Creating a College-Going Culture

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Study Background

• Qualitative data analyzed through Perna’s (2006) model of student college choice
  – Each layer is uniquely influential on student college choice

• Self-identified rural FGCS from New York State public high schools
  – 5 female FGCS, 2 male participants
    • Male participants not FGCS by study definition
Perna’s (2006) Model of Student College Choice

“the same values that shape an individual student’s habitus also have roots in the school and community context, and [...] provide students with assets that they can incorporate into their interest in and adjustment to postsecondary education experiences” (Gublo-Jantzen, 2015, p. 11).

(Perna, 2006)
Perna’s (2006) Model of Student College Choice

“institutions themselves serve to manage college access for students [through] institutional characteristics, location, and marketing and recruitment” (Gublo-Jantzen, 2015, p. 11).
Perna’s (2006) Model of Student College Choice

Primary area where students and families seek a college/guidance counselor’s input.
Findings

• All participants engaged in some discussion of postsecondary aspirations at home.

• Even for those participants who did not highlight affordability as a concern for their own college search and selection process, all participants shared that the government’s ability to provide federal funding for students to attend college is an important factor in college access.
Findings

- Patterns emerged in the importance of not only guidance counselor support, but also teacher support of goals and aspirations.
- I discovered that Perna’s (2006) model was appropriate to understand the influences at work as rural students moved through the college search and selection process.
So What Can I Do?

Practical Implications for High School Counselors
Scaffolding

• Study participants described experiences as early as pre-school that reinforced that college was an option for them on a daily basis
  – “Before I even went to school, I decided I wanted to be a teacher” (Elizabeth, 2014).

• Once students reach you in high school, try to discover their existing knowledge about postsecondary opportunities
  – Try to build in time to talk with students and/or their teachers about inherent skills, interests
Stay Asset Focused

• Re-imagine structural challenges, cultural norms, and potential obstacles as assets
  – “college access pathways were defined as [students’] enactment of assets and opportunities [...] as capital to reach a private, four-year, liberal arts college” (Gublo-Jantzen 2015).

• Challenge yourself to remain asset focused in your conversations with and about students
Make it Personal

• Facilitate relationships within the school
  – Students who have been accepted to college with those who are entering high school
  – Students who are entering high school and willing college-educated (or current college students) adults in the school
  – Students with community members
  – Students with local college community

• Illuminate student goals through relationship building
Engage the Teachers

• Find out what teachers are *already doing* in their classes to support college going
  – College essay writing
  – Requiring each student to submit at least one college application
• Work with teachers to provide your professional expertise on supporting college aspirations
Open the Door

• Work with local colleges to see if someone could provide a workshop on a pertinent college access topic (Financial Aid, Admissions, etc.)
  – Many colleges have service to the public good as part of their mission statement in some form; however, how best to accomplish that aspect of the institutional mission is sometimes unclear

• Invite and investigate opportunities to expose students to college experiences
Questions? Ideas? Feedback?

(Perna, 2006)
References
