

Closing the College Knowledge Gap

Closing the college knowledge gap requires engaging students in “authentic” postsecondary conversations as soon as preschool children affirm their first dreams and aspirations, “I want to be...” Regardless of students’ families, communities, or schools, authentic conversations begins the process of explaining schooling within a long-term context—“*This is why we learn to read, understand math, and explore science.*” Introducing students to meaningful, relevant, and enabling texts becomes an unforced and natural extension of current learning within a college and career readiness context. These efforts result in fewer children being marginalized due to limited accessibility to the college planning counseling and resources required to conceptualize college and career pathways.

College Planning Cohorts™

College Planning Cohorts™ is a successful model developed by Mychal Wynn, through the 8-year faith-based partnership between the Foundation for Ensuring Access and Equity and the Turner Chapel AME Church Education Ministry. Middle-through-high school students are engaged in large group presentations, small group discussions, and self-guided instructional activities, designed to increase students’ academic behaviors, focus on service and leadership, and expand postsecondary pathways to college admissions (4-year institutions, community colleges, or technical schools) and college scholarships.

A Research-responsive Model

The College Planning Cohort™ model is not in competition with or in place of research-based programs focused on increasing college readiness, or such programs as AVID, GEAR UP, or TRIO. *College Planning Cohorts™* represents a constantly evolving set of *research-responsive* strategies—responsive to research pertaining to student subgroups who are disproportionately underrepresented in AP, IB, and honors-level classes, who experience disproportionately low high school graduation and college matriculation rates, who ‘undermatch’ in the colleges they apply to, and who, as a result of making the wrong college choice, are less likely to attain their degree and more likely to incur thousands of dollars in student loan debt.



Conversational Communities

The often quoted African proverb, “It takes a village to raise a child” is actualized through this student and parent engagement model, which cultivates conversational communities where parents, teachers, coaches, tutors, mentors, and counselors become participants in authentic conversations regarding such areas as students’ gifts and talents, challenges and obstacles, attitudes and behaviors toward learning, tardiness, absenteeism, disciplinary infractions, leadership, community service, and study habits. Through conversations and self-reflective narratives, students are engaged in critical thinking, self-assessment, goal setting, and conceptualizing plans to maximize school and community resources within the long-term context of each students’ college or career aspirations.

Start or Join a Cohort Today

Schools, school-based clubs, athletic teams, fraternities/sororities, faith and community organizations, PTA/PTSAs, military families, or neighbors can form a *College Planning Cohort™*, or join our national cohort, facilitated by Mr. Wynn, by contacting our office or visiting the Rising Sun Publishing website. We provide all necessary books and materials, instructional units, and support:

Contact:

collegeplanningcohort@accessandequity.org

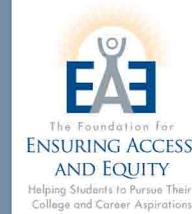
Register/Purchase Materials:

www.rspublishing.com

Success Stories/Testimonials:

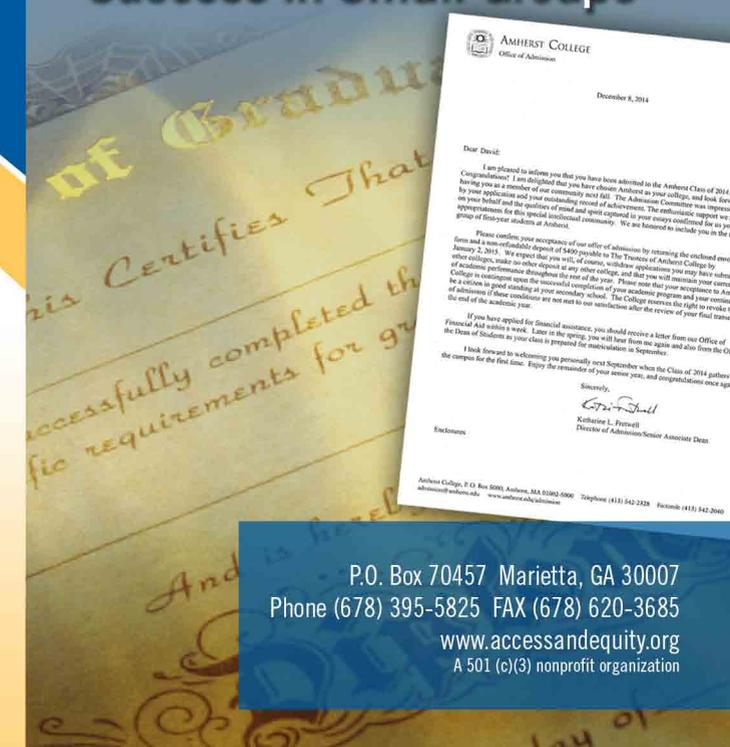
www.mychalwynn.com/college-planning-cohorts

Phone: (678) 395-5825 | FAX: (770) 587-0862



College Planning Cohorts™

"Success in Small Groups"



P.O. Box 70457 Marietta, GA 30007
Phone (678) 395-5825 FAX (678) 620-3685
www.accessandequity.org
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The 3Rs

Educators generally agree that, “Rigor, Relevance, and Relationships,” are key components to creating high performing schools and engaged classrooms. However, the *College Planning Cohort™* model realigns these components, seeking first to capture the attention of students by showing them the relevance of the work involved.

Relevance

Students engage in self-reflective activities designed to lead to deeper levels of thinking about their futures— futures in which their dreams and aspirations are conceptualized within a college or career context. Through self-assessment, students engage in critical analysis of the issues, obstacles, and challenges— whether societal, community, family, or self-imposed—faced by students and families.

Relationships

Relationships develop within the context of how *we* can help *them* overcome the challenges and obstacles to achieve the dreams and aspirations *they* have for themselves. Consequently, relationships between students, parents, mentors, coaches, and cohort facilitators are strengthened through a shared belief that *we* are vested in *their* success. Each academic award, college acceptance letter, institutional award, and private scholarship reflects the shared success of the village.

Rigor

Rigor is embedded in the expectations where students engage in extensive research, critical thinking, self-reflective writing, literary analysis, and small and large group discussions. Students examine their level of coursework (i.e., honors, AP, IB, or dual enrollment) within the context of their postsecondary aspirations and through the process of backwards mapping by identifying the postsecondary pathways that are best aligned with the rigor of their course taking.



Hands-on Learning

Students are guided through the many facets of the college planning process. Through hands-on learning, students engage in authentic self-assessment; résumé development; extensive writing; college and scholarship research; critical analysis of financial aid policies; identify their ‘hook’; learn how to obtain fee waivers and avoid paying out-of-state tuition; learn where and how to maximize leadership and service opportunities; and how to position themselves to become competitive candidates for admission into top colleges.

Assessment

This model makes use of formative assessments, considered by many educators to be the most powerful type of assessment for improving student understanding and performance. Formative assessments occur as students engage in the process of making meaning of college and career planning content and integrating learning into



what they already know. Feedback is immediate, enabling students to change behaviors and understandings as they experience daily epiphanies. These assessments enable cohort facilitators to continually examine instructional strategies, make adjustments to activities, differentiate instruction to meet student needs, respond to student aspirations, and fine-tune students’ postsecondary plans and pathways.

Engagement

Student cohorts typically reflect a broad range of interests, ability levels, learning styles, personality types, and energy levels. In middle school through high school, cohorts vary in their meeting frequency and make-up. Some cohorts are comprised of students from a single school or grade level while others are formed with students from multiple schools and across grade levels. Through the cohorts, student-parent relationships are strengthened, while student-to-student bonds are formed through shared aspirations, encouragement, and peer support.

