policy.[7] With support from the Gates Foundation, researchers at the New York City Department of Education partnered with the City University of New York to develop college readiness indicators that are now included in school report cards (see the sidebar on this page). Similar measures are being supported by Gates Foundation grants in Riverside, California, and Mesa, Arizona, where Mesa Community College is spearheading efforts to use data-informed decision making to improve college-going and completion rates (Gates Foundation 2010).

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[6] For more on the College Board's Accuplacer Diagnostic, go to http://professionals.collegeboard.com/higher-ed/placement/accuplacer. For more on the ACT College Readiness Standards and Assessments, go to http://www.act.org/standard.

[7] For more information on the Kentucky P-20 Data Collaborative, go to http://Kentuckyp20.ky.gov.

DATA-DRIVEN POLICYMAKING: A LOOK AT NEW YORK CITY'S COLLEGE READINESS INDICATORS PARTNERSHIP

In 2010, the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) received a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to partner with City University of New York (CUNY) in order to develop indicators of college readiness. Goals of the project included conducting research that would directly affect local policy and creating data that would be useful to school-level college readiness efforts. Using data from the NYCDOE, CUNY, and the National Student Clearinghouse, researchers were able to determine key characteristics of successful graduates and create useful tools for school administrators. These tools include:

- Where Are They Now Reports that help principals track data for graduated students;

- revised Progress Reports that now include a college prep course index; a college readiness index that tracks the percentage of students who pass out of remedial college courses; and a college enrollment rate.

Beyond influencing local policy, the NYCDOE/CUNY collaborative aims to be a model for additional school districts that wish to engage in this work.

Intervene early to keep students on a college-ready track

Recognizing that the road to college starts long before high school, players in the field of college readiness have begun identifying and targeting students as early as middle school to keep students on track to timely graduation and college success. These efforts are supported in part by research from the Consortium on Chicago School Research and the Center for the Social Organization of Schools at Johns Hopkins University demonstrating that students' likelihood of graduating from high school prepared to tackle college-level work can be predicted as early as middle school and ninth grade. Early intervention can be crucial in keeping students on a college-ready trajectory, especially for students who struggle academically or socially (Allensworth & Easton 2005; Neild, Balfanz & Herzog 2007).

The Early College High School Initiative, coordinated by Jobs for the Future and supported by several philanthropic organizations, has redesigned more than 230 schools across the country to provide special academic support for students who are at risk of dropping out of high school and/or underrepresented in higher education.[8] While requiring academic rigor and providing individualized support, the Early College High School Initiative also motivates students with the opportunity to save time and money to work hard and overcome intellectual challenges by blending high school and the two first years of college.

Talent Development models developed by researchers at Johns Hopkins University (Talent Development High Schools and Talent Development Middle Grades), which have spread to more than 125 schools throughout the nation, pay particular attention to students in middle school and ninth grade, when they are especially vulnerable to dropping out.[9] For instance, in the Talent Development's "ninth-grade academy," a team of interdisciplinary teachers provide academic support, such as a skills-building curriculum in math and reading comprehension, two areas in which ninthgraders often need extra support, so that ninthgraders can have a smooth transition to high school and don't drop out (Institute for Education Sciences 2007).

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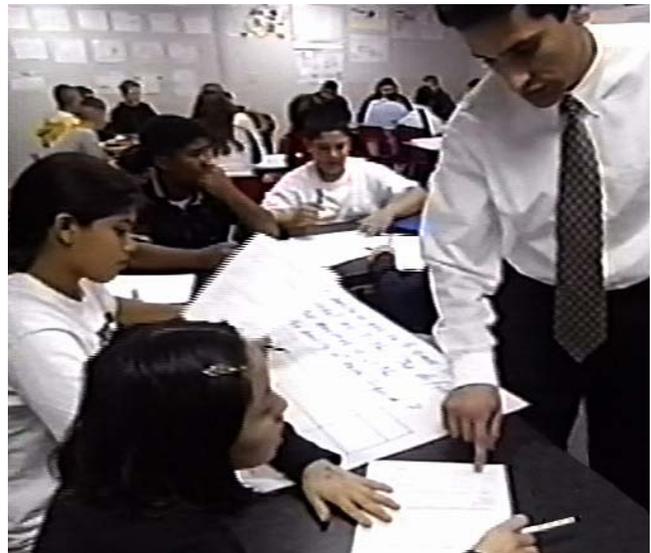
[8] The Early College High School Initiative defines underrepresented students as those who are low-income students; racial and ethnic minorities; first-generation college-goers; English language learners; and students at risk of dropping out of high school, not matriculating to college, and not completing a degree (see "Early College High School Initiative, Core Principles" at www.earlycolleges.org/Downloads/ECHSICorePrin.pdf). For more information on the Early College High School Initiative, go to www.earlycolleges.org.

[9] For more information on Talent Development schools, go to www.talentdevelopmentschools.com.

