Using Data and Inquiry to Build Equity-Focused College-Going Cultures

Findings and Insights from the Student Success Toolkit Demonstration Project at Two Boston Public High Schools

Tiffany Jones, Estela Mara Bensimon and Alicia C. Dowd
University of Southern California | Rossier School of Education | Center for Urban Education
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The Student Success Toolkit Demonstration Project was funded through the generous support of the Kresge Foundation
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The illustration on page 25 was drawn by Deanna Cherry of Deanna Cherry Consulting, whose wonderful facilitation skills have enlivened and enriched so many of CUE’s Equity Scorecard Evidence Team meetings in Wisconsin, California, and other states across the country.
National College Access Network (NCAN)
Incorporated in 1995, the National College Access Network’s (NCAN) mission is to build, strengthen, and empower communities committed to college access and success so that all students, especially those underrepresented in postsecondary education, can achieve their educational dreams. With its members and partners, NCAN develops and supports programs and policy solutions that help more students aspire to, apply to, enter, and succeed in college or other postsecondary training. NCAN’s hundreds of members span a broad range of the education, nonprofit, government, and civic sectors, including community-based nonprofit organizations, federally funded TRIO and GEAR UP programs, school districts, colleges and universities, foundations, and corporations.

Kim (Kiely) Cook, NCAN’s Executive Director, has worked in the higher education and college access fields for her entire professional career, including experience in undergraduate admissions and financial aid, direct-service provision and administration of a last-dollar scholarship program, and a succession of responsibilities within a national association of college access programs. Ms. Cook has been with NCAN since 1999, and she was appointed Executive Director in April 2008. Prior to joining NCAN, she was a Senior Program Associate at Plan for Social Excellence, Inc., a foundation supporting innovative projects in education, and served as its Grants Manager and Scholars Program Manager.

Formerly NCAN’s Assistant Director, Dr. Tia Brown McNair is now the Senior Director for Student Success in the Office of Engagement, Inclusion, and Success at the Association of American Colleges and Universities. She is the chief architect of the Student Success Toolkit Demonstration Project and served as the NCAN project director/consultant. During her tenure at NCAN, she conceptualized the project, developed the collaborative relationships of its many participants, and worked with Kim Cook, NCAN’s Executive Director, to obtain the resources to make it possible.
Established in 1999, the mission of the Center for Urban Education is to lead socially conscious research and to develop tools for institutions of higher education to produce equity in student outcomes. Housed at the University of Southern California’s Rossier School of Education, CUE is led by co-directors Drs. Estela Mara Bensimon and Alicia C. Dowd, and by Executive Director Linda J. Wong. CUE is committed to closing the racial-ethnic equity gap and improving student outcomes in higher education. Through its signature action research tool, the Equity Scorecard™, CUE puts data analysis and inquiry methods in the hands of educators and school leaders. CUE is a national leader in the use of data and action research methods to identify problems, develop interventions, and implement equity goals to increase college-going, retention, transfer, and degree completion among underrepresented racial-ethnic groups. Since its founding in 1999, more than fifty colleges and universities in eight states have partnered with CUE to use the Equity Scorecard™ and learn about the concept of “equity-mindedness,” the foundation for institutional responsibility.

**Dr. Estela Mara Bensimon** is a professor of higher education at the USC Rossier School of Education. She is also the founder and co-director of the Center for Urban Education. CUE's principal investigator of the Student Success Toolkit Demonstration Project, her research focuses on issues of racial equity in higher education, from the perspective of organizational learning and socio-cultural practice theories. She is particularly interested in place-based, practitioner-driven inquiry as a means of organizational change in higher education.

**Dr. Alicia C. Dowd** is an associate professor of higher education at the USC Rossier School of Education and co-director of the Center for Urban Education. With Dr. Bensimon, she is leading the development of the next generation of Equity Scorecard™ tools and processes. Her research focuses on issues of equity, institutional effectiveness, and organizational learning.

**Tiffany Jones** is a Ph.D. student at the University of Southern California and a research assistant at the Center for Urban Education. Tiffany works with Dr. Bensimon on higher education and critical policy analysis. She earned a master’s degree in Higher Education Administration from the University of Maryland, College Park. She has worked with pre-college programs for several years and served as an intern for the Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education. Her research interests include college access and student persistence, with particular attention to policy and practice that facilitate outcomes for students of color.
ICF Macro, an ICF International Company, is based in the Washington, DC area and maintains offices across the United States. It has conducted projects for private and public sector clients in more than 125 countries. ICF Macro’s mission is to deliver high-quality, research-based solutions to complex problems, integrating objective information with the advisory and implementation tasks needed to improve real world performance. This goal has shaped the firm’s history since its founding in 1966. In its pursuit, ICF Macro has nurtured core competencies in research and evaluation, management consulting, marketing and communications, and information technology.

Boston Public Schools
In the birthplace of public education in this nation, the Boston Public Schools are committed to transforming the lives of all children through exemplary teaching in a world-class system of innovative, welcoming schools. With over 100 primary and secondary schools, this comprehensive district strategically partners with educational institutions, community members and organizations, families, and students to develop in every learner the knowledge, skill, and character to excel in college, career, and life.
“As a nation, we are still far from achieving the goal of closing the racial divides that so strongly characterize educational institutions and systems in the United States.”
In today's economy, a college degree is in greater demand than ever before. Unfortunately, rising tuition costs, confusion about complex college admission and financial aid processes, and other barriers prevent many qualified students from entering college. Those who do enroll frequently face additional challenges finding the support and resources they need to graduate. These factors have the greatest adverse impact on racial and ethnic groups with a history of unequal access to educational opportunities and resources.

Our organizations, the National College Access Network (NCAN) and the Center for Urban Education (CUE) at the University of Southern California's Rossier School of Education, share a common mission to raise awareness about issues of equity in education. As a nation, we are still far from achieving the goal of closing the racial divides that so strongly characterize educational institutions and systems in the United States. In principle, we have a higher education system that offers access, affordability, choice, and mobility for all students, regardless of their race or wealth. But national, state, and local data all portray racially segregated college pathways. Access and choice are afforded in starkly differentiated ways. For students of color and those from low-income families, access is too often blocked. Too many find themselves on pathways that restrict opportunity, choice, and the likelihood of success.

Both of our organizations are dedicated to increasing racial equity in access, choice, and student outcomes. NCAN helps its members serve students better by providing programs with up-to-date tools and resources, connecting them to each other, and informing them of developments in the field. CUE is a research center that has developed a strategy to improve racial equity in higher education, called the Equity Scorecard™.

The Equity Scorecard™ is a set of data tools, inquiry methods, and practices that enable practitioners to take on the role of researchers of racial equity within their own institutions. CUE researchers work with institutions and guide the Equity Scorecard™ process by facilitating Evidence Team meetings and providing the action research tools for reflective practice. CUE also studies what participants learn about their personal and institutional behaviors, and how this learning leads to “equity-minded” changes in school policies and practices. Such equity-minded practices are designed to reduce the racial equity gaps that persist in American education.

In 2010 our organizations joined together to pilot CUE's Equity Scorecard™ in two Boston high schools. Our purpose was to model a viable strategy to strengthen high schools' college-going cultures. The pilot
project was designed to develop practices of data use and school-based action research that could subsequently be adopted in high schools throughout the country. With the generous support of the Kresge Foundation, we piloted the Equity Scorecard™ in the Community Academy of Science and Health (CASH) and East Boston High School (EBHS) as part of NCAN's Student Success Toolkit Demonstration Project.

This report describes the Student Success Toolkit Demonstration Project and the implementation of the Equity Scorecard™ at these schools. We invite other educators, school leaders, and policy makers to adopt these recommended strategies to create equitable college-going cultures at the schools in their districts or states.

The Student Success Toolkit Demonstration Project demonstrates that action research and inquiry are highly effective strategies for engaging teachers, guidance counselors, administrators, and private college access providers in a collaborative effort to understand low college-going rates from the perspective of racial equity.

Interviews with participants in the Student Success Toolkit Demonstration Project reveal that powerful change can come when taken-for-granted practices are viewed in a fresh light. Hidden inadequacies emerge when we rigorously examine what we assume to be effective practices to promote college access. For practitioners, it is empowering to identify these obstacles and recognize that they often can be corrected through simple actions.

This project was also important in highlighting the work that remains to be done to achieve equity in access, choice, and outcomes. CASH and EBHS were selected as the pilot sites in part because they host several college access providers. The teachers, counselors, administrators, and access providers at these sites were committed to strengthening college support services and facilitating access to higher education for more students. This commitment was evident in their willingness to meet on a regular basis over six months, to gather data to reexamine their own practices, and to engage in difficult conversations about two critical questions:

In what ways do we as teachers, guidance counselors, and administrators participate in the creation of a college-going culture?

How can administrators, teachers, and guidance counselors, through our practices and values, exercise collective responsibility and leadership for a college-going culture?

This practitioner-led investigation produced a wealth of information about college-going practices in the two schools. It also resulted in new knowledge among the participants about what goes on within their schools, how to connect with the work of their colleagues, and how better to serve the hopes of their students. This new knowledge led to reflection about what strategies were working at their schools, and what could be done differently.
In this report, readers will be able to hear directly from the Student Success Toolkit Demonstration Project Evidence Team members about the value of studying their own practices. Their words vividly convey what they learned and how they changed. Needless to say, not everyone was affected in the same way or moved toward learning and change. We know from our prior work, however, that the shift toward equity-minded innovation emerges over time and in different ways for different people.

