



Indicator Explanation



CORE FUNCTION	EFFECTIVE PRACTICE	INDICATOR
Instruction	Remove barriers and provide opportunities	3C.10 Teachers are guided by a document that includes suggested lessons and resources to integrate into every subject and grade level scaffolded experiences for career exploration and development.

Explanation: The evidence review suggests that all teachers at high performing districts and schools advocate a culture of achievement that includes setting high expectations for students to be college and/or career ready. Doing so includes all teachers, in every content area, incorporating relevant college information and career guidance into the classes they teach for every student.

Questions: How will the school ensure all teachers promote a culture of achievement? How will all teachers convey to students' high expectations for college and/or career readiness? What procedures will the school use to calibrate and scaffold lessons and resources that cross grade levels?

Many researchers talk about creating a college-going community where the messages to students and families about college/career start early and remain consistent throughout the school years. Conley et al. (2010) write that “students experience tremendous college and career readiness benefits (both social and emotional) when they learn in environments where adults intentionally emphasize the value and attainability of postsecondary education” (p. 19). According to Schneider (2006), “The most fundamental element of relational trust is advancing the best interests of the students, including their academic and social development....[T]his translates into shared goals among the staff that all students can go to college, and it is their personal responsibility to try and make that happen (p. 9).

Teachers are the adults in a school who interact with students most regularly, most consistently, and often, most intensely. As such, they are a critical driver for students in the college/career readiness process and need to be attentive to the influence of their role.

McClafferty, McDonough, and Nunez (2002) reinforce these ideas and provide a list of nine “principals of a college culture” to which school faculty should ideally adhere. The principles that teachers are best able to enact are facilitating college talk with students and families, holding high and clear expectations for students, sharing information and resources, ensuring that students are prepared for testing through a rigorous curriculum, staying involved in the college process, and collaborating with counseling staff (p. 11).

Teachers ultimately have the most control over their own classroom environment, what they teach, and how they teach it. With this element of control, teachers have the ability to assert tremendous influence on students by actively incorporating college/career readiness skills, information, and person anecdotes into their regular instruction. Skills such as time management, organization, problem solving, and research should be explicitly taught to students, with opportunities for them to develop these skills for themselves. Quint et al. (2008) rightly point out that students will need both content knowledge and the above-mentioned skills in order to get into and succeed in college, vocational programs, or careers; accordingly, both must be explicitly taught.



Corwin and Tierney (2007) emphasize how teachers can help motivate students by sharing their own experiences with college or careers, discussing the processes with students. In this way, teachers are not only exposing students to material and information about colleges and careers, but they are promoting a positive attitude about all their students being able to achieve college and career (Schneider, 2006).

Corwin and Tierney (2007) also discuss the importance of college-related professional development for teachers and other staff members, especially for schools with underserved or unique populations. Teachers who are particularly astute in the college process can train their colleagues on ways to incorporate college/career readiness into daily lessons. It is also encouraged for teachers to have vertical planning time—with teachers of the same content areas but different grade levels—to ensure that work becomes more rigorous and structured as students progress in school (Conley et al., 2010). Team-based planning also facilitates teachers' knowledge of courses and grades other than their own, allowing them to help students make connections between courses and to their own lives (Quint et al., 2008).

Above and beyond the instruction that occurs within the classroom, it is the teacher's supportive and mutually trusting relationships—with staff, students, and families—that can be most impactful on a student's decision-making process about his or her future. Throughout the body of research on the topic, it is clear that when a teacher believes that a student can go to college and provides the appropriate instruction and supports for him or her to succeed, that student is empowered, prepared, and more likely to achieve success.

References

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