Academic Tenacity

As noted, making it through college takes more than having the academic skills and content knowledge needed to complete college-level coursework. The demands of college warrant tenacity to persist through academic challenges. To this end, several initiatives aim to directly increase students' academic tenacity, while others do this indirectly by increasing their ability to persist through high school and college and attain a postsecondary degree. The following common strategies emerged from our analysis:

- Expose students to tenacity-building activities
- Provide accelerated and extended learning opportunities that promote persistence and attainment
- Restructure schools into personalized learning communities
- Provide additional supports for at-risk students

Expose students to tenacity-building activities

As Melissa Roderick and colleagues (2009) note, "Meeting the developmental demands of college requires behavioral, problem-solving, and coping skills that allow students to successfully manage new environments and the new academic and social demands of college" (p. 190). Several programs have emerged that aim to explicitly equip students with the educational values, attitudes, and behaviors needed for success in college. Such programs transform schools to create a culture of tenacity, in which students are directly exposed to tenacity-building activities throughout the day. For example, the Advancement Via Individual Determination program (AVID) is a national school-based initiative reaching more than 400,000 students in forty-seven states that provides students with both academic and non-cognitive supports as early as elementary school. Students learn

THE POSSE APPROACH: A COMPLETE SUPPORT SYSTEM FOR A COHORT OF STUDENTS

The Posse Foundation is a nonprofit with a novel approach to college access. The Foundation assembles cohorts or "posses" of students who will attend college together and encourage the development of student diversity on campus. Posse has partnered with forty institutions of higher education, and together they work to identify underrepresented students with extraordinary leadership potential. Applicants must be nominated by their high school or by a community-based organization in order to apply. Once chosen, Posse scholars undergo a rigorous eight-month pre-collegiate training program and are then awarded four-year, full-tuition leadership scholarships to attend one of the partner institutions. The built-in support system has contributed to a 90 percent graduation rate for Posse scholars. More than 4,245 students from urban public high schools across the country have participated in Posse. For more information, go to www.possefoundation.org.

important behaviors like self-awareness, meta-cognition, self-control, organization, study habits, critical thinking, and inquiry, as well as receive academic support and motivation for college.[10]

Similarly, the national Navigation 101 program engages students in developing their non-academic skills, including the ability to self-assess and study effectively, and identifies the best course of action to meet their college goals. As a schoolwide college readiness program, Navigation 101 is implemented in ninth grade, and students remain in the program until graduation to gain the "self-management" and "navigational" skills needed for college success.[11]

Provide accelerated and extended learning opportunities that promote persistence and attainment

While accelerated learning opportunities may not explicitly teach academic tenacity, initiatives aimed at decreasing the amount of time students spend in high school and/or college may contribute to students' college readiness by increasing their high school persistence and college credit attainment. The Gateway to College National Network helps high school dropouts re-engage in secondary school while at the same time earning college credits. The program accomplishes this in large part by creating partnerships between K–12 institutions and higher education institutions, especially community colleges.[12] The Gateway to College National Network uses an approach similar to Early College High Schools to transform high schools into places where traditionally low-performing students, low-income students, and

minority students, as well as first-generation college students, are able to obtain a high school diploma and accumulate up to two years of college credit at no cost. Research on Early College High Schools suggests that graduates of this program are more capable of adapting to challenges and pursuing their academic strengths in college.

Other initiatives make use of out-of-school time to expose students to career and technical education opportunities that make learning relevant while providing a rigorous academic curriculum. The Linked Learning model, supported in part by the James Irvine Foundation and coordinated by ConnectEd, provides career-based pathways to high school students in several California cities. These pathways combine a college preparatory curriculum, rigorous career education, work-based experiences including job shadowing, internships, counseling, and other supports.[13]

These strategies highlight the interconnectedness of the college readiness dimensions – students who are well prepared academically and are supported to tackle rigorous curriculum are enabled to see themselves as college material, which encourages their persistence and removes some of the very real barriers of cost and time.

Restructure schools into personalized learning communities

Multi-site, school-based initiatives also lead the field when it comes to creating personalized learning communities that contribute to students' academic success. The Talent Development High School model uses this personalized learning strategy by helping students meet high academic expectations through ninth-grade academies and interventions so that ninth-graders can have a smoother transition to high school. The program also relies on flexible staff roles so that teachers and other faculty members can provide personalized academic attention to struggling students.

[10] For more information on AVID, go to www.avid.org.

[11] For more information on Navigation 101, go to www.envictus.com/Navigation-101.

[12] For more information on the Gateway to College Network, go to www.gatewaytocollege.org.

[13] For information on the Linked Learning model, go to www.linkedlearning.org.