To call attention to findings that have implications for policymakers, school leaders, and heads of college access provider organizations, we highlight key areas that can be acted on immediately.

**For the Boston Public Schools, we recommend to:**

- Establish a system of data dissemination and annual reporting to:
  - Assist high schools in setting goals for racial equity in access, choice, and degree attainment;
  - Determine a baseline for college applications and admissions goals, including the number and types of colleges students apply to; and
  - Monitor changes in student eligibility for admissions to private and public institutions.

**For School Leaders, we recommend to:**

- Create a centralized internal database system to provide guidance counselors and other school staff with one-stop access to student data. This can be used to assess the percentage of students in each racial and ethnic group who have:
  - Seen a counselor for college guidance;
  - Requested transcripts for college applications;
  - Applied for financial aid; or
  - Participated in specific college support services provided by the school or by college access providers.
- Make the school’s college-going culture palpable to staff, students, and outsiders through the strategic use of symbols, artifacts, and language that communicate college-going indicators as expressions of professional accountability and responsibility.
- Adopt action research as a form of professional development and in-service training.

**For College Access Providers (CAPs), we recommend to:**

- Lay an intentional groundwork with school leaders to lessen the insider-outsider divide between school guidance counselors and CAPs counselors.
- Encourage a collaborative approach to the delivery of college support services and the sharing of knowledge and strategies, thereby facilitating a more efficient use of resources and increasing the number of students served.
- Establish a system for sharing data with host schools to report on the number of students served by race and ethnicity, type of service, and other outcomes.
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- Support innovation and development by sharing internal evaluations of the program’s effectiveness—without hesitating to indicate where there is room for improvement.

The high schools that host NCAN members are in a unique position to take the lead in strengthening the collaboration between college access providers and school personnel through these approaches.

The partnership between NCAN and CUE—two very different organizations—also demonstrates the value of national collaboration around a shared goal to bring diverse resources, knowledge, and experience to bear on complex educational issues. In the pilot demonstration of the Student Success Toolkit, we have learned ways in which our approach was most effective, and areas in which we could have done better. Through this work, we are now in a position to apply the Equity Scorecard™ and action research model more broadly.

Our partnership has enriched our vision and our impact. We look forward to the next stage.

Estela Mara Bensimon
Professor and Co-Director,
Center for Urban Education

Kim Cook
Executive Director,
National College Access Network
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“The activities and results of this demonstration project provide examples of the ways a school can promote a college-going culture and equity in college access among all racial-ethnic groups.”
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6 teachers
5 guidance counselors
3 college access providers
4 administrators

formed

2 evidence teams

at

2 Boston public high schools
CASH and EBHS

in collaboration with

3 research and advocacy organizations
NCAN, CUE and ICF Macro

surveyed

809 high school students
25 college access providers

interviewed

8 teachers
5 guidance counselors
3 administrators
11 parents

and conducted action research using
CUE’s Equity Scorecard™

This report is about the
Student Success Toolkit Demonstration Project

What we learned and
How you can build a college-going culture at your school

*Community Academy of Science and Health (CASH) and East Boston High School (EBHS)
**National College Access Network (NCAN, Center for Urban Education (CUE) and ICF Macro, an ICF International Company
Inequity in college access and success is a national problem that negatively impacts African Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, and particular groups within the Asian American and South Pacific Islander communities. However, the patterns of inequity are unique for each high school, and they cannot be overcome without first understanding how they are manifested in one’s own school and classroom. This report is about two Boston high schools—Community Academy of Science and Health and East Boston High School—that volunteered to pilot the action research methods of the Equity Scorecard™ to investigate their college access and support services from the perspective of racial equity. The activities and results of this demonstration project provide examples of the ways a school can promote a college-going culture and equity in college access among all racial-ethnic groups. As a result of what we learned through this project, the National College Access Network's Student Success Toolkit will provide activities and materials to other schools to enable them to engage in a similar process.

The Equity Scorecard™ is a change process that has been implemented in colleges and universities to examine racial inequities in educational outcomes. It employs action research methods on the premise that, when professionals collaboratively examine and make sense of data on student outcomes by race and ethnicity, they are more likely to “own the problem,” which in turn may increase their willingness to examine the ways in which their personal and institutional practices are implicated in the observed inequities.

The Problem: Inequities in College-Going

The face of education in America is changing, and educational systems are struggling to prepare students adequately for postsecondary education. Public schools educate an increasingly diverse population of K-12 students, in an environment of limited resources and growing expectations for improving student achievement outcomes. According to a report from the U.S. Department of Education 2009-10 Civil Rights Data Collection, educational disparities related to resources and opportunities are rampant. Traditionally underserved students have limited access to college preparatory classes and qualified teachers in comparison to their more affluent and Caucasian counterparts. The challenges are daunting and multifaceted, but not unsolvable. The National College Access Network (NCAN) is dedicated to developing strategies to improve America’s postsecondary access and success rates. NCAN fosters new partnerships and collaborations to address achievement gaps and to identify what works and does not work to foster strong college-going cultures in schools.

Across the nation and in Boston, the site of the Student Success Toolkit Demonstration Project, college-going rates among poor, immigrant, and minority students in urban high schools are significantly
lower than for white students and those in wealthier schools. Additionally, despite these students’ academic qualifications, their pathways to college tend to lead them to local community colleges or to less-selective, commuter four-year institutions. In this way, the national pattern of unequal access and participation in higher education, particularly for black and Hispanic students, is clearly evident in Boston. For example, Asian and white students who graduated from Boston Public Schools in 2000 were about 10 to 25 percent more likely to enroll in a two- or four-year college than their black and Hispanic peers. Further, black and Hispanic graduates were about 20 to 35 percent less likely to attend a four-year college than their white and Asian peers. Once in college, white and Asian graduates were nearly twice as likely as their black and Hispanic peers to graduate with a degree after seven years.¹

In many schools, particularly those serving large numbers of low-income and underrepresented minority populations, students are dramatically underserved by college counseling and related support. According to the National Center for Education Statistics Common Core Data for the 2008-2009 school year, the student-to-counselor ratio in U.S. public schools was 457:1; the American School Counselor Association recommends a ratio of 250:1. Not surprisingly, this high ratio negatively impacts students’ college-going behaviors. A 2008 report issued by the Institute for Higher Education Policy concluded that the vast majority of college-qualified students who did not enroll in postsecondary education did not take any of the necessary steps to do so; only 15 percent of non-college goers applied to any college, 12 percent applied for financial aid, and 10 and 7 percent took the SAT and ACT, respectively.²

External college access providers (CAPs) can play a significant role in addressing this need in many schools, especially in schools that have a high concentration of low-income, immigrant, and minority students. These intervention programs provide targeted services (tutoring, career exploration, test preparation, college admissions advising, financial aid counseling, etc.) to low-income, first-generation, and students otherwise underrepresented in postsecondary education. For many in these underserved populations, such college access intervention programs are the primary avenues for assistance in navigating the college preparation and application process. At their best, CAPs provide a much-needed service and assist overextended school officials.

Unfortunately, most schools lack the system structures and resources to assume a more coordinated approach to manage the delivery of college access services efficiently and equitably. Thus, while CAPs can contribute significantly to the creation of college-going cultures, their potential can not fully be realized without the integration of CAP counselors into the life of the schools to which they are assigned.

Research in the field has not yet thoroughly examined the roles of CAPs at public high schools or their capacity to become integrated elements of a strong college-going culture. This Demonstration Project highlights the steps necessary to integrate CAPs into schools in a purposeful way and to coordinate the delivery of services for maximum impact. The importance of this intentional design is strongly evident when we recognize that typical urban high schools, like those in this project, can have up to fifteen different college access service providers in their schools at the same time. When multiple CAPs operate in a disjointed manner, their services are sure to be underutilized; the resulting maze of overlapping

responsibilities creates an environment of competition for the same few students. As a result, there is no room for collaborative efforts to institutionalize college-going values and practices in ways that can touch the lives of all students in the school.

**A Solution: Strengthening College-Going Cultures through Practitioner Research**

Researchers define a college-going culture as having four characteristics:

1. Rigorous academic curriculum and programs;
2. Clear college-going mission and expectations;
3. Comprehensive college information and resource services; and
4. Coordinated and systemic college support.

It is necessary to maintain a focus on racial equity in this inquiry, because a model college-going culture does not ensure that all students enjoy the benefits equitably. For example, offering Advanced Placement courses at a school is an indicator of a college-going culture. However, the participants in this project found that, while progress has been made to ensure equal representation of students in AP courses, African Americans and Hispanics still participate at a lower rate than their representation in the total student population. NCAN’s Student Success Toolkit is designed to provide administrators, counselors, and teachers with the tools, activities, and structure to assess the presence of a college-going culture in their own schools, and to do so from the perspective of racial equity.

The purpose of the Student Success Toolkit Demonstration Project was to develop and provide a test case engaging practitioners in action-oriented research using these tools. It sought to raise practitioners’ awareness of existing racial inequities in the pursuit of a college-going culture within their own schools. It asked participants to look closely at who benefits from a college-going culture and to prioritize institutionally the task of monitoring the distribution of those benefits.

