
CREATING A COLLEGE-GOING CULTURE

Now that students have completed their applications and FAFSA, it is time to keep enthusiasm high in the days and weeks leading up to College Decision Day.

Students who have expectations from their parents, school, and community that college is the next step after high school see college as the norm. However, the idea that college is the next step after high school may seem unrealistic for those students who are from one or more of the following groups: low achievers, middle to low-income levels, underrepresented minorities, disabled youth, youth in foster care, and families where no one has attended college before.¹

The following resources are offered to help your school find ways to build a college-going culture in your school and community.

¹ http://www.collegeboard.com/prod_downloads/collegeed/collegeEd-create-college-going-culture.pdf

What is a college-going culture?

College Talk – engaging everyone, at all times, in a variety of places, in talk about college – ensures that no matter where students turn or who they are talking to, college is being discussed and the question of “where are you going to college?” is asked by all to all.

Clear Expectations – communicating and reinforcing the belief that all students can go to college and can take the steps to officially enroll in a college.

Information and Resources – connecting students to relevant and necessary information about how to take the steps to officially enroll in college, and what to do if the student hasn’t yet applied to college or been admitted.

Comprehensive Counseling Model – helping students and families with not only the steps involved in preparing for and enrolling in college, but also in dealing with the related stress of the college preparation, application and enrollment processes.

Testing and Curriculum – supporting students through the college test preparation and exam process, what to expect with college placements exams, and how performance on these tests may impact a student’s postsecondary journey.

Faculty Involvement – engaging educators both within and outside of the classroom to create a college-going culture among students. Tap into the school’s teachers to be part of the Decision Day celebration both inside and outside the classroom.

Family Involvement – engaging family members to increase the chances of student success in the college preparation, application and enrollment process.

College Partnerships – developing relationships between schools and postsecondary institutions to support the official enrollment process and transition to college.

Articulation – weaving in college access throughout a student’s life, starting at the earliest possible point and supporting the student all the way through high school graduation (and beyond)! Don’t forget to engage your middle school students and families in College Decision Day activities to get them prepared early for what it takes to officially enroll in college.

“Ask Me About It!” – Activity

Purpose

- To identify staff members by their institutions of higher education.
- To engage students in dialogue with faculty and staff members regarding college access, college preparation, application, enrollment, etc.

Activities

- Have the entire faculty and staff display an 8 ½” x 11” poster that lists alma maters (colleges and/or universities where they completed degrees).
- Post college signs and display them all year.
- Create a scavenger hunt during a specific time frame (i.e., during homeroom) and allow students to complete the challenges for as many different schools as they can find, the school farthest away, the school with the most alumni, etc. Award small prizes.

Preparation

- E-mail a sample sign like the one included in this Handbook to all faculty and staff and designate a posting date.
- Scavenger hunt: provide copies to every home room.
- Bingo: provide copies to every home room.





I GRADUATED FROM...

(College/University Name)

ASK ME ABOUT IT!

____(TEACHER/STAFF MEMBER'S NAME)____

College BINGO Activity

Activity for 9th-11th grade. Complete your BINGO card by locating teachers or other school staff members that experienced the following college scenarios or can answer “yes” to the following questions. Be sure to get the individual to sign in the space. You can only use each person for one space.

B	I	N	G	O
Attended a 4-Year College	Lived at Home While Attending College	Worked Full-Time While Attending College	Is Still Close Friends with His/Her College Roommate	Studied Abroad While in College
Attended a College in Florida	Went to College on a Scholarship	Changed Majors 2 or More Times	Attended a 2-Year College	Majored in Math
Majored in Science	Attended an Out-of-State College	FREE SPACE	Worked for the School Newspaper, TV Station, or Radio Station in College	Met His/Her Partner in College
Lived on Campus	Is Currently Enrolled in a College Program or Course	Had a Mentor or Other Close Advisor in College	Was President or Leader of a School Club	Has Completed Graduate School
Attended 2 or More Colleges	Wishes They Were Still in College	Ate Ramen Noodles Several Times a Week While in College	Played Sports in College	Took Out Student Loans to Pay for College

College Alumni Family Night - Activity

Purpose

- To familiarize families and students with community and four-year public and private colleges and universities
- To provide networking opportunities

Activities

- Have staff and parents represent the colleges and universities. Ask parents and staff to wear college and university shirts and hats and display flags or other items of interest to represent their institutions of higher education.
- Invite college admission offices to send materials for display or to send admission staff to attend.

Preparation

- Schedule an evening, possibly in conjunction with a PTSA meeting. Reserve a space and make a promotion plan. Ask parents and the PTSA officers to provide refreshments and college paraphernalia door prizes.
- Invite parents and staff to represent colleges and universities for your student body.
- Invite admission counselors from nearby colleges to set up information tables.
- Create sign-in sheets for each college/university represented to record attendance and collect comments.
- Create a “Good Questions to Ask” sheet for students to use as they visit alumni and collect information on their selected schools of interest

This guide was created based on a toolkit originally produced by the Michigan College Access Network (MCAN). A special thanks to MCAN for permission to adapt this guide to Florida.

The Florida College Access Network (FCAN) serves as the statewide coordinator for Florida College Decision Day, providing how-to materials and support.

FCAN’s mission is to create and strengthen a statewide network that catalyzes and supports communities to improve college & career preparation, access, and completion for all students. Our Big Goal is to increase the proportion of working-age adults in Florida who hold a high-quality postsecondary degree or credential to 60% by the year 2025.