The U.S. Department of Education's Smaller Learning Communities (SLC) program provides funding to large urban high schools to create small learning communities. Grantees use small learning communities to pay specific attention to potentially struggling students, often through ninth-grade academies.[14] Teaching students in small learning communities also helps schools identify at-risk students and target interventions ranging from after-school remediation to summer enrichment opportunities. Approximately 2,500 career academies across the country, many supported by the federal SLC program, use internships and job-skills instruction to make learning more relevant while providing rigorous academics and personal supports (Kemple & Snipes 2000; Kemple 2001). Creating small and personalized learning environments has been proven to be a successful and a powerful strategy to not only build tenacity but also to strengthen academic preparation.

Provide additional supports for at-risk students

Students who are at risk for dropping out of high school or not enrolling in or completing college deserve special attention to promote their college readiness. This need has been widely recognized in the field, with many policies and initiatives specifically targeting these students. The federal government contributes greatly to this effort. One of eight U.S. Department of Education TRIO programs designed to help students from disadvantaged backgrounds succeed from middle school through college, Upward Bound[15] supports students via pre-college workshops, tutoring, counseling, and mentoring, among other services.

[14] For more information on the SLC program, go to www2.ed.gov/programs/slcp/index.html.

[15] For more information on Upward Bound, go to www2.ed.gov/programs/trioupbound.

FROM AT-RISK TO COLLEGE READY: A LOOK AT PHILADELPHIA'S APPROACH TO A DROPOUT CRISIS

The Philadelphia Youth Network (PYN) is leading a public campaign to end its dropout crisis. Through partnerships with the School District of Philadelphia and community-based organizations and foundations, PYN developed Project U-Turn in 2006, a local initiative that has successfully championed funds to address the needs of at-risk and out-of-school youth. Key components of the program include:

- Student Success Centers that coordinate college readiness and college transition services in neighborhood high schools
- Re-engagement Centers where out-of-school youth can receive the information and supports they need to re-enroll in high school or earn a GED
- E3 Power Centers designed to provide case-management services and skills-building opportunities for out-of-school or delinquent youth
- A Summer Bridge Program designed to serve 2,500 students as they transition from middle to high school

Between 2006 and 2009, Project U-Turn succeeded in referring more than 1,600 students to educational options and is gaining recognition as a national leader in addressing the needs of at-risk students (Philadelphia Youth Network 2006; Project U-Turn 2009).

For more information on Project U-Turn, go to www.pyninc.org/projectuturn.

Similarly, GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) provides funding to states and partnerships to support high-need students through middle and high school and through their first year of college. GEAR UP partnerships provide mentoring, counseling, tutoring, and scholarships.[16]

The previously mentioned Gateway to College National Network represents one of the largest initiatives to re-engage out-of-school youth. The network reaches out to students between ages sixteen and twenty-one who have dropped out of school to help them persist through high school and strive for college attainment through individualized mentoring, coaching, and advising to lead and keep them on the road to college success. Diplomas Now, a partnership of Talent Development, City Year, and Communities in Schools, provides intensive supports to struggling students, including support groups, counseling, and health care. City Year places young adults full time in Diplomas Now schools to form supportive relationships with students and provide tutoring, mentoring, and after-school enrichment.[17]

Crucially, the programs described here offer supports and interventions aimed at strengthening tenacity in combination with attention to academic preparation and college knowledge. All support students in accessing more rigorous coursework and incorporate activities that develop college knowledge and awareness, and the same supports that build tenacity also directly impact students' ability to focus on and succeed in academic work.

[16] For more information on GEAR UP, go to www2.ed.gov/programs/gearup.

[17] For more information on Diplomas Now, go to http://diplomasnow.org.

[18] For more information on Aspire Public Schools, go to www.aspirepublicschools.org

College Knowledge

Finally, students need an understanding of how to get into, pay for, and navigate through college in order to attain a post-secondary degree. Common strategies that have been employed to equip students with this college knowledge include:

- Create a college-going culture in the school and community
- Support students through the college planning process
- Engage families in learning about and supporting college going

Create a college-going culture

David Conley (2011) notes:

> Many students fail to apply to college simply because the process seems so daunting, and they feel intimidated or overwhelmed by all of the requirements and activities associated with the application process. (p. 23)

Among the most common strategies used to help students overcome this obstacle and develop college knowledge are to create a culture in which all students have the expectation that they will go to college and help them to develop the know-how to go. Multi-site, school-based initiatives lead much of the work in this area. Aspire Public Schools, which operates public charter schools in California, for example, begins as early as elementary school to instill the notion of attending college in its students and has adopted the motto "College for Certain."[18]

The college-going culture can also be emphasized by creating a comprehensive college preparatory program at the school site, as in the case of the Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP), a national

charter school network of 109 schools in twenty states. This comprehensive college preparatory program at KIPP, called KIPP Through College (KTC), provides students with all the necessary resources to prepare for, apply to, and attend college. Most importantly, it affirms the high expectation of the school that all students will go to college. KTC support is customized by each region or school to meet the specific needs of their students, including SAT/ACT prep classes, counseling, academic advisement, enrichment activities, and financial literacy classes.[19]

Entire school districts have also engaged in creating a college-going culture to increase college knowledge. Initiatives such as the Pittsburgh, Indianapolis, Detroit, and Kalamazoo Promises and Say Yes to Education sites – including Syracuse, Harlem, and Hartford – mobilize public and private resources to focus on college readiness and guarantee tuition for students who meet certain benchmarks. By laying out a clear pathway to college, these initiatives help families see further education as a realistic goal. Many of these initiatives include public campaigns to foster a college-going culture.[20]

[19] For more information on KIPP Through College, go to www.kipp.org/students/kipp-through-college.