The CUE Equity Scorecard provided the practitioner research tools and processes to achieve these goals. The Equity Scorecard helps practitioners and leaders, in high schools as well as in colleges and universities, to shift their focus from the inadequacy of students and their families to an action-oriented examination their own institutional practices, asking questions like:

- **Why are we not sending more students to college?**
- **What might we need to do differently?**
- **What might we need to learn to be more effective?**

Undoubtedly, it is not a simple matter of changing school practices to solve low college-going rates among blacks, Hispanics, and other racial/ethnic groups with long histories of educational segregation and exclusion. However, the Equity Scorecard focus is on school practices as well as on structures and policies of schools, because these are the levers of change within the control of principals, vice principals,

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directors, guidance counselors, and teachers. Given that time is in short supply for every practitioner, it makes sense to help all school personnel to adapt and integrate equity-focused counseling strategies holistically into routine interactions with students. This demonstration project showed that, when alerted to the positive roles they can play, secondary school practitioners were willing and able to take meaningful steps to foster a college-going culture at their schools.

Many Forms of Data Inform Practitioner Action Research and Inquiry

Through the Student Success Toolkit Demonstration Project, administrators, teachers, and counselors from two Boston public high schools learned the strategies of inquiry and action research that are central to the Equity Scorecard™ process. ‘Inquiry’ was construed as the purposeful use of data for problem identification, experimentation, and change. Groups of practitioners engaged in this task as “Evidence Teams” to examine data and consider ways to change their school policies and practices. The aim was to learn how to create an equitable college-going culture.

As illustrated in Figure 1, multiple forms of data informed practitioner action research and inquiry in this project.

**Figure 1: Using Data for Inquiry and Reflective Practice in the Equity Scorecard™ Process**

- **INTERVIEWS**
  - Guidance Counselors
  - Headmasters

- **FOCUS GROUPS**
  - Counselors
  - Headmasters
  - Parents
  - Teachers

- **STUDENT SURVEY**

- **COLLEGE ACCESS PROVIDERS (CAPs) SURVEY**

- **ICF Macro**

- **Evidence Teams**
  - Survey Results Data Packets for Team Meetings
  - Equity Scorecard™ Vital Signs
  - College Culture Inventory
  - Team Facilitation
  - Observations
  - Interviews with Evidence Team Members

- **Reflection · Learning · Change**

- **COMMUNITY ACADEMY OF SCIENCE AND HEALTH (CASH)**

- **EAST BOSTON HIGH SCHOOL (EBHS)**

- **NCAN/ CUE/BPS Support Team**
  - Data Analysis
  - Team Meetings
  - Inquiry
Some of the data the Evidence Teams examined already existed, such as the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT) and Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) test scores for students attending the schools. Other data were collected for this project by ICF Macro, a research, evaluation and management consulting firm. At the start of the project in Fall 2010, ICF Macro conducted:

- One-on-one interviews (four in total) with guidance counselors and headmasters at the two schools;
- Focus groups (six in total) with guidance counselors, headmasters and parents; and
- A survey of students at the two schools.

The student surveys were particularly informative to the Evidence Teams’ inquiry process. The survey asked students to answer questions about college access, such as those listed in Table 1. The answers to the first question were disaggregated by race and ethnicity, and the remaining questions were examined according to students’ grade levels.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Sample Questions from the Student Success Survey</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What is the highest level of education you plan to complete?</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Have you received information on what colleges to apply to?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Do you know how to complete a college application?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Do you plan on attending a college fair to receive more information about college?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. How many college campuses have you visited?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Do you plan to visit a college to experience life on a college campus?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Do you know how to complete the FAFSA?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Do you know about any scholarships for which you may qualify?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Do you know how to search for scholarships?</td>
</tr>
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</table>

ICF Macro provided the results of their surveys and interviews to project researchers, who then compiled the findings into data packets for analysis by the Evidence Teams in early Spring 2011.

The Center for Urban Education, with data management assistance from ICF Macro, also provided Equity Scorecard™ Vital Signs reports to the Evidence Teams. The Vital Signs showed the performance of students at their schools on the PSAT and MCAS exams, as well as in mathematics and Advanced Placement courses. Figure 2 illustrates the appearance of the Vital Signs, in this case using the example of students’ “AP Potential,” based on their performance on the PSAT test administered to them in tenth grade.

Evidence Team members, in their roles as practitioner researchers, also collected data using CUE’s College-Going Culture Inventory for High School Self-Assessment (see Figure 3 for an excerpt of the inventory). The College-Going Culture Inventory is designed to help high school personnel make a systematic assessment of the practices and programs in place at their school that have the potential to

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4 Administered in Fall 2010 to students at Community Academy of Science and Health (CASH) and East Boston High School (EBHS) in their English classrooms. The response rates ranged between 50 and 60 percent; the racial demographics of the respondents mirrored their school populations. More than half of the respondents at CASH identified as black and more than half at EBHS identified as Hispanic.
promote a college-going culture. For each of the items on the inventory, participants were asked to assess whether particular practices or policies were in place in their school, whether those in place were effective, and what barriers prevented adoption of those practices and policies that were not in place.

Figure 2: An Example of the Equity Scorecard™ Vital Signs Provided to the Evidence Teams

Table 5: 10th Grade PSAT: Students that demonstrate AP potential by Race (Class of 2010)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Asian Students</th>
<th>Black Students</th>
<th>Latino Students</th>
<th>White Students</th>
<th>Native American</th>
<th>Mixed Race</th>
<th>Other/Unknown</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Critical Thinking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3: An Excerpt from CUE's College-Going Culture Inventory for High School Self-Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators of a College-Going Culture</th>
<th>Does this practice exist in your school?</th>
<th>How effective is it?</th>
<th>If the practice is not in place, can you indicate the reasons?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School offers Advanced Placement courses</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is equity by race and ethnicity in participation and completion of AP courses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AP courses are taught by AP certified teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School offers dual enrollment opportunities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is equity by race and ethnicity in participation in dual college enrollment programs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School offers specific forms of assistance to ensure students pass MCAS on first try</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Additional data were collected by individuals who comprised the External Support Team. This group included researchers from CUE, Jodi Then, a consultant from Boston Public Schools, and Drs. Tia Brown McNair and Ann Coles, both representing NCAN. This group of researchers and consultants gathered data to document the learning process among the Evidence Team members. The purpose of this aspect of the project was to understand how Evidence Team members experienced the project, what they learned, what helped (or hindered) their learning, and what changes they made or were likely to make in their own educational practices. With the Evidence Team members’ own reflections, the data collected included:

- Observational field notes collected at Evidence Team meetings during Fall 2010 and Spring 2011;
- Interviews with Evidence Team Members (17 in total) conducted in Spring 2011; and
- Reflections developed by Evidence Team members in Spring 2011, including observations from a college fair held at their school.

All of these sources of data informed the findings, conclusions, and recommendations of this report.

**The Student Success Toolkit Project Demonstration Schools**

Two pilot schools were identified by the Boston Public Schools Academic Superintendent of High Schools to participate in the Student Success Toolkit Demonstration Project. The Community Academy of Science and Health (CASH) and East Boston High School (EBHS), both in Boston, Massachusetts, were selected because of their diverse student bodies and their wealth of supplemental college access partnerships and student support programs. CASH and EBHS are distinctly different types of high schools; CASH is small with a specialized curriculum, and EBHS is much larger with a broad and varied curriculum. Both were rich sites to pilot a demonstration project of this type. Our aim for the pilot was to determine strategies to enhance collaboration and to develop best practices for connecting the many stakeholders who wish to create college-going cultures in U.S. public high schools. Administrators, counselors, and teachers at CASH and EBHS embraced this goal.

**East Boston High School (EBHS) At-A-Glance**

*Size and Demographics*

East Boston High School (EBHS) is a large high school, with 1,379 students enrolled as of the school census date in 2010, with a focus on academic services. As shown in Figure 4, the student population is by majority Hispanic, while white and African American student groups each have about a 15 percent share of the population. At the time of the study, the EBHS staff estimated that the majority of the school’s students were first or second generation immigrants, including approximately 40 percent who were undocumented.
Figure 4: Racial-Ethnic Composition of EBHS Student Body, 2010-2011

Data reported from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) (2011)

Academic Structure and Services

➢ The academic structure of EBHS includes a block scheduling strategy, in which students take four 80-minute classes each day.
➢ EBHS offers 11 Advanced Placement (AP) courses.
➢ Tutoring for the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS), PSAT, and SAT is offered.
➢ EBHS has a Sheltered English Instruction (SEI) program for Spanish-speaking students.