[20] For more information on Say Yes to Education, go to www.sayyestoeducation.org.

THE COLLEGE CRUSADE OF RHODE ISLAND

The College Crusade of Rhode Island is a nonprofit organization that provides college readiness and scholarship programs for middle school and high school students in low-income urban school districts. The organization reaches out early to motivated students and provides long-term guidance (grades 6 to12) and support for them to get ready for and succeed in college. The College Crusade of Rhode Island offers programs that focus on academic enrichment, social and personal development, career awareness and exploration, and preparation for postsecondary education. For more information, go to www.thecollegecrusade.org.

Support students through the college planning and application process

While research shows that most students aspire to attend college, many lack the knowledge and support needed to apply for, fund, and enroll in college. To address this challenge, the U.S. Department of Education launched the College Access Challenge Grant Program that aims to increase the number of low-income students who are ready for college, especially by supporting them through the college planning and application process. Each grantee designs its own plan to address this need, and proposals include Freshman Seminar in Arkansas, aimed at equipping ninth graders with early college knowledge; FAFSA First in Connecticut, a continuation of a financial aid application assistance program for low-income youth; and the College Info Road Show in Kentucky, designed to travel to schools to spread college knowledge.[21]

While Pennsylvania is using its grant award to develop partnerships between the national non-profit Project Grad USA, the Pennsylvania Department of Education, and the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency to improve its graduation rates, in Maryland, funds are being used to bring together the national nonprofit College Goal Sunday, the Maryland Business Roundtable, the University of Maryland, and Maryland Public Television, among others, to develop the college knowledge students and their families need for postsecondary access and success (U.S. Department of Education 2008).

Community-based organizations (CBOs) also play a very active role in supporting students through this process. CBOs often step in to bridge gaps in college knowledge for students in high-needs schools where few of their peers apply to college and guidance counselors are stretched thin. Some partner formally with school districts or schools, while others serve children in a particular neighborhood. In Los Angeles, for example, the SOURCE program pairs UCLA students with public high school students to mentor them throughout the college and financial aid application process (Adams 2011).[22] Philadelphia's Student Success Centers (see the sidebar on page 11: From At-Risk to College Ready), the result of organizing by youth-led community groups, are located in schools but staffed by local CBOs with support from the Philadelphia Youth Network and the Public Education Fund (Philadelphia Public School Notebook 2004).

Engage families in learning about and supporting college going

Parents and families are key partners and important decision-makers when it comes to their children's college-going behaviors. A common strategy for increasing students' college knowledge and college-going rates has thus been to engage families in the process of acquiring college knowledge and applying to college and for financial aid. At the national level, the College Board has been a vocal advocate for keeping parents informed and equipped to make college decisions. This work is also supported by a national collaboration between the American Council on Education, the Lumina Foundation for Education, and the Ad Council, which have developed the KnowHow2Go Initiative, which serves as a "one-stop resource to help students and parents plan for college and careers . . . and learn about financial aid options."[23]

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[21] For more information on the College Access Grant Program, go to www2.ed.gov/programs/cacg.

[22] For more information on SOURCE, go to www.edboost.org/SOURCE.

[23] For more information on KnowHow2Go, go to www.knowhow2go.org.

The Growth of the Field: College Readiness Hot Spots

Figure 1 maps the emerging college readiness "hot spots," cities and regions in which the field is heavily saturated. As the map indicates, cities like San Francisco, Los Angeles, New York, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C., house a high concentration of college readiness initiatives. Other cities including Portland, Oregon; Seattle; and Indianapolis are emerging as newer college readiness hot spots, heavily supported by the work of foundations. In Texas, strong state policy has led to the emergence of multiple hot spots, including Dallas and the southern Texas region.

Such a concentration of activity, layered on top of states' and districts' responses to federal policy changes and the CCSSI, raise important questions about alignment and efficient resource use. Several foundations have launched initiatives in "hot spot" cities to address the need for coordination across players and dimensions. One of these, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (in partnership with the National League of Cities), facilitates collaboration between city leaders, school districts, community colleges and universities, and community-based organizations to share data, align expectations, and create coordinated networks of college access and support services, as part of the Foundation's Communities Learning in Partnership program (Gates Foundation 2010). The Lumina Foundation's Partnerships for College Access and Success and Citi Foundations' Postsecondary Success Program similarly build collaboration and coordination across sectors. These initiatives include asset mapping of existing college readiness resources to identify gaps and avoid duplication (Academy for Educational Development 2008).

FIGURE 1. College readiness "hot spots"
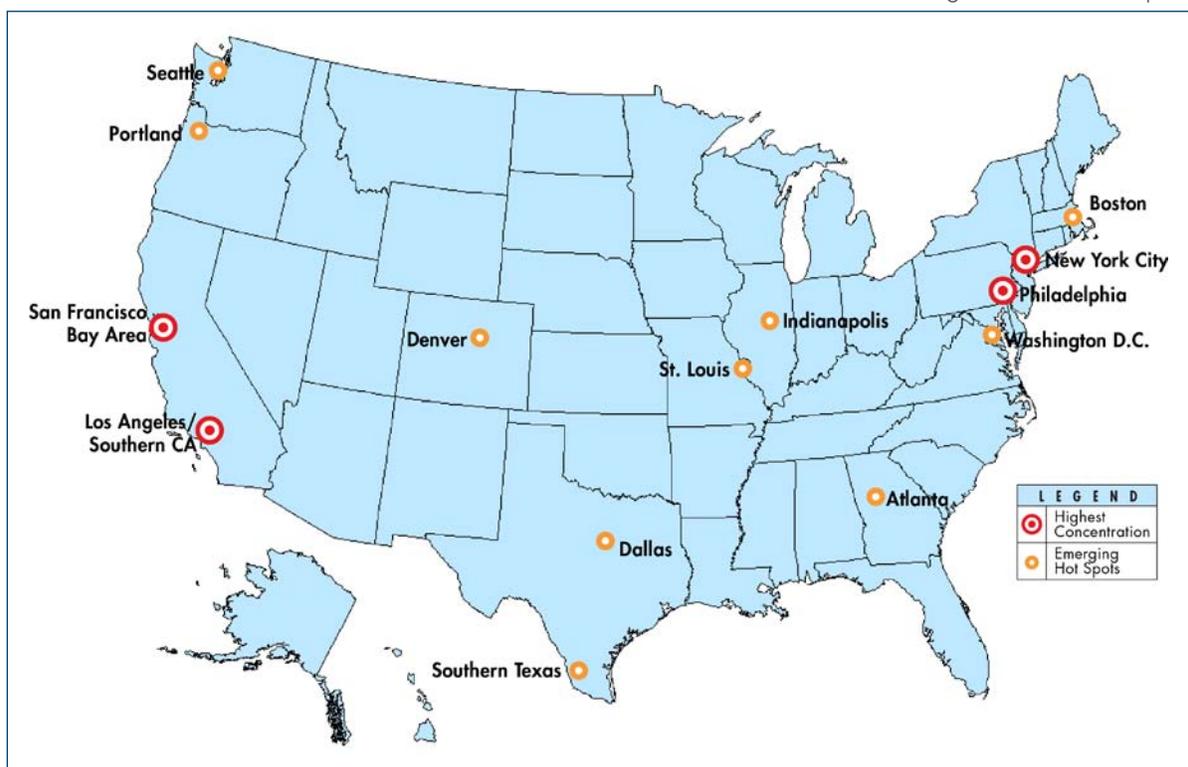
Summing It Up: Implications for the Field

This brief has organized the burgeoning and complex field of college readiness work using the framework of academic preparedness, academic tenacity, and college knowledge. It highlights common strategies that have emerged to strengthen these three college readiness dimensions, as summarized in the Figure 2.

Academic preparation, traditionally the focus of much college readiness work, is currently the most developed college readiness dimension. Federal policy emphasizes rigorous pre-college coursework; state policy aims to align and strengthen academic rigor and supports; and a range of other education stakeholders – foundations, nonprofit organizations, school reform intermediaries, research centers, and community-based organizations – are also well represented in this dimension.

In contrast, relatively few initiatives target tenacity directly. Since tenacity involves "soft" skills that don't lend themselves to easy definition or measurement, the development of interventions is more challenging. Several interventions, such as early college high schools, work to increase persistence and attainment, and others provide individualized supports to minimize barriers to school success, but few – Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) being a notable exception – directly build students' self-management and motivational skills.

Conversely, as the result of school-based efforts and community partnerships, and more recently as the direct result of the federal College Access Challenge Grant Program, college knowledge supports are becoming more and more widely available. Community-based organizations are well represented in college knowledge initiatives and play an important role in serving first-generation college-goers and students who receive less college-knowledge support in school.

Of course, the three dimensions are not rigid categories, and they overlap and are interconnected in practice more extensively than this snapshot can capture. Improvement in one dimension is influential and dependent on the other two dimensions. Students are more likely to be tenacious when they feel that college is financially possible. Accordingly, when students are more tenacious, they will be better prepared academically for college. Many strategies develop skills across two or three dimensions, and many initiatives employ multiple strategies in a holistic approach to college readiness. Personalized learning communities, for example, support academic preparation by allowing teachers to provide intensive, differentiated academic supports but also contribute to college knowledge and academic tenacity by forging close personal relationships.