College Information Services

➢ Each of the four full-time guidance counselors provides college information services to 300 students and is assigned to one of the schools' four “houses,” which are small learning communities.
➢ The school supplements its guidance services with staff from 14 external college access providers, including programs like Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID), Early Access to College, and Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP).
➢ The external college access providers advise students and families on financial aid, college admissions, career exploration, test preparation, and academic enrichment/tutoring/study skills.
The Community Academy of Science and Health (CASH) At-A-Glance

Size and Demographics

The Community Academy of Science and Health (CASH) is a small high school within the Hyde Park Education Complex that enrolled 404 students at the school census date in 2010. At the time the research was conducted, the two other schools located in the building, The Engineering School and the Social Justice Academy, were scheduled to be closed at the end of the 2011 school year, with CASH remaining open and relocating to a building in Dorchester, MA. As illustrated in Figure 5, almost three-quarters of the students at CASH identify as African American and around one-fifth are Hispanic. The school’s large Haitian Creole population is included under the African American category. Other racial-ethnic groups are present only in small numbers.

Figure 5: Racial-Ethnic Composition of CASH Student Body, 2010-2011

Data reported from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) (2011)

Academic Structure and Services

➢ CASH is a college preparatory, theme-based high school focused on Science and Health.
➢ The school partners with the surrounding community to offer internships and career opportunities for students related to the school’s health and science theme.
➢ CASH is increasingly focused on providing students with enriching academic opportunities, as demonstrated by the school’s plan to increase AP course offerings from five to seven courses in the 2011-2012 school year.
➢ CASH also offers additional educational services through a Sheltered English Instruction (SEI) program for Haitian Creole-speaking students.
College Information Services

➢ The single guidance counselor at CASH is responsible for providing college information to all of the school’s students.
➢ College access services are also delivered by 11 college access providers through programs like The Education Resources Institute (TERI) and the Action Center for Educational Services and Scholarships (ACCESS).
➢ The college access providers deliver services to students and families, including financial aid and college admissions advising, academic enrichment, study skills, tutoring, career counseling, and information on scholarships and grants.
➢ CASH has a Director of Partnerships who coordinates the college access providers, internships, and dual enrollment programs for students.

“The purpose of the Student Success Toolkit Demonstration Project was to develop and provide a test case engaging practitioners in action-oriented research using these tools. It sought to raise practitioners’ awareness of existing racial inequities in the pursuit of a college-going culture within their own schools. It asked participants to look closely at who benefits from a college-going culture and to prioritize institutionally the task of monitoring the distribution of those benefits.”
The Importance of the Evidence Team: Learning and Change Are Socially Constructed

In an earlier era, social scientists believed that learning happened ‘between the ears.’ In other words, it was a matter of cognition. In contrast, contemporary researchers recognize the social and cultural aspects of learning. They emphasize that learning and change are socially constructed in “joint productive activities,” with peers and facilitators. The good news is that schools and other educational institutions are ideal locations for such activities, so long as educational leaders support the value of these generative interactions. Team-based, in-service learning, including practitioner research, must be employed as strategies for educational excellence.

The CUE Equity Scorecard™ relies on the Evidence Team as the incubator and vanguard of learning about racial equity and inequities. To this end, Evidence Team members engage in a variety of joint productive activities, all designed to promote new thinking about existing educational practices, policies, and structures.

These socio-cultural theories of learning are reflected in five guiding principles for this work:

1) Learning is social;
2) Learning is facilitated by exposure to responsive, capable peers and mentors;
3) Learning is mediated by cultural tools and artifacts such as data and meetings;
4) Learning takes place in communities of practice; and
5) Learning is indicated by changes in participation within these communities of practice.

These principles make clear why the CASH and EBHS Evidence Teams are at the center of Figure 6. The Evidence Team members were engaged in the processes of learning and building organizational capacity for learning on behalf of their schools and communities. They performed dual roles as educators serving a diverse community of parents and students, and as practitioner-researchers engaging in inquiry on behalf of a broader community of practice. This community of practice for each group included the other teachers, counselors, administrators, and college access providers at their schools, as well as their colleagues in the broader National College Access Network. The expectation was that Evidence Team members would evaluate the status of equity in college access services provided within their schools, and that they would advocate for change in the areas they found to be most in need.

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6 For further reading, see:
Figure 6: The Student Success Toolkit Demonstration Project, Boston, Massachusetts: A Community of Practice Engaged in Inquiry
The Equity Scorecard™ employs action research methods as the primary strategy of change. Action research is effective by incorporating the aforementioned learning principles; it depends on collaboration and is validated by the willingness of practitioner-researchers to act upon their findings. Learning in the Evidence Teams is mediated, or guided, by inquiry tools and activities.

Together, CUE and NCAN believe that the involvement of practitioners in structured and assisted collaborative inquiry is an effective method for developing new awareness of racial inequities. Conceptually, this approach reframes inequity as a problem of practice, rather than as a problem of student academic, social, or cultural deficits. Inquiry leads to the identification of problem areas in policy or practice, not to assign blame, but rather to create an impetus for change, reinforced by the practitioner’s self-generated knowledge of the problem.

How the Equity Scorecard™ Works in Practical Terms: Who, What, Where, How

The Equity Scorecard™ engages the members of a practitioner-researcher Evidence Team in a collaborative process of inquiry facilitated by researchers from the Center for Urban Education. The Evidence Team, which typically consists of ten practitioners, is given its name because it uses evidence that exists in student records or is gathered through surveys, interviews, and observations to identify inequitable practices, policies, or environments that disadvantage students from racial-ethnic groups who have experienced exclusion or marginalization in U.S. society.

The CASH and EBHS Evidence Teams were appointed by administrative leaders, in this case the school headmasters. The teams included teachers, guidance counselors, administrators, and counselors from outside college access providers with whom the schools partner. They were headed by two Team Leaders, both of whom were school administrators appointed by their headmasters. The Team Leaders were responsible for planning and leading the Evidence Team meetings, facilitating discussions about the data to assist their teams in developing meaningful interpretations, and communicating with the various partners involved in the project.

As shown in Figure 7, the CASH and EBHS Evidence Teams were supported in their inquiry process by representatives of the project’s collaborating partners: Dr. Tia Brown McNair, project director, NCAN project director/consultant and currently of the Association of American Colleges and Universities; Dr. Ann Coles, NCAN Consultant and ACCESS Senior Fellow; Jodi Then, a consultant from the Boston Public Schools (BPS); CUE co-director Dr. Estela Mara Bensimon; and researcher Tiffany Jones. This Support Team provided the Evidence Teams with information, ideas, and support during the process. Figure 7 identifies the team members from the two schools, with generic position titles. The representatives from the external organizations are identified by name.

The cycle of inquiry is captured by the five-phase model of the Equity Scorecard™, illustrated in Figure 8. The timeline indicated approximates the phases of inquiry in the Student Success Toolkit Project.

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Using Data and Inquiry to Build Equity-Focused College-Going Cultures

Figure 7: Student Success Toolkit Project Evidence Team Members and External Support Team

Team A
- Two Administrators (2)
- Four Guidance Counselors (4)
- Two College Access Providers (2)
- Two Teachers (2)

Team B
- Two Administrators (2)
- One Guidance Counselor (1)
- Four Teachers (4)
- One College Access Provider (1)

External Participants
- Estela Mara Bensimon
  Co-Principal Investigator, Professor and Co-Director at the Center for Urban Education, University of Southern California
- Ann Coles
  Consultant for National College Access Network, and Senior Fellow for ACCESS
- Tiffany Jones
  Project Coordinator at the Center for Urban Education, University of Southern California
- Tia Brown McNair
  Co-Principal Investigator, Project Director/Consultant for National College Access Network
- Jodi Then
  Boston Public Schools Representative

Figure 8: The NCAN/Equity Scorecard™ Five-Phase Process and Project Timeline

USC Center for Urban Education

The Equity Scorecard™ Process and Timeline

P1: Laying the Groundwork
- Understanding the Context
- Team Preparation
- Introduction to Equity

P2: Becoming Practitioner Researchers
- Reviewing Data
- Finding Gaps
- Developing Hunches
- Capturing and Prioritizing Questions

P3: Becoming Best Practitioners
- Inquiry Activities
- Inquiry into Policies and Practices

P4: Setting Goals
Apr. 2011 – May 2011
- Reviewing Data
- Setting Equity Goals
- Designing Action Plan
- Aligning Plan with Existing Efforts

P5: Advancing Solutions
June 2011 – Sept. 2011
- Discussing Implementation
- Assessing Process Impact
- Communicating Progress
Training the Team Leaders and Evidence Teams

Three training sessions were held to familiarize team members with action research methods, the specialized language of the Equity Scorecard™, and the theory of change. Most importantly, the team members learned about equity-mindedness, the central concept of equity-focused change. An equity-minded practitioner creates successful innovations because she or he views poor educational outcomes, lack of college readiness, and low rates of college-going not as problems caused by student deficiencies, a ‘deficit-minded’ view, but as problems caused by inadequate practices—on behalf of the individual practitioner as well as the school. Equity-minded ways of thinking question what schools can do to improve students’ college readiness. Through this framework, the participant is empowered to effect change in the areas that lie within her or his control.

CUE’s Action Research Tools: Guiding the Teams’ Inquiry Activities

The Evidence Teams met every other week from January to June 2011. They used ICF Macro’s Student Survey report and CUE’s data and inquiry tools, such as the Vital Signs, observation protocols, and interviews, to investigate key aspects of their schools’ college-going culture.

The Evidence Teams held eight meetings designed to guide them in the cycle of inquiry. The meetings had the following goals and outcomes.

Meeting 1: Review data.