FIGURE 2. Common strategies for college readiness work

DIMENSION	STRATEGIES
Academic Preparedness	• Align standards, curricula, and assessment to college-ready expectations • Use data to drive college readiness policies • Intervene early to keep students on a college-ready track
Academic Tenacity	• Expose students to tenacity-building activities • Provide accelerated learning opportunities that promote persistence and attainment • Restructure schools into personalized learning communities • Provide additional supports for at-risk students
College Knowledge	• Create a college-going culture in the school and community • Support students through the college planning process • Engage families in learning about and supporting college going

Implications for Research

Despite the burgeoning activity in the field of college readiness, there is still much we do not know about it. Efforts to define college readiness were summarized earlier. Original, empirical research is part of the College Readiness Indicator System (CRIS) initiative for both partners. The John W. Gardner Center (JGC) is focusing on identifying indicators of college readiness for all three dimensions. The Annenberg Institute for School Reform (AISR) will examine district and community supports that affect implementation of CRIS. Key questions include:

• How can college readiness efforts cohere, both within and across local sites?

• How do local and state policies affect the range of strategies employed and how they are implemented? How do schools, districts, and states prioritize interventions?

• How do school-based supports like traditional counseling connect or overlap with community-based supports, foundation initiatives, and federal programs?

• What strategies for increasing motivation and perseverance might be borrowed from community and extracurricular settings?

Implications for Policy-makers and Practitioners

While the proliferation of college readiness efforts and the vast range of strategies available to policy-makers and practitioners is an exciting development, the messiness of the field poses dilemmas for stakeholders making decisions about how to advance college readiness in a particular place.

Whether through a foundation grant or via relationships that exist among state and local leaders, coordination of the multiple efforts is essential, if only to communicate a coherent message about the importance of and path to college readiness. Pushback about whether college readiness is the right goal is becoming more frequent.[24] Policy-makers at both the state and local levels need to be clear about their rationale for promoting college readiness, as well as its connection to career readiness and vocational education. It also requires policy-makers and school and district leaders to apply what the education and social services fields have learned about service integration and coordination over the last two or three decades to achieve the new and more ambitious goal of college readiness.

Data systems and technology will also be implicated. A focus on college readiness requires better information about postsecondary outcomes and about what services are available, where they are offered, who is getting them, and how they are faring. Just implementing the new Common Core Standards and their related assessments will be a challenge for many states and school districts, especially under the trying economic conditions many are facing.

But we know that college readiness requires more than just academic preparation.

This brief has attempted to organize the burgeoning and complex field of college readiness work. Using the framework of academic preparedness, academic tenacity, and college knowledge, we have highlighted common strategies that have emerged to strengthen these three college readiness dimensions.

Through the work of the CRIS network, we hope to support our CRIS sites as they work to measure, implement, and cohere college readiness.[25] As CRIS sites work to develop indicator systems to measure and monitor students' readiness along each dimension and build inventories of targeted supports, we will identify lessons and share strategies for navigating the growing field of college readiness.

[24] See, for example, William C. Symonds, Robert B. Schwartz, and Ronald Ferguson, *Pathways to Prosperity: Meeting the Challenge of Preparing Young Americans for the 21st Century* (report issued by the Pathways to Prosperity Project, Harvard Graduate School of Education, February 2011).

[25] The CRIS sites are Dallas, New Visions for Public Schools (New York City), Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and San Jose (California).

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Information on Highlighted College Readiness Initiatives and Programs

National Coalitions

MODEL FOR MORE INFORMATION	DESCRIPTION
Common Core State Standards Initiative www.corestandards.org/	Education initiative currently exercised in 43 states, steered by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers. The initiative looks to align various state curricula to common academic standards in order to promote and assess academic preparedness. The standards focus on essential English language arts and math content knowledge/skills that students need to be successful in college.
American Diploma Project (ADP) www.achieve.org/adp-network	Network of 35 states, dedicated to a shared set of strategic policy priorities that drive improvements in postsecondary preparation and graduation rates. The benchmarks developed by ADP are notably more rigorous than existing high school standards and focus on acquiring the content knowledge and skills necessary to be college and career ready.
Smarter-Balanced Assessment Consortium (S-BAC) www.k12.wa.us/SMARTER/	A multi-state consortium dedicated to developing an assessment system based on the new Common Core State Standards. Assessments will be used to collect student data that will drive instruction, influence intervention programs, assist in the development of professional training, and guarantee a valid measure of individual student progress regarding career and college readiness.
Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Career (PARCC) www.parcconline.org/about-parcc	A partnership between 24 states dedicated to developing a K–12 assessment system that will be administered during the 2014-2015 academic year. The system will guide all students to be college and career ready by evaluating all Common Core State Standards from third grade through high school, supporting teachers in the classroom, driving interventions to keep students on track to graduate, and utilizing technology for assessments.

Federal TRIO Programs

MODEL FOR MORE INFORMATION	DESCRIPTION
Upward Bound www2.ed.gov/programs/trioupbound/index.html	Educational program developed to assist low-income, first-generation, and rural students from middle school through college. Students participate in pre-college workshops and mentoring programs and are provided with supplementary tutoring and counseling services.
Gear Up www2.ed.gov/programs/gearup/index.html	Program to award states and partnerships six-year matching grants that aim to deliver services that will support high-need students at the middle and high school level through a cohort-style intervention program with an early intervention and scholarship component designed to increase college-going rates and success for low-income students.
College Access Challenge Grant Program www2.ed.gov/programs/cacg/index.html	Grants that allow grantees to design an individual strategy to increase the number of low-income students who are college ready by improving their college knowledge through college-planning workshops and by guiding them through the application or financial aid process.

State- and District-Led Initiatives

MODEL / FOR MORE INFORMATION	DESCRIPTION
Hidalgo Independent School District (HISD) Dual Enrollment Program www.earlycolleges.org/publications.html	HISD aims to develop a college-going culture by engaging not just students, but the entire school community. With the goal of increasing college-going rates and student success, the district starts as early as pre-school with a well-developed curriculum that is aligned until high school. By ninth grade, students are positioned to earn without charge both a high school diploma and an associate's degree or up to two years of college credit toward a bachelor's degree.

New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE)/City University of New York (CUNY) Leaky Pipeline Project
 	
http://annenberginstitute.org/cris/
    webinars/cris-webinar-linking-high-school-
    data-and-post-secondary-outcomes-nyc
	Data collaboration system between the NYCDOE and CUNY developed to better understand the factors that lead to college-ready students. The collaboration led to the development of new accountability metrics for the NYCDOE that help schools improve instruction and identify successful strategies in preventing course remediation at the college level.

Kentucky P20 Data Collaborative http://kentuckyp20.ky.gov/	A collaborative that connects Kentucky student data from a number of sources in an effort to meet the concerns of various educational groups and present state and local policy makers with information needed to improve the state's education system.

Multi-site School-Based Models

MODEL / FOR MORE INFORMATION	DESCRIPTION
Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) www.avid.org	Schoolwide elementary-through-postsecondary college readiness system based on rigorous standards, higher-order thinking skills (writing, inquiry, collaboration, and reading), and organizational skills like note-taking taught through the AVID elective course.
Project GRAD www.projectgrad.org/	Program to partner with local school districts to foster a rigorous college-going culture from pre-K through college by building an individual support system for students. The program focuses on delivering six critical elements including a college preparatory curriculum, summer programming, college and career planning, increasing parental involvement, scholarship money, and increasing student tenacity.
Navigation 101 www.k12.wa.us/SecondaryEducation/ CareerCollegeReadiness/default.aspx	A "guidance and life-planning program" for grades 6 through 12 in the Washington State area. It is intended to act as a catalyst for constructing future goals and informing students on the prerequisites that are essential to achieving their postsecondary goals.
POSSE Foundation www.possefoundation.org/	A national college access program whose mission is to identify, recruit, and train underrepresented students with extraordinary leadership potential. Students must be nominated by their high school or by a community-based organization to apply. Posse Scholars are awarded four-year, full-tuition leadership merit scholarships and attend college in teams of ten, known as Posses.

Multi-site School-Based Models (continued)

MODEL / FOR MORE INFORMATION	DESCRIPTION
Talent Development High Schools www.talentdevelopmentschools. com/TDHS.html	A model that aims to improve the academic success of students through the development of small learning communities led by teacher teams, starting in ninth grade, and structured around courses guiding students toward higher-level English and mathematics coursework. Supports are offered to the entire school community through tutoring sessions for students, professional development for educators, and parental involvement in events that cultivate students' career and college readiness.
Talent Development Middle Grades www.talentdevelopmentschools. com/TDMG.html	A schoolwide model devised to increase student achievement in urban middle schools that serve high numbers of low-income students. The school is transformed into small learning communities taught by a team of teachers. The model utilizes an academic curriculum centered on nationally acknowledged standards, provides professional development to teachers, and provides additional assistance to students grappling with math or reading.
Diplomas Now http://diplomasnow.org/	A partnership between Talent Development, City Year, and Communities in Schools. It combines aspects of the Talent Development model with mentorship and academic support by City Year corps members and well-coordinated community supports.
Early College High Schools www.earlycolleges.org/	A model that encourages underrepresented students, such as first-generation college students and low-income youth, to take college-credit-bearing courses while working toward their high school diploma. Through the use of small learning communities students can potentially earn a high school diploma and an associate's degree or up to two years of course credit toward a bachelor's degree, for free. The model is used in over 270 schools in 28 states.
KIPP Through College www.kipp.org/students/kipp-through-college	National network of college-preparatory public charter schools dedicated to preparing underserved students for success in college and beyond though the development of academic and life skills. KIPP schools provide students with academic supports, counseling services, mentoring services, financial literacy, and career awareness at the middle school, high school, and college levels.
Aspire Public Schools www.aspirepublicschools.org/	Charter network in California that emphasizes college aspirations and college enrollment through its "College for Certain" motto. Aspire high schools participate in the Early College High School inititaive.
Gateway to College www.gatewaytocollege.org	This model connects school districts and public universities to provide accelerated dual-credit opportunities to students who have dropped out or are unlikely to graduate. The students are enrolled in college and complete college coursework on the college campus while simultaneously earning a high school diploma. The model provides a range of personalized supports.
Linked Learning California www.connectedcalifornia.org/ linked_learning	A California multiple-pathways model that redesigns high schools to provide integrated college and career preparation. Schools using the model combine a rigorous college preparatory curriculum with technical education in one of California's 15 major industry sectors and work-based learning, plus individualized academic and social supports. Funded by the James Irvine Foundation.