Review survey data on students’ college aspirations and self-reported knowledge of admissions process, financial aid, and other basic information. Select specific findings for additional in-depth inquiry.

Meeting 2: Select and plan inquiry activities.

Pursue more evidence of the impact of school policies and practices on student outcomes, building upon the data examined in Meeting 1. The teams were provided with a guide to develop a plan for their inquiry activities. The planning process required that participants (1) identify a student outcome to investigate; (2) find sources of information on educational practices and policies that affect those outcomes; and (3) delegate responsibilities to team members who are responsible for conducting the inquiry.

Guiding questions for research included:

1. How do we provide college access services?
2. How often are the college access services provided?
3. How will the team gather information to address the inquiry questions?
4. Who will complete the activity?
5. Who will we contact to get more information?
Meeting 3: Plan “equity-minded” inquiry activities.

During the planning process, Evidence Team members often suggested inquiry questions to examine students’ and/or parents’ beliefs and behaviors, rather than their own practices. In response, the team leaders and external participants agreed upon the need to revisit the concepts of equity- and deficit-mindedness. Revisiting these concepts encouraged the teams to use equity-mindedness as a frame for inquiry and to develop activity plans focused on actions within their own control as educators. A reframing activity asked participants, working in pairs, to identify equity- and deficit-minded statements about student outcomes, using the following prompts:

1. What problem is addressed in the statement?
2. Who/What is cited as the cause of the problem (e.g. student, teacher, school)?
3. What is the implied solution within the statement?
4. In what ways can the school address the problem in this statement?

Examples were drawn from school staff responses to interviews conducted by ICF Macro at the outset of the project. An example of an equity-minded statement showed how it was possible to locate the problem of students’ poor preparation in educational practices:

Teachers indicate that they have incomplete knowledge about the college application process, and sometimes wonder if they are giving their students inaccurate information.

This statement was contrasted with a deficit-minded statement that made assumptions about students and suggested the problem derived from parenting practices:

Parents, especially those who did not go to college, are not supportive of their children going to college.

As a result of this exercise, one team decided to observe student and college representative interactions at a college fair held at its high school. This decision was also informed by their doubts about the student survey data, which indicated that about half of students had never attended a fair. The initial reaction of the Evidence Team was to reject the finding as wrong, or to focus on the students’ deficits that could have led them to misunderstand the question or to forget that they participated in a college fair. Through discussion and collaboration, the team formulated an equity-minded question, “How do we prepare students to participate in a college fair?” This line of inquiry brought the team to the recognition that students receive no preparation to navigate a college fair. The team reasoned that, therefore, students may feel disengaged at college fairs, and even some may have no recollection of their participation to report on a survey.
The Evidence Team combined their inquiry process with experimentation in the design of a new instructional resource. To assist students in navigating and engaging with the resources at a college fair, the team created a list of items that students should collect while at the fair (see Figure 9). They prepared some students to engage in the fair as though they were on a ‘scavenger hunt’ for these items. Students who completed the activity were given a small prize. Evidence Team members attended the fair and observed that this activity helped students engage in conversations with college representatives.

**Figure 9: College Fair Scavenger Hunt Activity**

- ✔ A university in New York that starts with the letter ‘A’
- ✔ An application from a college in California
- ✔ A pencil from a college with Oceanography as a major
- ✔ The signature of a representative from a university in Florida (and college name)
- ✔ An application from a university in Massachusetts
- ✔ The name of a college or university with a tiger mascot
- ✔ The name of the first college ever in the U.S.
- ✔ The name of a dorm on the campus of UMass Amherst
- ✔ The name of a dorm on the campus of University of California, Berkeley
- ✔ A college with a bear mascot
- ✔ The names of two colleges in the state of Maine
- ✔ The name of a college or university in Georgia that starts with the letter ‘E’
- ✔ An admission packet from a college or university in Texas
- ✔ The signature of a representative from a college in Delaware (and college name)
- ✔ A pencil from a college or university in Colorado

**Meeting 4: Clarify equity- versus deficit-minded interpretations.**

The team members reported what they learned and observed during the inquiry activities they had conducted subsequent to Meeting 3. While generating findings from their observations, team members had additional opportunities to refine their understanding of equity- and deficit-minded interpretations.

“If we put actions in place to highlight both what students can do and what staff can do to support them—the results will be student achievement beyond anyone’s expectations.”
Meeting 5: Assess college access resources at each school.

The Evidence Team reviewed the data ICF Macro had collected through the survey of college access providers (CAPs) in the two high schools. The results showed that many programs were available, but the total number of students served was much smaller than expected. The low number of participants generated a discussion of how to better coordinate with CAPs to make their resources available to more students, if space permitted. With the CAPs survey results in hand, the discussion was informed by a better understanding of important characteristics of the college access programs at the two schools, such as:

1. The number of years the CAPs had provided services to EBHS or CASH.
2. The range of services the CAPs provided to students.
3. When the services where provided to students, including the time of the day, year, and across the freshman to senior years.
4. The intended target population for each service provider.
5. The racial and ethnic background of the students served.

Meeting 6: Summarize findings and identify preliminary recommendations.

Participants identified the things they had learned from the data, activities, or discussions in previous meetings, and they generated policy and/or practice recommendations.

Meeting 7: Review PSAT and MCAS Equity Scorecard™ data.

Participants reviewed racially disaggregated student achievement data for the PSAT and MCAS. The data included the number of students by race identified as having “AP Potential” by the College Board as a result of their PSAT scores. For example, as described in Figure 10, the data indicated that about half of the students were not taking the PSAT, and only half reported receiving information about it. Among those who did take the test, few scored at levels considered to signal “AP Potential,” according to College Board standards.

Meeting 8: Develop an Action Plan.

Team members were provided with a summary of the data they had reviewed in previous meetings, the inquiry activity findings they had discussed, and an action planning template, illustrated in Figure 10. In small groups, they identified recommendations to address the issues indicated by their inquiry findings. For example, for the improvement area of low PSAT preparation attendance and participation, they recommended actions to educate staff on the importance of the PSAT, to review the PSAT with staff to better acquaint them with the preparation students would need to succeed on the exam, and to communicate with ninth graders and their families about the importance of the PSAT.
In the action plans, the teams described an area of desired improvement. They outlined how the idea evolved from the data and inquiry activity findings; their recommended actions; the staff and resources needed; timeline for implementation; and benchmarks that would represent success.

**Figure 10: Sample Action Plan for Areas of Improvement/Purpose**

**Increase PSAT Attendance and Participation**

**Connection between area of improvement and findings**
1. About half of students are not taking the PSAT.
2. 51% of 9th graders have not received information about college admissions tests like the PSAT.
3. Few students are scoring at levels that the College Board identifies as indicative of AP potential.

**Recommended Actions**
1. Educate staff on the importance of the PSAT.
2. Review PSAT with staff to determine what skills are needed to succeed on the test.
3. Speak to 9th grade students and their families regarding the importance of the PSAT.

**Evidence Team Member who will reach out to person/office**
Guidance counselors and administrative staff will speak to teachers during summer professional development, as well as with families during orientation.

**Resources Needed**
PSAT information

**Improve 9th Grade College Readiness**

**Connection between area of improvement and findings**
1. 63% of 9th grade students do not know how to fill out a college application.
2. 77% of 9th grade students do not know how to fill out the FAFSA.

**Recommended Actions**
1. Use advisory time to inform students about the college admission process.
2. Conduct workshops during MCAS testing on the college process.
3. Perform peer assessment to determine knowledge of students.
4. Teach students communication skills to advocate for their own education.

**Evidence Team Member who will reach out to person/office**
Guidance counselors and administrative team will meet with 9th grade staff and distribute college readiness information.

**Resources Needed**
Information regarding college readiness activities
Generally, the action plans focused on improving the dissemination of college information to students, parents, and teachers. Evidence Teams generated ideas for communication and collaboration. These included a school Twitter account to post college information and professional development workshops, conducted by guidance counselors, to inform teachers about the college application process. Each team was provided with funds ranging from $3,000 to $11,000 to support the implementation of their action plans.

Using Data for Inquiry: Framing the Challenges as Problems of Practice

Reflecting on the many sources of data brought together in the Student Success Toolkit, Evidence Team members began to find new answers to the following questions that they had not previously considered:

- What are students’ college expectations?
- How are students preparing for college?
- How do we ‘do’ college prep at our school?
- What existing internally- and externally-supported college access services are available to students and parents at our school?
- Which students are taking advantage of these CAP services and programs?
- What are the perceptions and experiences of high school staff and their college access partners regarding their work around college access?
- What challenges do we face in delivering these services effectively?
- What are we doing well, and what can we do better?
- What can I as a teacher, guidance counselor, administrator, or college access provider do to increase college-going among students at my school?

The Evidence Teams learned many things that helped them to know their students’ lives better. More than half of the students responding to the survey shared that English was not the primary language spoken in their homes. A majority of the respondents’ parents had not completed a postsecondary degree. These and other related results indicated the important role of the schools as sites for sharing information and guidance about what it takes to apply, be admitted, and enroll in college.

“We don’t want to change our policy. We always try to blame outside factors: the student, the parents. But there are a lot of things that probably can change within the school. And we have to [ask], ‘What is not working? Why is it not working?’”
Nine overall themes emerged early in the Student Success Toolkit Demonstration Project as the Evidence Teams examined the data packets with the ICF Macro survey results.

1. **Students Have High Aspirations**
   Over half of responding students at both schools aspired to at least a 4-year college degree. Over one third planned to pursue education beyond a 4-year degree.

2. **Students Lack the Knowledge They Need to Access College**
   The majority of responding students indicated that they do not know or are not sure:
   - How to complete a college application
   - How to get assistance to pay for college application fees
   - Whether they are eligible for any college scholarships, and how to search for any for which they may qualify
   - How to get loans for college
   - What the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is, and how to complete it

   The majority of students rated their knowledge as low to moderate concerning what they would need to do to:
   - Receive tutoring in a subject to help them graduate
   - Participate in a class to prepare them for the ACT, SAT, or MCAS
   - Participate in a mentoring program
   - Go to a college fair
   - Experience life on a college campus
   - Participate in a summer program on a college campus

3. **College Information Is Placed in Students’ Hands Too Late**
   The college information received by participants varied by grade, with 12th grade students receiving the most information, and 9th grade students receiving the least. The majority of college access providers recruited only 11th and 12th grade students. The information students received was inadequate with regard to:
   - Courses they needed to take to get into college
   - Choosing and applying to colleges
   - What to expect from college-level classes
   - Preparing for college life
   - Identifying career options
4. **School Personnel Matter**
Students were most likely to list a teacher, counselor, or principal at their school as one of their sources of college information. More than half of respondents said school staff gave them information about study and time management skills and college admission tests.

5. **Many Stakeholder Groups Support College Access Programs (CAPs)**
Each of the two project sites had between ten and fifteen different college access providers at their schools. The majority of these programs were supported by community organizations and colleges and universities, while some others were supported by government organizations and private businesses.

6. **A Range of Resources and Programs Have Already Been Developed**

*What:* The services most commonly offered to students included:

- Academic enrichment/tutoring/study skills
- College admissions advising
- Test preparation services
- Financial aid advising
- Career exploration
- Counseling services

*Where:* About half of the programs offered services at the school site, while others offered services at community centers, college campuses, or the site of their business.

*When:* Most of the programs provided services after school hours, while half offered services during the summer. Less than half were open during school hours. About half organized episodic events (e.g., financial aid nights, college fairs, college visits).

7. **CAPs Focus On and Serve Particular Student Groups**
Many of the programs targeted specific demographic groups, with half targeting potential first-generation college students and racial-ethnic groups that have been historically underrepresented in higher education. Some programs focused on more specific demographic groups, with one program directed toward undocumented students. The overall demographics of students served by CAPs reflected the school populations, with black students making up the majority served at CASH, and Hispanic students the majority of participants at EBHS.

8. **Some Restrictions Do Apply**
Half of the programs required students to apply to participate through a competitive process, and a third of the programs required that students document their legal U.S. resident status. Some programs required the completion of a contract with a parent or student. About half of the programs were open enrollment.
9. Evaluation Capacity Exists to Strengthen College Access
All programs responding to the survey had been evaluated, with about half evaluated by an external evaluator. Most of the programs verify whether their participants later enroll in college. The programs that track postsecondary enrollment of their participants reported that about half went on to college.

Additionally, focus groups and interviews conducted by ICF Macro further contextualized the survey responses. Participants in these discussions identified six over-arching challenges:

Challenge #1: Difficulty coordinating across various departments. Focus group members observed a lack of communication between internal and external college access providers, with the result that CAPs counselors were not always aware of activities conducted by internal providers, and vice versa. They noted that one particular challenge in coordinating across departments is the separation in physical spaces designated for different providers, and that having a shared space or designated group planning time could enable them to work together more effectively.

Challenge #2: Lack of parental involvement. A frequently noted concern was the need to involve parents in college access events and to keep parents abreast of key information. Members observed that parents do not always attend the events to which they are invited, such as financial aid nights or open house nights, and that teachers are not always able to contact parents for outreach. Some members suggested that the language barrier between school staff and parents was one possible reason for this disconnect.

Challenge #3: Difficulty meeting diverse student needs. Another concern raised by several members was the need to be creative in meeting the college aspirations of a diverse population of students, especially those who might not be effectively served by current delivery modes. For instance, it was noted that student group discussions, a common interpersonal format for dispersing information, could alienate students who have complicated family situations, such as foster care or homelessness. Members also raised concerns for English language learner students, whose classes were perhaps less likely to be targeted by speakers about college topics. In addition, participants were worried about undocumented students, who were likely to be hesitant to apply to programs due to their status, despite their college-going eligibility.

Challenge #4: Lack of awareness among students of what will be expected of them in college. Some members expressed concern that many students may have teachers who were not providing college-level expectations or instructional workloads similar to a college setting.

Challenge #5: Lack of knowledge about financial aid packages. Members articulated a perceived lack of knowledge among students and families about financial aid packages, observing that many families do not understand the financial aid they receive. For example, they recounted instances of family members who did not understand that required payments were annual, rather than one-time costs, and whose children had to leave four-year institutions when payments could not be made. Members also believed
that families did not understand the financial risk of taking out loans over four years. They felt that families needed a clearer understanding of how much they would have to repay, how long the repayment period would last, and other risks and benefits of borrowing money.

**Challenge #6: Lack of teacher knowledge about the college application process.** Members also shared the concern that, while students often go to teachers for advice about college, teachers have incomplete knowledge about application processes and are in danger of giving inaccurate advice. After listening to colleagues, one teacher in a focus group noted that he wished he could take back certain advice that he had recently provided to a student.

These focus group and interview commentaries added texture to the project’s understanding of current dilemmas experienced by college access providers and counselors at the two high schools. The conversations also forced participants to pinpoint their perceptions of the causes of students’ struggles. Some members framed their observations in terms of institutional responsibility (“Here’s an area where we aren’t serving students as well as we could...Perhaps we should try...”). In other cases, however, members directly attributed the problems to lack of effort or other deficits on the part of students or their parents. When this deficit framework prevailed, Support Team members used the examples as a starting point for a discussion about equity-mindedness with the teams at the two schools. The Support Team extracted sample statements based on the interview and focus group data and shared them with team members, who had the opportunity to identify equity- or deficit-minded frames. The team members reframed statements that blamed students or parents into statements that emphasized institutional responsibility and opportunity for improvement.

**Impact of the Inquiry Process: Participants’ Learning and Change**

To assess the impact of the Equity Scorecard™ on participating practitioners, all Evidence Team members were interviewed at the end of the project. The purpose of the interviews was to document what the participants learned, what helped (or hindered) their learning, and what changes they made or are likely to make in their own practices. The following questions served as a framework for the interviews:

1. What did the participants in the inquiry process learn about their college readiness programs and services?
2. What did the participants learn about their students’ participation in college readiness programs?
3. In what ways did participants’ new learning bring about changes in their own and their schools’ practices, structures, and policies?
4. In what ways did participants respond to the notion that producing racial equity in college-going outcomes is a professional responsibility?

The interviews revealed that about three-fourths of the Evidence Team members found that the project helped them to consider how their practices could be improved to increase college access.
One participant started the project questioning whether his involvement was relevant, but he came to realize, through the inquiry activities, the need for personal and collective responsibility. He noticed that, even when the evidence showed that they were not doing everything well, many of his colleagues still did not want to admit that their practices may be the problem. He said:

“We don’t want to change our policy. We always try to blame outside factors: the student, the parents. But there are a lot of things that probably can change within the school. And we have to [ask], ‘What is not working? Why is it not working?’”

Through the inquiry process, Evidence Team members’ reflections about college-going cultures in their schools began to revolve around two points:

1. How existing policies and practices at the school facilitate college access; and
2. How building a college-going culture requires the involvement of all school staff.

An anticipated result of the project was that school-based participants would become aware of how their expectations shape student opportunities, and, as a result, they would increasingly seek to examine the quality and effectiveness of their own practices. The reflections of Evidence Team members presented in this section illustrate that this was, indeed, an outcome of the project.

At the start of the project, some team members voiced skepticism about the purpose of the work. They questioned their students’ potential and suggested it would be more realistic for students to focus on preparation for jobs. About the student survey, one participant complained,

“Why [ask them] just about college? …What about vocational [options] and other things?”
Another shared this view of the survey, asking, “[What] about something other than college? …They may want to do hair or even the military.” A third participant felt that the students should be made more aware of community college certificate programs: “[The students could] learn how to fix a computer.”

Pervasive symbols of restricted college pathways in the school buildings also conveyed lower expectations to students, even if unintentionally. Project researchers were initially struck by the predominance of posters in guidance offices about community colleges and vocational schools. These materials contrasted with advertisements for selective schools, featured by the college access providers (CAPs). Some evidence team members, however, felt that CAPs fostered college goals that were not realistic for their students.

“Sometimes college access providers give students a false sense of what college they can get into. …I agree that you should encourage students to apply to ‘reach’ schools, but these external programs build up the students’ confidence so they think that they are a shoo-in for [elite private college].”
While it is true that some students will prefer or be best suited to pursue vocational study and careers, there is no reason that vocational and collegiate or professional aspirations should be disparately apportioned among racial-ethnic groups. Using the concepts of deficit-minded and equity-minded interpretations, the CUE Equity Scorecard™ process encourages participants to take on institutional responsibility for these problematic implications for student success.