Site-Based Collaborations

MODEL / FOR MORE INFORMATION	DESCRIPTION
Partnership for College Access and Success http://aed.org/News/Stories/lumina.cfm www.luminafoundation.org/publications/Results_and_Reflections-Making_the_numbers_add_up.pdf	Lumina Foundation initiative in eight cities to form partnerships of community-based organizations, colleges and universities, school districts, business leaders, and support organizations to align data and supports for college access and success, particularly for underserved students. Lead organization in each site has extensive experience supporting underserved students.
Postsecondary Success Program www.philaedfund.org/programs/advancing-education/philadelphia-postsecondary-success-program www.educationfund.org/programs/citipostsecondarysuccessprogramcpsp/ www.sfedfund.org/partners/postsecondary.php	Citi Foundation initiative to increase college going among first-generation and low-income students. Public education funds in three cities coordinate collaborations of schools, colleges, community organizations, and service providers. Sites conduct inventories of services and service providers to increase alignment work to build college-going cultures in specific schools.
Communities Learning in Partnership www.nlc.org/find-city-solutions/iyef/education/higher-education/communities-learning-in-partnership	Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation initiative to support low-income students' college going by coordinating community, school system, and college resources. Builds learning communities and long-term partnerships to streamline guidance and other services for high school and college students
"Promise" Programs www.pittsburghpromise.org/ For links to several Promise programs see: www.wmich.edu/conferencemanagement/promisenet/importantlinks.php	Place-based scholarship programs that seek to increase the college-educated population in a given city through coordinated education reform, economic and neighborhood development, and guaranteed financial aid for students who meet certain basic requirements. See, for example, the Pittsburgh Promise.
Say Yes to Education www.sayyestoeducation.org	National nonprofit with chapters in several northeastern cities that provides academic support, out-of-school programming, health and mental health care, and college scholarships to cohorts of students in several cities. Say Yes Syracuse uses a citywide strategy.
Success Boston www.successboston.org	Citywide alignment strategy to dramatically increase the number of Boston Public Schools students completing college. Includes increased access to rigorous coursework in high school, college and financial aid advising, and transition mentoring through college.
Project U-Turn www.pyninc.org/projectuturn	Citywide campaign led by the Philadelphia Youth Network to end the dropout crisis in Philadelphia. Collaborations with the school district and other community partners include a summer bridge high school transition program, re-engagement centers for out-of-school youth, case management, and student success centers to support college access.

Local Community-Based Organizations

MODEL FOR MORE INFORMATION	DESCRIPTION
College Crusade of Rhode Island www.thecollegecrusade.org	Recruits motivated middle and high school students and provides ongoing adult support along with academic enrichment, college prep and career exploration, and social and personal development activities. The Crusade provides four-year scholarships to financially eligible "crusaders."
SOURCE and VSOURCE, University of California at Los Angeles www.edboost.org/vsource	SOURCE trains current college students to provide one-on-one mentoring and college advising to Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) students, as well as college access materials and curriculum to LAUSD schools. VSOURCE provides reminders via text, email, and social networking about deadlines, as well as access to online SAT preparation and virtual support from trained college mentors.

Other Resources

MODEL FOR MORE INFORMATION	DESCRIPTION
Accuplacer Diagnostic www.connection-collegeboard.com/09dec/programs_3.html	Suite of diagnostic tests developed by College Board to complement its Accuplacer college placement tests. Diagnostic tests are used in colleges and high schools to target individualized supports and remediation and to plan for high school to college transitions.
College Readiness Standards and Assessments www.act.org/standards	Relates scores on its three sequential assessments to widely shared expectations for success in high school and college. The standards are used for coursework placement and to inform instructional decisions and targeted supports.
KnowHow2Go Initiative www.knowhow2go.org	Online resource for middle school through high school students and mentors that provides information on preparing for and applying for college, as well as links to useful resources.