The deficit-equity dichotomy is a useful heuristic for the habits of mind that frame our understandings of the problems of access and equity. The following two examples illustrate how the Equity Scorecard™ inquiry activities and learning process fostered a shift in thinking toward equity-mindedness among the practitioners.

As shown in Figure 11, members of the Evidence Teams who were teachers observed a college fair at their high school—an activity that they had not previously examined. They realized that, as teachers, they could play a more direct role to ensure that their students benefited from these normally routine events. For example, they recognized that they could prepare their students by instructing them about which questions to ask college representatives. It had never occurred to them to help students to know what to look for in advance of attending the fair; this was a new practice that any teacher could very easily adopt, even with limited resources.

**Figure 11: The Equity Scorecard Learning Process.**

1. **Data Review**
   Example: Half of seniors report that they never attended a college fair.

2. **Deficit-Minded Interpretation**
   Survey is incorrect because all students are taken to college fairs.

3. **Equity-Minded Interpretation**
   Students are not being prepared to engage fully in college fairs.

4. **Inquiry Activity**
   Provide students with an activity to engage with college representatives.

5. **Inquiry Findings**
   Students who utilized the activity appeared more engaged than students who did not.

6. **Recommendations**
   Provide all students with preparation and strategies for engagement before attending college fairs and campus visits.
Another example can be drawn from a guidance counselor who participated in a focus group with 9th grade students. The counselor came to the realization that some students relied on their parents for information about college, and that this behavior prevented them from taking advantage of the information and college access opportunities provided by the college access providers. Listening to the 9th grade students talk about their college aspirations, the guidance counselor reflected on her own practices, and she decided to become more systematic about reaching out to students.

**How Existing Policies and Practices Facilitate College Access**

Evidence Team members discussed several instances in which they were unexpectedly enlightened through data or discussion about their schools’ existing practices related to students’ college-going opportunities. For example, they learned from the freshmen student survey data that an institutional focus on juniors and seniors in college-going outreach resulted in the neglect of freshmen and sophomores,

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**Figure 12: Participant Learning about PSAT Performance/AP Course Access**

1. **Data Review**
   Example: Only about half of tenth graders completed the PSAT, and only 25% of PSAT test-takers reached the score needed to enroll in AP courses.

2. **Deficit-Minded Interpretation**
   Students are not taking the PSAT test seriously.

3. **Equity-Minded Interpretation**
   The school does not place as much emphasis on the PSAT as on the state standardized test.

4. **Inquiry Activity**
   Find out what is done to promote and prepare students for the PSAT.

5. **Inquiry Findings**
   There are no existing formal initiatives to promote taking the PSAT and succeeding.

6. **Recommendations**
   Establish promotion efforts for the PSAT comparable to existing measures for the state standardized test.
who knew very little about college until it was too late to get started. One participant shared an intention to remedy this practice:

“[I am] definitely going to be more focused, aware, and intentional about working with the younger grades around college awareness, because…that’s been sort of a missed opportunity. I’ve been so busy with the applications, …that we’ve already lost a lot of kids who didn’t get to that stage.”

Additionally, specific policies came into focus in the data discussions. One piece of information, the relationship between students’ Advanced Placement (AP) course enrollment and PSAT performance, initiated lively dialogue during the Evidence Team meetings and was referenced in several of the later interviews. As demonstrated in Figure 12, participants learned about their schools’ AP course enrollment policies through the review of data and discussion with their colleagues.

Within each team, there was at least one individual who had knowledge about the PSAT and could answer basic questions asked by colleagues: Who takes the PSAT? How does the PSAT determine which students get into AP courses? By drawing on its own internal knowledge, the Evidence Team learned that students who do not earn a high PSAT score must depend on teacher recommendations to get into an AP course.

Successful completion of Advanced Placement courses increases students’ admissions eligibility to four-year colleges; however, the number of students taking AP courses at the demonstration sites was very small, particularly among black and Hispanic populations. The teams identified two reasons for this underrepresentation in the AP program. First, few students met the minimum PSAT score (45) to qualify. Second, even though teachers can recommend promising students with lower scores, not many such students were recommended. These two blocked pathways to AP courses became known to the participants during a discussion of Vital Signs data. When asked to share new learning from the process, one participant said,

“I was floored because I had no idea the PSAT was being used as an AP success predictor or recommender.”

The data on PSAT scores and AP course enrollment led to a greater understanding of racial-ethnic inequity in student access to the schools’ college preparation resources. The Evidence Team members mapped racial group differences onto the process for entry into AP courses to learn more. One team member observed,

“The Afro American PSAT [scores] as a recommender for AP is zero. I mean, wow, that’s sad. And yet, so much of our resources seem to be dedicated to “at risk students,” who are from that demographic. And I’m thinking, well, are we spinning our wheels?”

This participant’s statement demonstrates how equity-minded data analysis equips practitioners to think more critically about institutional practices.
Collaborating to Create a College-Going Culture

Participants learned during the project about the importance of collaboration to share knowledge and expertise, within the Evidence Teams as well as when implementing practices institution-wide.

Evidence Teams drew on diverse colleague experience levels and expertise areas as they considered school practices and policies. One participant appreciated the opportunity to “step back and see the big picture” through her colleagues’ perspectives. She specifically enjoyed how other team members with “years of experience [engaged] with data, responded to it, and processed it based on past experience with students.”

In these ways, participating in the Equity Scorecard™ process encouraged team members to take full advantage of their individual roles to prepare students for college and contribute to college-going culture. They gained a greater understanding of how individual efforts could be maximized through collaboration with colleagues to leverage collective responsibility for improvement.

Figure 13: Participant Learning about Collaborating to Create a College-Going Culture
Of the process, one participant observed,

“It helped us identify the assets [of students] and what aspects are within our control. For some people, that was powerful. We all walked away with the fact that everyone has a piece in ensuring that our students have access to college and are college and career ready. …It is not just the [role of the] guidance counselor helping students fill out applications; every one saw through the inquiry activities that we could each play a significant part in helping to shape and support a college-going culture.”

More specifically, the team members expressed a greater understanding of the need for formal integration of teachers and external college access providers in the college-going culture of the schools. The team members gained this understanding through the whole planning process, from data discussions, conceptualization of equity, and inquiry activities to recommendations for implementation and policy change. An example of this learning process is demonstrated in Figure 13.

Integrating Teachers into the College-Going Culture

Figures 11, 12, and 13 illustrate how the Evidence Team’s discussions about school data resulted in constructive conversations about how better to utilize all of the available staff and resources to facilitate students’ college access. Teachers, in particular, derived value from being included in conversations in which they otherwise would not have participated. One teacher shared, “It was helpful… There are programs that we don’t know what their role is, because they don’t meet with us. I have a better idea now.”

Another shared that teachers didn’t really discuss college-going prior to this project; that role was reserved for guidance counselors. Some teachers attributed their ignorance of college preparation programs to the limited opportunities for teachers, guidance counselors, CAPs, and administrators to work in cross-cutting teams to solve problems. One member shared, “We don’t get a lot of opportunities to leave the classroom, because [the school] believes that [is where] teachers should be; that’s our role. …So participating in outside activities, we don’t do that often. …In the ten years I’ve been here I think [this Evidence Team] is probably the second time, because I don’t even remember a first time that I’ve been out of the classroom participating in a group for this long.”

Academic preparation is a critical predictor of college access for students. However, many teachers referenced a lack of opportunities to contribute to conversations about college preparation, and some said they did not see themselves as having a role in preparing students for college. These teachers shared that they didn’t participate in promoting college-going prior to the project, except by providing students with
occasional letters of recommendation. As a result of their unfamiliarity with college-going language, policies, and practices in their schools, many teachers reported feeling out of place when discussing college access data on the team. Consequently, many of the teachers shared that they initially took more passive roles on the Evidence Teams, simply listening to the discussions as they “struggled to wrap [their] heads around” the data and college access information.

However, as the process continued, the same teachers who initially felt removed from college-going practice learned how they could play a role. Taking advantage of sustained contact with students, teachers can provide information to students and help them prepare for college participation. One participant shared,

“\textit{I didn’t go to college in the US, so I had to listen and learn; I didn’t have these experiences. I got a better understanding of the college planning process, e.g. the college fair, and [now] I feel more part of it. I know why [we do] college fairs, and how as a teacher I can help students with college planning.}”

An additional benefit of including teachers in the Evidence Teams was that the other participants were able to draw upon their knowledge and experiences from the classroom. For example, the team used the teachers’ experiences instructing Advanced Placement courses to inform the discussion of equity in that arena. One participant commented,

“\textit{It was nice to get teachers as a part of the process, because creating a college-going culture is a whole school collaboration. It isn’t just the guidance counselor; it is an entire school effort. …This gave us an opportunity for so many people who have different roles at the school to get together and talk.}”

\textbf{Utilizing College Access Provider Partnerships}

While Evidence Teams embraced the presence of teachers for collaboration, the process was less seamless to create collaborative partnerships between team members and the externally supported college access providers (CAPs).

High school staff and CAPs worked simultaneously in the same communities to prepare students for college. Yet, despite the similarity of their efforts, there was little formal collaboration in place at CASH and EBHS. Reasons for this limited interaction included physical barriers and tension between staff with overlapping roles. The Equity Scorecard™ process initiated productive interactions that may not naturally have taken place in the high school setting. This created an opportunity for high school staff and CAPs to discuss their shared interest in college access. Further, all participants across both groups were able to engage in reflective conversations about complex issues, such as race and perceptions of students.
The Evidence Team members discussed the physical structure of schools, in which college services are scattered throughout the building, which creates barriers to collaboration among CAPs, guidance counselors, teachers, and administrators. One CAP participant shared,

“When I started here, guidance was all in one room. …I had to learn the ropes coming into the building as an outside provider. We worked together great [across roles]. …We all worked in the same physical space, …so communication happened naturally. …[Now] a lot of folks send email about students. Some of the stuff is very sensitive; …this is stuff that needs to happen in one-on-one personal conversations. It’s harder to do that when all the college-going [activities] are completely separated throughout the building.”

This physical distance can exacerbate natural tensions that often exist between the overlapping positions. Guidance counselors conveyed that managing competing tasks and priorities was an obstacle to their work; administrative tasks consumed time they would like to spend working directly with students. These challenges were intensified when others, such as college access providers, were given more opportunities to work directly with students. For instance, one high school staff participant shared,

“I have to proctor a test when I could be doing work searches for kids who need jobs. …I should be the one taking a kid on a college visit, but that now gets parceled out to other people because [student support staff] don’t have the time. And I think that’s where for us it becomes a point of friction, where we see ourselves as being capable of doing more.”

The Equity Scorecard™ process provided guidance counselors, CAPs, and other staff the opportunity to discuss the schools’ structural and organizational environment for successful collaboration. Out of these conversations, the team members shared that, despite existing tensions, they learned the importance of collaborating for the benefit of helping students. One participant used the metaphor of a chorus being in harmony to describe the need for high school staff to work together.

“I hope that this really will change not only the staff, but also the administrators; the administration can really work together with guidance and with the teachers. …And if they start singing one song, and this group is singing the other song, …I hope everything can come to harmony and work together, because we are working for the kids, for their well-being and for their benefit.”

This statement illustrates a sentiment that many of the participants articulated: that, as a result of the project, they gained an understanding of the need to work together despite the challenges that they face in collaborating across established roles and responsibilities.
“Our partnership with Boston Public Schools illustrates the beginning of a change process; one that does not end at the conclusion of this project, but continues through more practitioners investigating college access and support services from a perspective of racial equity.”
Lessons for Future Use of the Student Success Toolkit in Other Schools

While participants expressed that they learned a great deal in the Student Success Toolkit Demonstration Project, they also articulated the challenges that they experienced at each stage of the process.

Challenges with Data

Participants expressed frustration that the high school student and institution-wide data were not inclusive and comprehensive. The participants shared that they wished to see data disaggregated by student characteristics other than race and grade, such as socioeconomic status and immigration status. One Evidence Team member shared,

“One thing that kept coming up, even after we had cleared the air, was the issue of why we weren’t looking at socioeconomic groups. The truth is that our neighborhoods are still divided by race, and socioeconomically, there are still divisions by neighborhood.”

In addition, the participants consistently questioned the quality of the student survey data. Team members doubted the survey’s ability to capture student knowledge and experiences accurately. Some wondered whether low student awareness results about the FAFSA form, for example, could have been attributed to students’ lack of familiarity with the acronym. In this case, a deeper discussion would have recognized that student ignorance of the name of the form was still indicative of broader student disenchantment with the college process. Unfortunately, in this case and others, there was not time or space for that discussion to take place. On this topic, one Evidence Team member stated,

“I’m just trying to look at what ‘true’ data give us. ‘True’ data are identifiers, like how many African American males; that’s solid core data. ...I have no problem with that. But when you’re asking questions about college experience, it starts becoming really gray, because you don’t know if it’s the question or the numbers [that determine the results].”

In contrast, team members placed greater trust in the student outcomes data, such as standardized test scores. One of the obstacles faced in the project was that much of the requested student outcomes data could not be obtained; thus, the primary evidence to frame discussions was derived from student questionnaire data and data collected through inquiry activities. It perhaps would have been easier for the participants to formulate recommendations using direct connections between the concrete student outcomes data, such as the number of students taking the PSAT, and their own practices.
Challenges with Creating an Action Plan

As mentioned earlier, Evidence Team members increased their awareness that students need better preparation to succeed in college, both academically and socially. However, when faced with the task of changing specific practices for delivering services, the participants experienced difficulty conceptualizing an action plan for improved student outcomes. One participant described the difficulty of working within existing realities:

“A large percentage of students work, so they cannot be part of after-school activities. Everything needs to be during school hours if we want more participation. We can’t ask them to choose doing something for their future over paying their rent. We need to start working around those kids, because they are the ones that need our help. …If we fault them for [squandering these opportunities], we are not going to shift anything.”

Several participants identified additional challenges faced when creating equitable college access for largely immigrant student populations. For example, a teacher mentioned,

“Equity means that everybody has the same opportunity to be part of a program. …[Right now,] not all our students can participate in college programs, because they don’t have papers. This is sad. They work very hard, but in the end, nothing else can be done.”

Participants shared that, when they discussed these challenges during team meetings, team leaders often responded by re-directing the discussion to actions that the school could take. One team leader described her response to these discussions of obstacles:

“I try to get people to change some of their belief systems. I want people to talk about it, but I’m not going to get stuck in the muck of low expectations for our students. This is a real tension: do you change beliefs before you have actions, or do you change beliefs through actions? I am moving on the expectation that, if we put actions in place to highlight both what students can do and what staff can do to support them, and the result is student achievement beyond anyone’s expectations, then that’s going to be my best bet for changing beliefs. Actually show people how the change can happen.”

“In today’s economy, a college degree is in greater demand than ever before.”
Recommendations and Conclusions

A collaborative relationship between college access providers and high school counselors should be structured at the outset. Early opportunities for providers and guidance counselors to get to know each other are invaluable for the development of a professional partnership. In the absence of such a relationship, distrust and resentment between guidance counselors and external access providers may unintentionally arise, thereby reducing the potential for more effective delivery of college access services to students.

- Explore the existing relationships between guidance counselors and CAPs to identify communication avenues, issues of concern, barriers to collaboration, and opportunities for leaders to support a collaborative relationship.
- Hold an orientation meeting for guidance counselors and CAPs to get to know each other, including a joint opportunity to plan how they will work together.
- Schedule regular meetings between CAPs and guidance counselors to plan the delivery of services, share strategies, identify potential or real areas of conflict, and assess the effectiveness of the partnership in creating a college-going culture.
- Provide regular monitoring reports from CAPs to school officials on a common template.
- Develop an established intake procedure to be deployed when new CAPs want to provide services to the schools.

Schools must develop centralized school- and system-level data tools, monitor key indicators of college access, and set goals for improvement. It is essential for all stakeholders to have easy access to already collected data. In many cases, data systems are available to track college applications, admissions, and enrollments, but the information is not widely shared or easily accessible for practitioners. Streamlined systems would allow for more intentional monitoring that can be coordinated across all parties involved in the school’s college-going culture.

“The face of education in America is changing, and we must continue to develop new strategies and practices to ensure that all students have the opportunity to succeed. It is our responsibility. It is their right.”
For the Boston Public Schools:

• Create a centralized database that incorporates information from all schools.
• Make action research a form of professional development.
• Promote a culture where student college-going is viewed as an indicator of professional accountability and responsibility.

For School Leaders:

• Monitor college culture indicators such as AP course participation.
• Engage in practitioner training around the usefulness of data.
• Make the creation of Evidence Teams a professional development opportunity.
  Experienced team members can become leaders of new teams in their departments.
• Hold regular team meetings to monitor progress and to identify additional target areas and inquiry activities.
• Have the Evidence Teams provide progress reports to the schools.
• Incorporate equity-minded discussions into existing departmental meetings, and have the current Evidence Team serve as the cross-departmental team.
• Invite higher education representatives to be members of the Evidence Teams.

Creating an equitable, college-going culture in high schools is essential to improving educational achievement disparities. Our nation and our students can no longer afford policies and practices that ignore the role of race and ethnicity in access and attainment of educational opportunities. Through this project, critical action research methods engaged teams of high school practitioners to examine issues of college-going and equity. The product was new knowledge about group dynamics, K-12 partnerships, the integration of different types of practitioners into a school’s college-going culture, and, ultimately, the facilitation of access to college for racial-ethnic minority students.

Our partnership with Boston Public Schools illustrates the beginning of a change process; one that does not end at the conclusion of this project, but continues through more practitioners investigating college access and support services from a perspective of racial equity. We can only hope that the team members at CASH and EBHS will continue to challenge themselves and their peers to engage in equity-minded inquiry to serve their students. And perhaps their success will lead other high schools to use a similar approach to transformative student support and guidance.

The face of education in America is changing, and we must continue to develop new strategies and practices to ensure that all students have the opportunity to succeed.

It is our responsibility. It is their right.
The Student Success Toolkit Demonstration Project

Our aim for the pilot was to determine strategies to enhance collaboration and to develop best practices for connecting the many stakeholders who wish to create college-going cultures in U.S. public high schools.